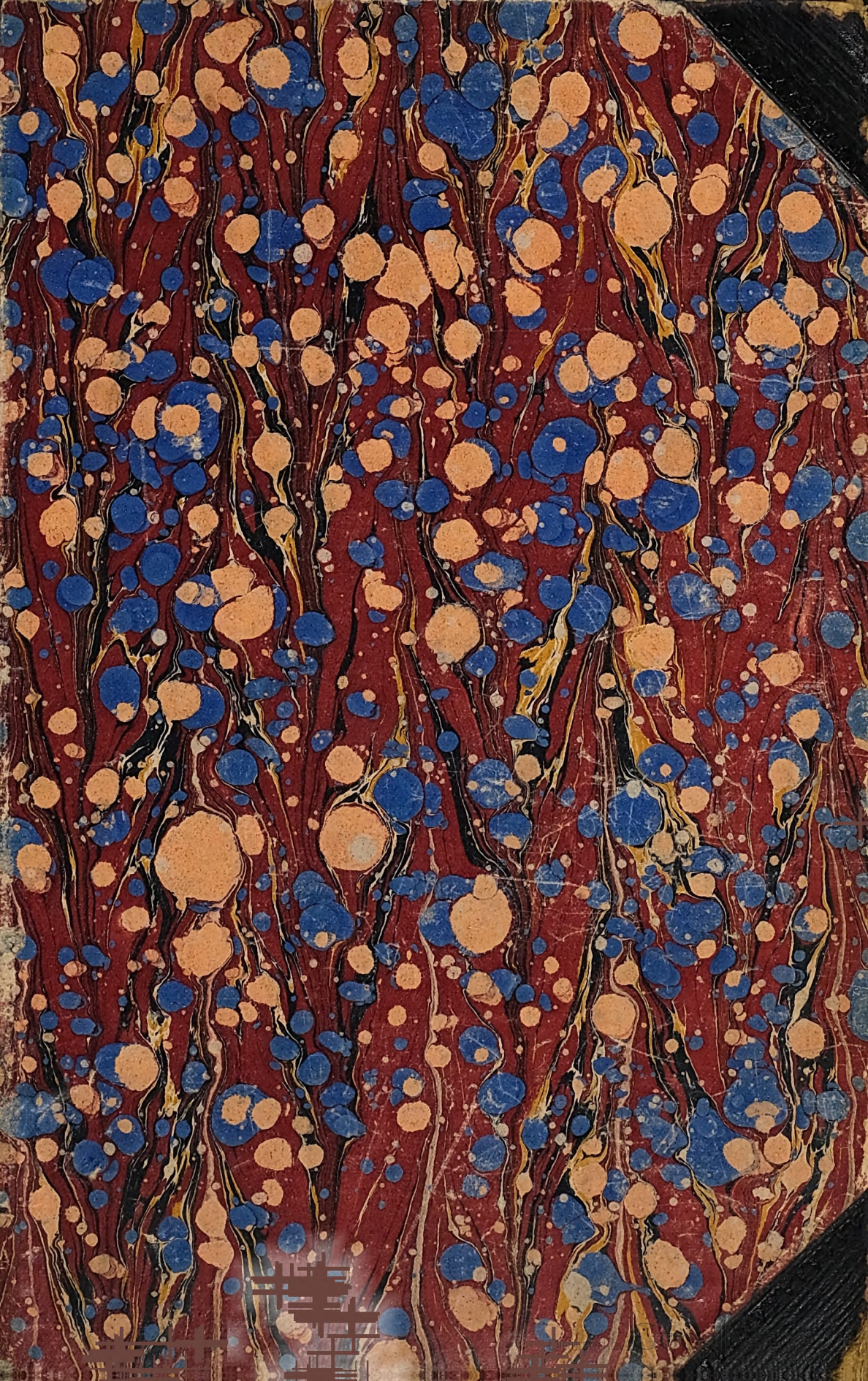
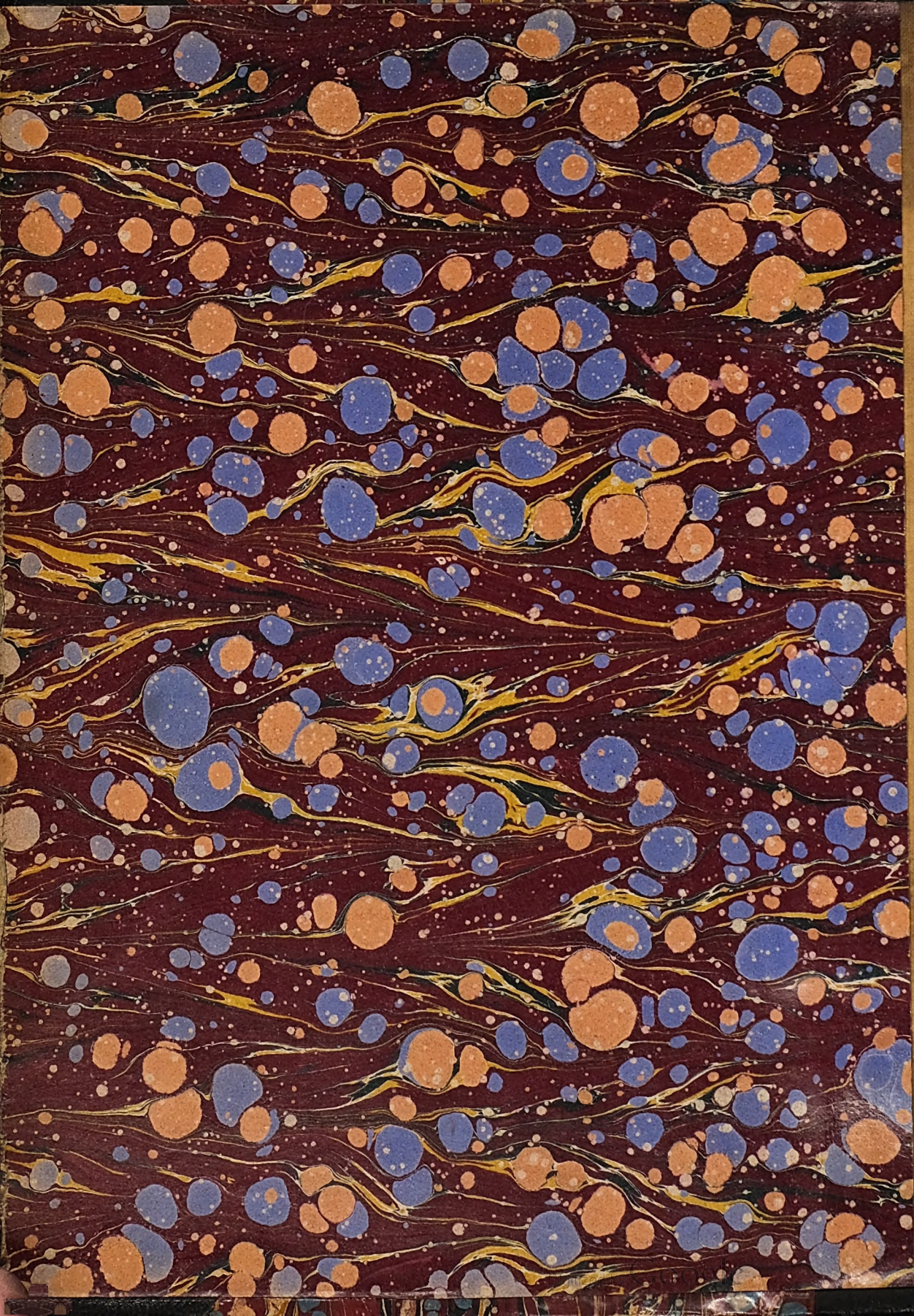
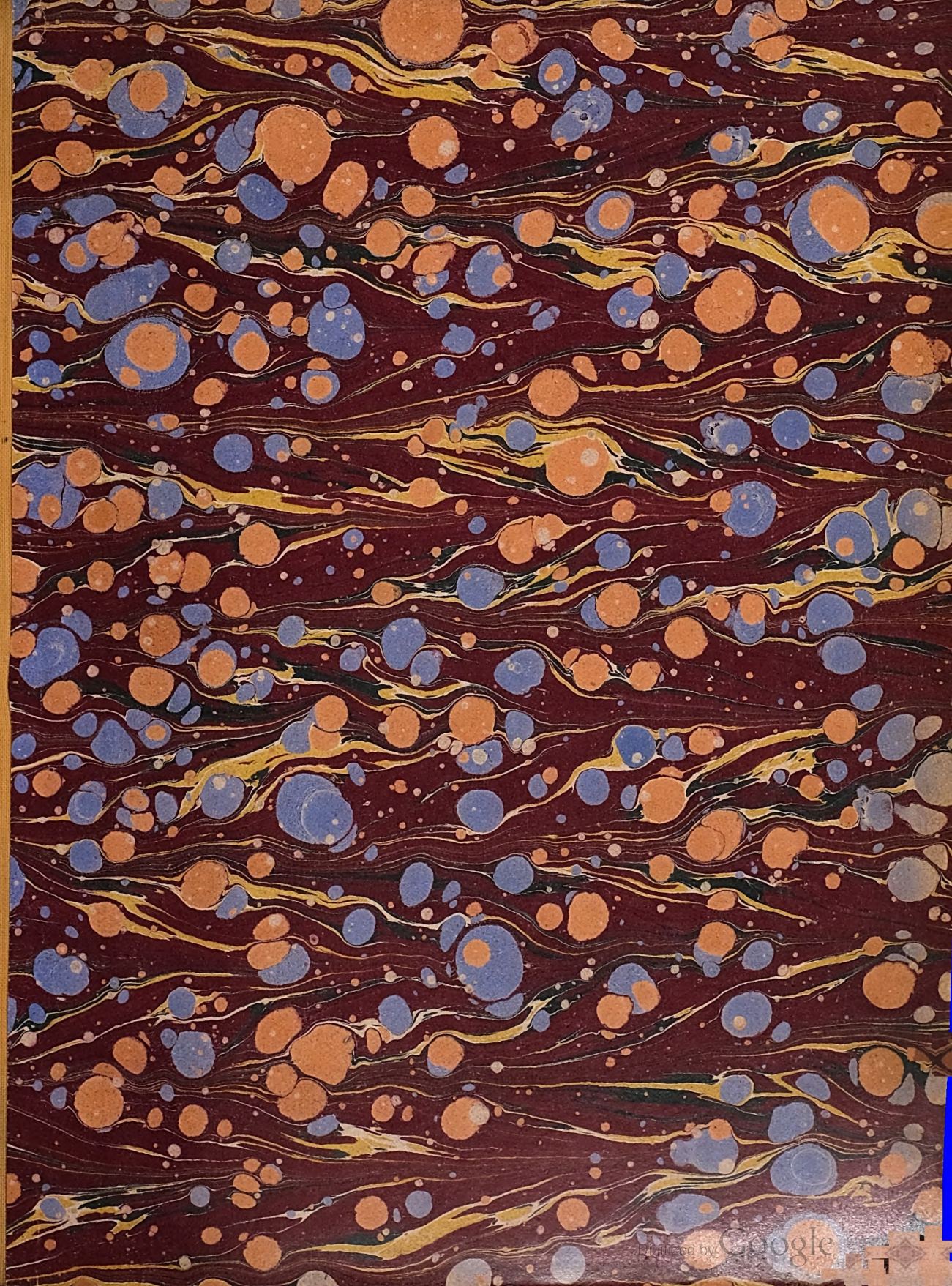
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

https://books.google.com






Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

MacTaggart's First-Foot
See inside.

TARTAN COVER No. 7.—
ERSKINE.

No. 731.] Week ending January 3, 1903. [One Penny.

Digitized by Google

FREE PRESENTS.

FREE.

You can earn a 3 years warranted Watch, Life-sized Doll, Powerful Air Rifle, Beautiful Solid Gold filled Dress Rings, Long Guard, Bracelet, and Jewellery of all kinds from our list of presents. You can have any of these FREE after selling Nine Articles of Exquisite Jewellery, at 9d. each (sold by shops at 1/6.) We send the goods on approval on receipt of your post-card. When sold you remit us the 6/9, and you get a Beautiful Present, absolutely free. Send no money, we trust you. You take no risk, as they sell at once, and we receive back unsold goods. Colonials must send 1/- for extra postage.

FREE.

(Room 59) HYDE PARK WATCH CO., 14 Ranelagh Road, Paddington, London, W.

SONGS COPIED.

Legible as print, **5d.** page; transposed correctly, **6d.** page. MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon. Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Mrs. Conyers,
MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee; and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive **Free** on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU—
NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at **2d.** each, making 4/- altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Timekeeper or other Presents of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of **£2 10s. per week.**, Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE
Delamere Crescent, London, W.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

DAILY . . . EXPRESS.

ONE HALFPENNY.

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

For HEADACHE & NEURALGIA.

Don't be put off with a dangerous substitute. Insist upon Kaputine the **safe** remedy. Recommended by many eminent medical men.

Cures in ten minutes. Kaputine is *not* a single dangerous crude drug put up to evade the Government stamp duty, but is the **safe** remedy.

Packets of 18 doses 1/-.
Samples 1d. each.
KAPUTINE LTD.,
HUDDERSFIELD.

KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. **2½%**

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

BODLEIAN
20 MAR 1903
LIBRARY

GIVEN AWAY

WITH THIS WEEK'S

Home Notes

(No. 468),

PAPER PATTERN

OF THESE

KNICKERS.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

Price ONE PENNY.

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE.

Digitized by Google

Short Stories

No. 731.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 3rd, 1903.

A Woman Hater.

And How he was Converted.

"Colonel Clarence is a woman hater, Barbara; your enthusiasm over his coming is quite misplaced."

Uncle Denis spoke with a sneer. He usually did. I think he is the most aggravating person I know, excepting aunt Fanny. They both take a delight — a positive delight—in making sarcastic speeches; and in being generally disagreeable. They have what my dear London arabs call "a down" on me.

Uncle Denis is my guardian, unfortunately, and I came to live with him and his sister, aunt Fanny, when my dear dad died.

Dad and I had spent most of our time travelling about together, and we were just two of the very happiest people in the world. Aunt Fanny says I was shockingly spoilt and indulged—and uncle Denis sniffs assent.

Perhaps dad did spoil me. We spoilt each other, I believe! At any rate my uncle and aunt did their best to neutralise the effect of my past happiness. They were at great pains to snub me on every available occasion, and to assure me repeatedly that it was unlucky I should have turned out such a plain, uninteresting girl.

This sort of treatment palls upon one after a time, and Dipleigh Court (my uncle's place), was not in any case a very lively abode.

Naturally, therefore, I was pleased to hear that Colonel Clarence, *the* Colonel whose name was in everyone's mouth, who had led the famous charge of Raslapan, was actually to be one of a house party at Dipleigh in the following week.

Naturally, too, having been accustomed to express pleasure when I felt it, I showed my delight. Hence the snub bestowed on me by uncle Denis: "Colonel Clarence is a woman hater, Barbara, your enthusiasm is quite misplaced."

"I can't quite see that, uncle Denis," I said, uncle Denis does aggravate me so, he has such a little shrivelled-up face, and such ferret's eyes. "I don't see why I shouldn't be enthusiastic about a woman hater, if he has done something worthy of enthusiasm. What *have* his views about women got to do with his soldiering?"

Uncle Denis snorted unpleasantly, and smiled the sarcastic smile which fills me with an unholy longing to kick him.

"I merely wished to warn you that Colonel Clarence is not likely to return your enthusiastic interest. He is a most pronounced woman hater."

All rights reserved.]

"Then he has probably treated a woman badly, or been treated badly by a woman," I retorted; and I actually smiled up into uncle Denis' sour visage. I tried never to show when he annoyed me; it did so please him to upset and vex people, and he merely sniffed at me again.

"Woman hater, indeed?" I said to myself as I sat before the glass doing my hair on the evening the Colonel was expected. "Now, my dear, that means one of two things." I nodded at myself in the glass, "either the poor man has been run after by women till he hates the very sight of them, or one woman has broken his heart and he is afraid to trust it to another."

My dear old dad had taught me a good deal of shrewd worldly wisdom; although he had at the same time a most simple, loving soul.

"I *expect*"—I went on soliloquising aloud, "that this poor woman hater would be rather surprised and disappointed if he were not made much of; we shall see."

Then I laughed at my own reflection. "You plain, uninteresting girl," I said, curtseying to myself in the long pier glass which aunt Fanny declared was an incitement to vanity, "we shall see."

My gown was white and soft and fell in heavy folds. Dad always liked me in white. He said it went well with the copper of my hair, and my grey eyes. That evening I wore no colour at all; and the flowers in my belt were white roses.

There was only one person in the drawing-room when I went down, a tall man with a bronzed face, a heavy moustache and the very keenest blue eyes I ever saw.

"Behold the woman hater," I said to myself, and aloud, my hospitable instincts getting the upper hand, "I think you must be Colonel Clarence? I am Mr. Denis Tenby's niece."

He shook hands with me; but I could see a look of annoyance shoot into his eyes, and a most funny expression of bored resignation crossed his face. I knew perfectly well that he was thinking:

"Another woman to bother me and gush."

And before he could begin a polite nothing, I said:

"I know you will excuse me, but I have a note I must write before dinner," and I sailed off to the writing table, feeling, rather than seeing, the astonishment in his eyes.

From where I sat, I could just see his brown bullet head over the top of the chair into which he had subsided, and I

Digitized by Google

noticed that he shuffled his feet impatiently once or twice, and I smiled as I wrote that unnecessary note. Before I had finished it, aunt Fanny came gushing in. She looked from the great man to me, a storm gathering in her face.

"Barbara," she said, in her 'well, I *am* surprised' voice, "did you not know Colonel Clarence?"

I came forward, wrinkling my brows.

"Know it, was Colonel Clarence," I said; "oh, yes, I guessed that you must be he, did I not?" I beamed upon the big person on the hearthrug, "but I had a very important note to write, and I knew Colonel Clarence would forgive me."

Then uncle Denis entered the room, his face wreathed in smiles, most unusual to it, and whilst he talked to the guest, aunt Fanny whispered acidly to me:

"I don't know what he will think of your behaviour, Barbara. To allow a man of his eminence to sit and amuse himself whilst you write notes—a chit of a girl too!"

Aunt Fanny always became incoherent in her tempers; she gave me no opportunity to reply, but turned back to the Colonel. We were alone that evening, and uncle Denis kept our guest in close conversation throughout dinner; whilst aunt Fanny listened with rapt attention.

I also listened, but I continued to look as if my thoughts were far away; I did it because I caught those blue eyes looking at me across the table with a puzzled expression, especially when the conversation turned upon the recent war.

When uncle Denis began to mention the word Raslapan, I saw out of the corner of my eyes what an intensely bored look crossed Colonel Clarence's face, but uncle Denis has the perception of a rhinoceros and went on gaily, asking a series of questions about that famous charge.

I pretended harder than ever not to hear, especially when I knew that the bored look on the face opposite was changing to one of increased surprise as he watched my impassive visage.

"You know every detail of Raslapan," my uncle suddenly said viciously, turning to me. I gave a great jump.

"I?" I said, "Oh, I *beg* your pardon, uncle Denis, I am so sorry. What was it you were saying?"

"You have Raslapan at your fingers' ends," he repeated, "you always go wild over the heroic." The sneer in his voice was rather unbearable, nevertheless I laughed lightly.

"Oh, I don't know about that," I said, "wars and rumours of wars have become almost monotonous lately, haven't they?" I flashed a look across the table; the blue eyes met mine, their look was still puzzled.

"Just like a girl," uncle Denis muttered, "never know their own mind two minutes together?"

All the same I knew *my* mind perfectly well!

After dinner aunt Fanny talked to me for fully half an hour upon the superiority of the young women of her youth. If they all turned into aunt Fannys I have no wish to emulate them.

Colonel Clarence was buttonholed by uncle Denis for the whole evening, and I stole away early. I knew that the soldier's eyes were often upon me, but I did not meet them again.

"It is most excellent for him not to imagine that every woman must adore him," I said to myself, and again spoke to my own image in the glass, "the woman hater must learn a lesson."

Next day the house filled up, one unmarried girl was of the party, my cousin, Annie Deane.

"Oh, Bab," she said eagerly, as I went upstairs with her, "you've got *him* here, haven't you?"

"Him?—who?" I asked.

"Why Colonel Clarence; *the* Colonel Clarence?"

"Oh, yes—he's here," I made my voice quite indifferent, and began to hum a tune.

"My dear Bab"—Annie looked at me with eyes grown round and awed, "you speak of him as if he were nobody, it makes me positively shiver with joy to think of seeing him close."

"My dear Annie," I said mockingly, "he is only a man, much like other men, except that he poses as a woman hater."

"Perhaps some hateful creature jilted him," she said warmly.

"Perhaps," I answered coolly, "I really don't know." Annie is a perfect goose. She took the line at once of hanging on Colonel Clarence's words as though they were pearls and diamonds, and of deferring to his opinion as if he were a Solomon.

"No wonder the poor thing is a woman hater," I said to myself twenty times a day, when I saw that not only Annie, but the rest of the ladies of the party, laid themselves, metaphorically, under his feet.

"The man simply despises women for being such fools. So do I." I felt really vicious; perhaps I have a spice of uncle Denis' temper somewhere in me. I did not join the throng of worshippers when they sat round with rapt countenances, asking questions about the campaign. I usually discovered something most important to do elsewhere, and the more persistently Colonel Clarence's blue eyes watched me, the more did I appear not to notice them.

One evening I slipped out on to the terrace after dinner. The garden was fragrant with the scent of roses; a silver moon hung in the deep sky; a nightingale sang in the copse.

A step on the gravel made me turn.

"What a delightfully peaceful place!" Colonel Clarence's deep voice struck on my ear.

"Yes," I said, "I came out to find some fresh air, and fresh ideas." I added mischievously, looking up at him. The war had been talked all dinner time.

"You don't take much interest in the war?" he asked.

"W-e-ll—one can have too much even of a good thing, can't one?" I said. "You see, I read all about it in the papers at the time."

I was rather proud of that speech, because no item of the war failed to interest me, really!

"I quite agree with you," he spoke eagerly. "I'm dead sick of being asked questions about it all; and ladies want to know so much."

"Do we?" I asked.

"I didn't include you amongst them," he exclaimed hastily.

"Thanks," I said; and I made him a low mocking courtesy; "it is true aunt Fanny says I'm more a tomboy than a woman," I added, reflectively.

Then I looked at him. His eyes shone in the moonlight; his teeth gleamed white as he smiled.

"You—don't care much about men, do you?" he said doubtfully.

"Not particularly," I answered nonchalantly, "but why?"

"Well, I thought; it seemed, I mean," the hero of Raslapan stumbled hopelessly.

"Yes?" I said, "you thought?"

"Well, you never seem to care to join in the conversation when—when I am talking——"

"Don't I?" I knitted my brows as though in deep thought; "I think I rather like to talk myself, you know. If you have monopolised the conversation at all, I expect I didn't care to play second fiddle. Was that it?"

I smiled at him sweetly; he looked utterly nonplussed.

"Oh!" he said feebly; "it wasn't exactly intentional then? I mean you didn't purposely avoid me."

I laughed.

"Why should I avoid you?" I said; "why you more than anybody else? All men are more or less alike, aren't they; just as women are?"

Digitized by Google

I looked at him again.

Then I looked away, because there was a light in his eyes which made my heart beat.

"Are women all alike?" he said; "I don't find them so. I—I usually dislike women, but——"

"Do you?" I broke in lightly; "how funny; but why? You don't mean to say you're a woman hater? Oh! I'll go in at once!" I half turned from him, but he stopped me.

"If you only knew," he began, and there was a pleading note in his voice that I could not resist.

"I don't want to be a conceited jackass, but—my life has been a burden to me lately, because——"

"Because women are fools," I said shortly. "I've no patience with them. Why, I believe you might be quite nice if they hadn't spoilt you. It *is* a pity."

And before he could recover from his speechless astonishment I had fled into the house.

I did not see him again that night. Next morning when I went into the garden as usual before breakfast, he was the first person I met. He was in the rose garden, looking absently at a bush of white roses. When he saw me he smiled.

"You wore white roses the first day I saw you," he said.

"Did I?" I answered quietly, but my heart beat much faster than I liked, and I did not care about meeting the glance of those keen eyes.

"Come and sit here and tell me what you meant last night," he said, pointing to a seat. Now to this day I know not why I obeyed him; I suppose his habit of commanding gives him a masterful air. Anyhow, I sat down.

"What I meant last night?" I asked, trying to speak lightly; "why, what did I say? We talked about so many things."

"You said I was spoilt because women were fools."

"*Did I?* How rude of me!" I made patterns on the gravel then with my foot for I felt that his eyes were on me, and I was getting more and more nervous.

"In what way am I spoilt?" he persisted.

"Well, you know," I said, plucking up courage, "you do seem to think that everybody is just made to listen to you and worship you. You may call yourself a woman hater—but——"

"But what?"

"But I don't believe you are." I glanced at him nervously; his eyes twinkled, a smile glimmered round his mouth.

"You are fairly outspoken," he said.

"Yes. I always was. You see, I am not in the least afraid of you, and I think it's a great pity you should go about posing as a woman hater, which simply makes silly women admire you, and sensible ones despise you. Now why not treat us all naturally? I——"

I was well launched on my subject, when suddenly I felt my hand taken and grasped firmly in his big brown one.

"Are you one of the silly, or sensible women?" he said. "No—look at me and tell me truly"—for I was most busy at that moment looking at a rose-bud into which a bee was dipping. I had to look round, he was so masterful. He only grasped my hand tighter.

"I—I—don't think I have considered the matter," I said, with flagrant disregard of truth.

"You don't know whether you despise me or not?" Something pleading crept into the masterfulness of his voice; he bent a little nearer to me.

"I—I—don't despise you," I said—my voice shook, which annoyed me; "but of course I wouldn't grovel round you as though you were a little god. I don't think you *are!*"

I looked at him defiantly.

"What is your opinion of me?" *His* voice shook now.

"I don't exactly see what my opinion of you matters, one way or the other." My coolness returned as his vanished; "I think you are just a very human sort of man," I ended mischievously; "and I can't imagine what uncle Denis would think if he heard me giving my opinion!"

"Pshaw! Who cares about uncle Denis?"

"Well, you see, he says I am a chit of a girl who has no right to opinions; a plain, uninteresting chit of a girl." I spoke slowly and thoughtfully, making patterns with my foot. My hand was still a prisoner.

His grasp on it tightened.

"A plain — uninteresting—chit of a girl—*You?*"

"Yes—I——"

"I wish I could duck uncle Denis in the nearest and dirtiest duck-pond," he growled. Then suddenly his voice changed and softened. I never imagined his deep voice could grow so gentle.

"Shall I tell you something?" he said.

I nodded.

"I can't get away from the memory of you as I first saw you; all in white, with your crown of bronze hair. I—may be a conceited ape, and spoilt, and everything you say, but—I love you dear——"

The simple ending made my heart leap. I was silent because I could not speak.

"Could you put up with a fellow like me?" he said anxiously.

Now I badly wanted to put my arms round his neck, and tell him then and there that I loved the very ground he walked on, but it would never have done, would it? It would have simply made him put me on the level of all his other silly worshippers. Besides which, it is very bad for a man to know too much of one's feelings. So I only said:

"I believe I *could* put up with you, only—you won't want me to fall down and worship, will you? I shan't ever think you an angel——"

Then he took me in his arms and kissed me.

All the same I think he *is* very nearly perfect, and I am most truly sorry for all the wives who have not got husbands like mine!

L. G. Moberly.

"I HAVE noticed that it is the bad boy who seems to get on best in school." "Yes; the teachers promote them to get rid of them."

"HERE, my little boy," said a benevolent old gentleman to a weeping boy, "I wouldn't cry that way if I were you." "How did you cry when you were a little boy?" asked the weeper, during a temporary cessation of tears.

THEY were two little children, and they were painting pictures in their school books. One youngster finished a cow in blue, and then remembered never to have seen a blue cow. "Never mind," said the other; "we will say the cow is cold."

WIFE (to her husband, who is a great criminal lawyer, and who has found fault with the dinner): "There you go again, always finding fault with my cooking. You never see any redeeming qualities in me, and yet you have an excuse for every murderer that comes along."

"SAY, pa," queried Willie the other morning, while preparing his geography lesson, "how many motions has the earth?" "I don't know, Willie," replied the fond parent, as he bound a towel soaked in ice water about his throbbing brow, "but they're numerous, very numerous."

"PAPA," said the young mother, "I've decided on a name for the baby. We will call her Imogen." Papa was lost in thought for a few minutes. He did not like the name, but if he opposed it his wife would have her own way. "That's nice," said he, presently. "My first sweetheart was named Imogen, and she will take it as a compliment." "We will call her Mary, after my mother," was the stern reply.

Digitized by Google

HER FAIRY STORY;

Or, HELPING HIS RIVAL.

How bewitching the girl looked, with her cheeks aglow where the frosty air had touched them, and her usually bright, expressive eyes rendered still more sparkling and vivacious by the delight of the afternoon ride! She had taken off her warm jacket and her hat and gloves, and had returned to the cosy drawing-room to chat with her companion, a man of six-and-twenty.

He gazed at her as she lay ensconced in the cushions of a particularly comfortable arm-chair; she was staring dreamily into the fire, having sunk into a reverie. If anyone could have looked into his eyes, they would have observed an expression indicative of love and longing.

"Bessie," he said suddenly, causing her to start slightly at the abrupt break in the silence, "when are you going to marry me?"

"I wonder how many more times you will ask that question, Frank?" she inquired with a smile. "You have been asking it off and on ever since I was a little girl and you were only just a little bigger boy! You asked me every time you saw me with a new frock; of that I am quite certain!"

"And now I ask it without even that provocation!" retorted Frank. "You have never given me an answer. In the earlier days I did not attach so much importance to not having a reply, but we are older now, Bessie, and the matter is more serious."

Bessie laughed. The laugh began merrily, but it assumed a different note before it concluded, although Frank did not notice the change. This question and answer had, as she said, been a commonplace for years; they had grown up to regard it unconsciously as something in the nature of a jest that is half in earnest, and she was treating it so now, but with a purpose. Frank was only half in earnest still; he was in that peculiar frame of mind when one accepts a refusal, or procrastination, contentedly because one feels sure that the thing will come about in time.

"Well," he yawned, for the warmth of the fire had a somnolent effect. "I shall ask you again soon, because"—and here he became more wideawake, more serious—"because I want you, Bessie!"

"Frank," she said quietly, "there is only one obstacle to our union."

"And that is some petty affair not worth considering, of course!" he rejoined promptly. "We have been so much together, that——"

"It is that I do not, cannot, love you enough to become your wife, Frank! You are a dear old boy, and—and you will understand it."

"We are getting on a bit!" he declared with a laugh. "I have received something more than the usual reply, so I hope soon to get the wedding-day fixed!"

She looked away from him and gazed into the fire once more. Her face was troubled, but he could not see it in the gloom of the gathering darkness.

"Frank," she said softly, after a pause, "I used to tell you fairy tales when we were boy and girl. Perhaps I am out of practice now, but suppose I try? I have a fairy tale which I should like to relate."

"I don't see what that has to do with the subject in hand, Bessie, but I suppose I mustn't press you any further to-day. We shall get further next time. Yes, go on with the fairy story, but you won't mind if I fall asleep, will you?"

She slipped from her chair and seated herself on a hassock near him, so that he could have placed his hand quite easily on her head and caressed the glossy hair.

"Once upon a time," she began, in true fairy-tale style, "there were a father and a daughter who went to Scotland to stay for a few weeks in a mansion of the Western Highlands. They rented the place for the time, transacting the business of hiring through the owner's solicitor."

"That isn't very exciting," remarked Frank, "and I won't guarantee not to go to sleep!"

"Yes, you will!" replied the girl in a tone of quiet confidence. "Well, the stay was a very pleasant one, but the girl wished to see the country and the two made journeys to places quite a long distance from the mansion and sometimes had to put up at a hotel for a night in consequence.

"I wanted to see—I mean, the daughter wanted to see—some of the crofters on their pasturage holdings; some of the poorest, if possible; and to that end she persuaded her father to undertake one of those long journeys. When they reached the particular locality mentioned by a friend as a favourable spot, we set about visiting some of the people in their dwellings."

"Rather cheeky of you!"

"It was while visiting the occupants of these dwellings, by whom we were very hospitably received, that a strange incident occurred. We were met at the door of a wooden structure, with a thatched roof, by a man who was not a crofter, although he was dressed in the garb of one and his beard and hair were unkempt and untrimmed. He was a tall, strongly built man under thirty, and he showed the training of a gentleman as soon as his attitude of defiance yielded to one of affability, which it did after a few words."

Bessie stopped and Frank sat up a little. "What of the man?"

"He showed us into his best room and did his best to make us comfortable. The girl was surprised to find on the shelf many books that betrayed the scholar; and in his conversation he unconsciously gave indications of having travelled and of being a well-bred, highly intellectual, chivalrous man—a gentleman, in short.

"My father left us conversing about music, of which he was undoubtedly very fond, and on other subjects, and the fifteen minutes during which his absence lasted, appeared to go like the same number of seconds. I longed to ask this crofter why he came to be there, but some indefinable influence restrained me, and I suppose it was so with my—I mean, with the girl's father!" concluded Bessie hastily, recognising that she had been speaking in the first person.

"We left the crofter's dwelling," she went on, again relapsing into the personal, "but not before father took a snapshot at this 'interior,' as he called it, and when the picture was developed I was surprised—and pleased—to see that it included the crofter and myself as we sat talking. I will show it to you in a minute! We went back to our temporary home, and three days later the crofter appeared and asked that he might see me, in order to give me some Spring flowers and to leave some music which he thought might please me! I asked the servant to show him in; they were our own servants, travelling with us. He entered, and I was pleased to find that he had trimmed his beard, and had his hair cut. I think that he was wearing a slightly better suit of clothes, but I didn't notice that especially; I only noticed that he was even more like a gentleman in bearing than before.

"I am afraid that I was rather forgetful of conventionality, for I asked him if he would like to hear the old pieces played, and I played them. One of them was a dreamy

Digitized by Google

song, a love song. Then he went and I have not seen him since."

"You said that you would show me the picture!" said Frank in a strained voice. He was widewake now.

"Oh, never mind that! It is only a fairy story, you know, and I do not understand why I have told it, except—But let us forget it."

"I should like to see the picture!" said Frank in a strangely subdued, but persistent tone.

She brought it to him, lighting the gas that he might see it the better. It was not a perfect picture by any means, but it was sufficiently distinct for him to see the two faces clearly. He started as he recognised the features of the man and his hand trembled as he muttered under his breath:

"Alec Malcolm!"

"Don't smile at father's amateurish effort and say things to yourself about it!" said Bessie, with a poor attempt at jocularity. She was wondering what effect the fairy story and the snap-shot would have upon him.

"Thank you," he said, handing it back to her and speaking nonchalantly. "You promised me a game of chess, and I should like to undertake something serious after the frivolity of fables and fairy tales!"

Bessie's father had announced his intention of spending some time on the Continent, and within a week after the scene in the drawing-room they were off. Frank Staynes made rapid preparations, and on the following day he was off to Scotland. He had no difficulty in finding the locality mentioned by Bessie, and at noon on a cold Spring day he knocked at the door of the crofter dwelling. He had found it by giving a description of his man, for he rightly guessed that Malcolm had assumed another name.

"Frank Staynes!" gasped the astounded Malcolm, on beholding his former college friend. "How—how did you find me out?"

"That's another story, Alec!" replied Staynes lightly. "I've come to spend a week or two with you for the sake of quietude. I want to read up—something—and my nerves are not so steady as they ought to be, so I want more solitude. See? Oh, I'm prepared to rough it, and I can pay for my keep and the rent, old fellow. Don't shut your door against an old college acquaintance."

"Well, if you put it like that," said Malcolm, "I'll not say nay to you. Come in, and be welcome to what there is, but I'm puzzled to understand how you found me! I thought I had slipped from all the old friends and acquaintances."

"Let us have something to eat," said Frank, "and we can go into the thing. I see you have your frugal repast ready and as there doesn't appear to be enough for two, I am glad that I brought a sandwich or so with me."

"I'll have enough for two at the next meal," smiled Malcolm. "I didn't expect company, you see!"

The "frugal repast" was soon ended, and Frank Staynes carried his trunk into another room which served as a bedroom. There was no second bed, but Staynes soon arranged that with a rug, and stated that a hammock was coming. He had ordered one at the place where he had bought his rough clothing, which he intended to wear.

"I'm going to be a crofter for a time," he declared, "and I'm sure it will do me good!"

He had so far dodged the question asked by Malcolm, as to how he had found out his former schoolfellow. He proceeded deliberately with his plan, and, for the better accomplishment of his object he avoided asking why Malcolm had chosen the life he was leading.

"I'll find out all about it soon; first let me learn the truth on the other matter!" mused Staynes. "Does Malcolm love——"

A slight exclamation from Malcolm interrupted his musings. He, Frank, had tumbled several things out of his trunk for the purpose of placing them handy on the shelves or the table; a cabinet photo of Bessie Danvers had fallen out, and this had caught the eye of Alec Malcolm. Staynes pretended not to notice the exclamation, but proceeded to sort his things. He picked up the photo and put it in a small writing case which he had brought with him. In a few minutes he had done all that was necessary, and he was ready to accompany his host to the open, where he had to tend the sheep.

Alec Malcolm seemed much preoccupied at times, while at others he would talk freely. It was in one of those expansive moods that he disclosed his reason for living apart from his fellows.

"It is strange, perhaps, but I am doing it for three or four years in order to raise money," he said. "My father was owner of an estate without a rent-roll, for all the money obtained from the cottages on it is swallowed up in repairs, and so forth. When he died, and I came into the property, I found that there was nothing to live on. My father had kept up a goodly show by living on his capital, and all that was left when his debts were paid was the estate, which I cannot sell, and a large number of mining shares that seem to be worthless, although my father never lost faith in their possibilities. He believed the mines would prosper one day and the shares bring in large dividends and be worth a lot of money.

"It was a blow to me when I learnt the truth, and I pondered on ways and means. I found out that I could easily let the house, for shooting, and so on, and make about £700 a year net out of it. I might have done that and lived quietly abroad, or gone to Australia and set up in business, but sentiment overpowered me. I love the old country, I love Scotland. So I descended to this, and am earning a small living, while I am putting the rent away in the bank. In five years I shall have a fair sum, and then I hope to be able to do something—I can't tell what yet. I like the life, but I fear that I was beginning to degenerate when, nearly a year ago, I was pulled up by—well, by Fate, I suppose!"

He became quiet after that, and Frank Staynes left him alone.

At night Frank turned in first. Malcolm said he was not sleepy and intended to read. An hour passed, and then Staynes saw his host walk stealthily into the room and approach the writing-case.

"It's mean, but I must see that face again!" he muttered. He was unconscious that, in his excitement, he was talking audibly enough for anyone to hear. Moreover, Staynes was asleep! "How came *he* with her portrait? It haunts me!"

Staynes, peering at him, saw him open the case, take out the photo and stare at it in the dim light of a lantern which lighted his face as well as the picture. If Staynes had entertained any doubt that Alec Malcolm loved Bessie Danvers, that glance at the former's face dispelled it.

It seemed to be several minutes before Malcolm took his gaze from the photo, and then it was to throw a swift glance at the hammock. He saw nothing, but, through a slit in the material, Staynes saw him kiss the photo and replace it in the writing-case.

Several days passed, but no allusion was made to the woman whom both men loved. Staynes did not remain awake long after turning in at night, and Malcolm was always the last to retire; but Staynes knew that the photo had been looked at, because its position in the case, arranged by himself, was always a little different in the morning.

Frank noticed a cup that was kept scrupulously clean, but never used. It remained on the top shelf of a cupboard—not that in which Malcolm kept his crockery and food, but one in which he kept some of his best books.

Digitized by Google

"This seems to be a souvenir," he remarked casually. "I should like to have my tea in that!"

He took it down and made ready to place it on the table. Malcolm laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"Not that, Frank! That is sacred to me! Don't laugh! I can't bear it, and I shall punch you if you do!"

The concluding words were uttered fiercely. Frank laughed and replaced the cup with a jesting apology; he had adopted the light tone with the object of soothing Malcolm, but it was wrongly interpreted, and he nearly received the promised punch.

One morning, Staynes went into the bedroom hurriedly, and thus unintentionally precipitated the crisis. Malcolm was standing near the writing-case with the photo in his hand. He was caught in the act, and he coloured to the roots of his hair.

"Hallo!" cried Staynes cheerily, but with a cheeriness that was wholly assumed. "What have you got there?"

For a second the other did not reply; then he spoke with suppressed passion.

"Frank, what is she to you? You have her photo, and such a thing is not permissible unless a man has asked the woman to be his wife! Tell me, do you love her?"

"Miss Danvers is my third or fourth cousin, or first cousin four times removed, or something of that kind," answered Frank, "and she and I are the best of friends—quite brother and sister, in fact. We've known each other since we were children, but she doesn't love me, and wouldn't have the slightest idea of marrying me even if I were a Duke! I'm positive of that!"

So he was, but he had not answered Malcolm's question. His reply was sufficient for his host, however, who placed the photo reverently on the case, and seized Frank's hands in his iron grip.

"Frank," he said brokenly, "forgive me for my caddish act in going to your desk, but I love her! She was here a year ago, and she has brightened my life, although it has been somewhat embittered by the thought that I could never possess her. Then I saw it among your things, that photo, and I have been nearly mad since. If there were only a chance for me!"

"I do not see why there should not be," declared Frank stoutly, despite the pain at his own heart. "Why not come back with me and see her?"

"Have I anything to offer her?" asked Malcolm sorrowfully.

"You have nearly three thousand saved, and a splendid home. She has enough money in her own right."

"I could not accept——"

"And spoil your own happiness and hers?" cried Frank angrily.

"Hers?" repeated Malcolm, catching at the word. "Do you mean——?"

"Come with me and ascertain for yourself, Alec. I cannot answer for a woman's feelings!"

A letter forwarded from home told Frank that Bessie had returned from the Continent, and he and his host left the crofter holding for London. Malcolm took the cup with him, and they broke the journey at Malcolm's estate, where the cup was placed in safety. "She drank from it," was all the explanation vouchsafed by him.

"Do you think she would like this?" asked Malcolm, while looking over the grounds. "She seemed happy enough while she was staying here."

"It was here?" inquired Staynes in astonishment. "I never thought of asking her where she stayed. So you really visited her in your own home?"

"Yes," assented Alec Malcolm with a smile. "I took care that none of the tenants should see me, and all the old servants are gone!"

They went to the metropolis and called at the residence of Mr. Danvers. Staynes sent up his card to Bessie, who came running into the reception room.

"I'm so glad to see—Mr. Alexander!" she gasped, as she caught sight of the other. "I did not know that you were coming with Frank; he only sent up his own card."

"I trust that you are really glad to see Mr. Alexander, Bessie, as you said just now!" said Frank, with a quiet smile. "I am sure he is glad to see you, and I may tell you that his real name is Alexander Malcolm, and I hope you will congratulate him on a circumstance that will enable him to give up the life of a crofter and reside again in his proper home, the place where you lived last year. I see by the papers that certain mines are looking up, and the shares promise to be worth a great deal, but I fancy that my old college friend has not read the good news yet!"

As they glanced at one another, Frank Staynes slipped away to a little study which was always regarded as his room when he was staying with the Danvers. How long he sat there he knew not, but he was aroused by feeling a pair of arms incircle his neck, and the touch of lips on his cheek.

"You're as good as a brother to me, Frank! However can I repay you?" said a well-known voice. "It is all your doing! It is so good of you, and—I am so happy!"

F. Brewster.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE

is offered to all readers of *Short Stories* who care to become readers of *Pearson's Weekly*, and to fulfil the conditions of the competition which starts there shortly.

In order that you may not be too late to take advantage of this liberal offer, you should at once get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* and read all about this huge scheme.

Result of the "Albert Gate Anagram" Competition.

THE Gramophones in the above competition have been awarded as follows:

J. Hargreaves, 8 Houghton Street, Bury.
C. Martin, 1 Park Avenue North, Priory Road, Hornsey, N.
E. Friend, 65 Eastern Road, Romford.
Marshall Gray, care of 63 Withnell Road, South Shore, Blackpool.
Mrs. H. Spice, 59 Southover Street, Brighton.
W. Hindle, 35 Olney Street, Walton, Liverpool.
W. Stevenson, 18 Granville Terrace, Carlisle.
G. Carter, 5 Boston Villas, Oswald Road, Southall.
W. Gunning, London Road, Newbury, Berks.
G. Neill, 4 Elms Road, North Dulwich.

The five special Gramophones which we offered to Scottish readers have been won by the following:

J. A. Downie, care of Hume, 231 Great Junction Street, Leith.
J. Marshall, 25 Paterson Street, Motherwell.
A. White, 3 New Bridge Street, Partick, Glasgow.
Miss Anne Dewar, 7 Henry Street, Edinburgh.
J. Nicol, 10 St. Mirren Street, Paisley.

Digitized by Google

Love Problem No. 3.

WAS IT LOVE?

Can a Man be in Love with Two Women at the Same Time?

DICK FRASER had always been a great trouble to himself. He was so uncomfortably liberal in his views.

He possessed the fatal gift of being able to see both sides of a question with equal clearness, and the consequence was that he never could make up his mind as to which was the right side.

Dick's political persuasions were characterised by such breadth of view that neither he nor his friends had ever been able to determine whether he was a Liberal or a Conservative or even a Liberal-Conservative, and he had never been heard to express a definite *pro* or *con* in any discussion concerning religion, sociology, or any other problem of the day.

Dick himself was the first to admit that it was irritating and uninteresting to have no fervid convictions of any kind, but he was too conscientious to save himself trouble—as men have been known to do—by feigning opinions he did not possess.

"There's so much to be said on both sides," he would declare uneasily, and the unfortunate thing was that with Dick this was no mere phrase of a lazy man who has no wish to argue. Dick, if called upon to do so, could advance forcible arguments in plenty to prove his contention.

Then, one day, Dick made the acquaintance of Nora Maclean, and soon afterwards he discovered, to his own intense astonishment, that there was at least one question to which he was prepared to give a definite answer.

His attitude towards matrimony had hitherto been a consistent part of his general non-committal policy.

Had he been called upon to make deliberate choice between a wife and single blessedness he would have been placed in no small dilemma, since he agreed with his married friends that there was much to be said in favour of bachelorhood, but was equally ready to admit the charms of married life as described by the bachelors of his acquaintance.

It is conceivable that, had he been required to plunge either into bachelorhood or matrimony from some neutral plane, Dick would have been entirely at a loss. The respective advantages and disadvantages of either state would have been sure to confront him with equal force, and he would not have known which to select.

The fact that he had been born a bachelor simplified matters. It seemed to lessen his responsibility, as it were. So long as he continued in his original state, he could hardly be said to have made any choice at all.

And so it happened that Dick Fraser had attained the ripe old age of twenty-seven without committing himself to matrimony.

As an eligible and good-looking male, he had met several women who had tried to please him. They had succeeded, up to a certain point, but not one of them had been able to alter his outlook upon life.

That was before the advent of Nora Maclean, of course.

Nora changed all that. She was a charming girl, made to be loved, and she captured Dick's heart without an effort.

Before Dick had known Nora a week he admitted joyfully to himself that he was head over ears in love, and that matrimony was the only desirable state of man.

For the first time in his life Dick felt no hesitation in expressing an opinion, and he realised this fact with something very like triumph.

Undoubtedly Dick would have proposed to Nora, and probably he would have been accepted, but for an unfortunate accident.

The accident was the existence of Nora's cousin Kate.

Exactly two weeks after he had first met Nora, Dick was introduced to Kate. From that moment his doom was sealed.

Kate was not half so pretty as her cousin, yet Dick felt her fascination the moment he set eyes upon the girl.

He thrilled at the touch of her hand, he listened, enthralled, to the sound of her voice. Her dark, wistful eyes cast a strange spell upon him.

"This is the woman I love," he told himself rapturously, and for one brief moment Nora's image faded from his mind.

For one brief moment only. Then—well—then Nora happened to enter the room, and Dick became a prey to such a conflict of emotions as most men, it is to be hoped, are mercifully spared.

With a sudden shock Dick realised that while adoring Kate, he had not ceased to worship Nora.

Just as Kate's touch had thrilled him, so Nora's thrilled.

Kate's gentle, winsome face bewitched him, so did Nora's glowing cheeks and dancing eyes.

Kate's voice was low and tender, Nora's as clear and silvery as a high-toned bell. The sound of both was music in Dick's ears.

Kate held him captive by her sweet seriousness, Nora by her enchanting gaiety.

When Dick recovered from the first shock of these novel sensations he told himself confidently, and with a laugh at his own expense, that such an impossible state of affairs could not possibly last.

At present, he argued, he probably loved with a superficial passion engendered by purely external charms, in which case it was conceivable that two, or even three, or any number of women could inspire the same emotions.

As yet, he told himself, he had not studied the true inwardness of Kate and Norah. He was unacquainted with their *real* selves, their characters, their mental and moral attributes.

Time would reveal all these, and then surely he would know whether to read his fate in Kate's soft brown eyes or Nora's laughing blue ones!

But as time went on Dick only grew more and more distracted in his mind, for Kate and Nora, on closer acquaintance, appeared as equally lovable as before.

They were as dissimilar in their natures as in their appearance. Both natures, alas, appealed to Dick. Even the discovery that Nora had a temper did not affect his impartiality.

The situation would have been ridiculous had Dick not been so desperately in earnest.

How happy could I be with either
Were t'other dear charmer away.

sang someone in a frivolous mood.

Dick echoed the sentiment in all good faith.

At the end of six months of mingled bliss and agony Dick, in a sudden burst of confidence, was moved to make full confession of his dilemma to his chum and other self, Charlie Bourchier.

Charlie, with great simpleness and directness, advised Dick not to be a fool. Then, perceiving that this advice made little impression, he proceeded to prove, to his own complete satisfaction, that Dick was not in love at all.

Digitized by Google

"Love, my dear fellow," he remarked placidly, "is an all-absorbing passion for *one woman*. The very definition of love makes your case impossible."

"But how do you know that this narrow definition of love is right?" demanded Dick. "My own experience shows me that it is not."

Charlie tried another tack.

"Perhaps you're really in love with only one of them all the time without knowing it," he said. "Tell me, doesn't either of them ever engross your thoughts in preference to the other?"

"Of course, when one only is near me, I can give no thought to the other."

"But when neither happens to be there, what then?"

"Then I think of both, all the time."

"Supposing both were in danger of their lives at the same moment, which one would you try to save?" persisted Charlie.

Dick gave a groan.

"It's no good, old man," he said wearily. "I've tried all that. I've asked myself all the questions you're going to ask dozens of times. About saving their lives, for instance—I couldn't answer that. I only know that both their lives are equally precious to me. I've analysed my own sensations till I thought I should go mad, and always with the same result. I'm abnormal, I suppose, and there's an end of it."

"It's the outcome of your general broadmindedness, Dick. You never could make up your mind to reject one side of a question in favour of the other. But I scarcely thought you would carry your principles into your love-making."

"I can't help it, I wish to Heaven I could!"

"Well, you can't marry them both, you know," said Charlie mildly. "By the way," he added, "do you happen to know whether your affection is reciprocated?"

"How do I know till I ask them? And how can I ask them both?"

"Well, one generally has an inkling on the subject. Now, supposing one of them liked you and the other didn't, wouldn't that solve the difficulty? It has been known to do so in similar cases."

"Never in a case like mine!" cried Dick. "I know what you are thinking of. There are plenty of men who are mildly attracted by any number of women and who go and marry the most convenient one. But my case is different. You forget that. *I* adore where they only admire. It would be impossible for me to marry one, for I know that I should continue to worship the other."

"Of course," remarked Charlie thoughtfully, "there's always the possibility of neither of them caring for you."

"Ye—es," replied Dick.

Charlie detected the obvious insincerity.

"I always thought you were a man of honour," he said.

"What do you mean?" asked Dick uneasily.

"Unless I am very much mistaken you are making love to two trusting women."

"That's not true. Nothing could be more—more—er—circumspect that my behaviour."

"Nonsense. You may flatter yourself you're circumspect. By your own showing you're in love and, to a certain extent, you're bound to give yourself away to the objects of your affection. Of course, each of them is sure to imagine *she* is the only one. If she cares for you, you are raising hopes which you may never be able to fulfil. As a man of honour and a gentleman there is only one course open to you."

"And what is that?"

"You must go away. You must not attempt to see either of these girls again until you have definitely decided which of them you want to make your wife."

And Dick who, to tell the truth, felt guiltier than he cared to confess, lost no time in taking his friend's advice.

"My belief is," said Charlie to himself, "Dick's not a bit different from other men. It's all imagination. He's not in love at all. When a man's really in love there's only one woman in the world for him. When Dick meets *the* woman he'll find out his mistake. Time will show."

But time, strangely enough, has done nothing of the kind. Though Nora and Kate Maclean were led to the altar years ago, Dick Fraser is a bachelor still. In his heart of hearts he is convinced that there will always be two women in the world for him.

Grete Hahn.

MOONLIGHT - - - - REFLECTIONS.

"MAY I have the pleasure of a dance?"

The girl addressed turned sharply away from the group of black-coated youths amongst whom she had been endeavouring to divide her favours impartially.

"Mr. Maxwell," she exclaimed, the colour leaving her cheeks.

The man smiled.

"You have not forgotten me then?" he said, taking her much defaced programme. "Which may I have, there are not many left to choose from."

"The tenth, thirteenth and fifteenth are still unappropriated, you may have any of them."

"Or all would be better still. It is a long time since I have seen you, and many things must have happened since. Be generous, and for the sake of old times let me have all three."

"It is against my principles, but still—as you say—it is a long time since we met, so—if you *really* wish it, you may have them."

"Thank you," he said, and scribbled his initials against the dances.

* * *

The strains of a dreamy waltz were filling the big ball-room when Guy Maxwell came to claim his partner. It was the beginning of the winter season in southern California, and the Hotel del Coronadao was filled to overflowing with guests escaping from the cold eastern winter. The dance was merely the ordinary Saturday evening one, but the huge ball-room, with its brilliant lights and floral decorations had the appearance of some large function.

Handsome women in gorgeous New York and Paris gowns, strolled through the beautiful rooms. Belles from Washington and Baltimore vied with Californian girls from the sleepy little town across the bay, while outside the deep thunderous boom of the Pacific, whose waves rolled up almost to the panelled walls of the ball-room, mingled with the wail of the violins.

Neither Maxwell nor his partner spoke, and before the music ceased he stopped rather abruptly, and saying, "Shall we go outside?" led her through the door on to the glass verandah which runs the whole length of the hotel on the side fronting the sea. They strolled to the end and then stopped. He threw up one of the large windows, and they stood side by side, and in silence which neither seemed to care to be the first to break, gazed at the wonderful scene before them.

And in truth it was a scene to have made the most thoughtless pause and think. The waves rolled up and broke a few

Digitized by Google

feet below them. A full moon shed its brilliant, pure, cold light on the broad expanse of the mighty ocean; to the right the dark outline of Point Loma showed up faintly in and to the left as far as the eye could see a continuous line of white breakers formed a semi-circle to the cliffs of Mexico.

The thoughts of both the watchers were busy with the past. Two years before Sybil Delaunay, then in the zenith of her youth, and tasting the first draughts of success in the art of sculpture, to which she determined to devote her life, refused to marry the man who stood beside her, and sent him away, vowing that no man should ever find part in her life, nor interfere between her and the work she loved. Disappointed and heartsick Maxwell had thrown up his profession in which he was already being spoken of as a rising surgeon, and disappeared from Miss Delaunay's world. From that day to this she had never heard anything of him until he appeared to-night, at this hotel in the Far West, to which she had come for the winter with a party of friends. She had learnt much of herself since the time when he had left her, and had begun to realise that art alone cannot fill the heart of a woman, nor that a successful career was all that she required to make her happy.

To the man who watched her she seemed in the moonlight almost unearthly in her beauty. Not the faintest breeze stirred the ripples of her golden hair. Every sequin on her black gown caught the reflection of the moon, until her slight form seemed to be sheathed in silver.

A sudden shudder on his part broke the spell that held them, and she turned suddenly towards him.

"It is strange that we should meet like this," he said, striving to keep the passionate longing out of his voice. "When we last danced together—do you remember?"

"I remember everything," she answered softly. "It is two years ago now, isn't it?"

"Two years," he repeated, "and to me it seems a lifetime." Then in a different tone. "Are you staying here long?"

"All the winter, I think. They say I must not stay in New York, that I need sunshine."

"You are not ill?" he said sharply.

She smiled. "No, not ill, but I might be if I stayed longer in a cold climate."

"And your work, will you keep that up here? You will not give that up, of course?" he asked, a trace of bitterness creeping into the question.

"For the present, yes, but I hope to go back again to it. It is all I have to live for now, I am quite alone since my father died, and you know I never cared for society."

"I think it was all you ever lived for," he said roughly; "the ruin of a man's life meant nothing to you while you could devote yourself to your art."

She shrank a little from him and her face grew still whiter in the moonlight.

"I suppose you have a right to say that—I do not know—perhaps I was selfish in those days—but I was very young and success when it first comes is sweet to everyone—and how was I to know that you cared any more for me than for any other friend, I did not realise where you were drifting, and so I suppose, you grew to hope for what I had never thought of—then."

"How was I to know that you were so different from all the rest of your sex," he said bitterly, "the rest of the world knew if you did not, and women are not generally so blind in those matters. What does a man usually mean when he follows a woman like a lapdog? You let me wait on you, send you flowers, escort you everywhere—allowed me to go on in a fool's paradise, and then, when you had grown into my life and wound yourself round my heart until life without you seemed impossible, till your face haunted me day and night and my work was dedicated to you and you only, you told me in your calm, sweet way that you did not care for me except as as friend, that you intended to devote your life to art, and that no *man* would ever take its place. God! what are you women made of," he continued, passion getting the mastery of him at last, "you have no more feeling than one of the statues you thought so much of, no more idea of the purgatory you send a man to than those same blocks of marble to which you devoted yourself!"

Sybil Delaunay shivered a little and her figure lost its haughty alertness.

"I — I hoped you had forgotten," she said tremulously.

He laughed bitterly.

"Did you come out here, then?" she asked, trying to keep her voice steady. "I heard you had left New York, but no one seemed to know where you had gone."

"Yes, I left New York, gave up my profession, and came here, as far away as I could get, my one desire being to escape from anything and everything that reminded me of you."

"You live here then?"

"Near here—in the mountains—I have a ranch."

Again a dead silence. He gazed fixedly at the scene before him not trusting himself to look at her face. She did not know that his hands were clenched till the nails cut into the flesh to keep himself from seizing her in his arms and holding her for ever. He did not see that her eyes were full of tears, or notice the trembling of her slight figure.

"You are happy now—you have forgotten," she almost whispered.

"I thought so until to-night. But when I saw you I knew that it was hopeless, that all the flight, the striving to keep back the memories and put you out of my life were in vain. You are and always will be, the one woman in the world for me. I am a fool to tell you I suppose, but what does it matter. I was a fool all through, a blind fool and I have no one but myself to blame. Don't let it worry you, I have managed to go on, I have not shot myself, nor taken to drink nor any of the hundred and one things that a man can do to try to help him to forget."

"Don't you think," she said, a new tone in her voice, and speaking very slowly and softly, "that—if you had waited a little—had not been in such a hurry to get away—it might have been better—women do not always know their own minds, you know."

Her voice was so low that he had to bend down to hear, and then he saw her face, and a light flashed into his own.

He put his hands on her shoulders and turning her round, forced her to meet his eyes.

"Do you mean it—Sybil—oh, my darling, don't mislead me again, don't say it out of pity—or——"

For answer she leant forward and kissed him on the forehead.

Still he held her away from him and continued in the same eager, passionate voice.

"You know what you are doing—you will come to me, live as a rancher's wife in the mountains, give up society, and your work that was so much to you?"

He waited breathlessly for her answer.

She raised her head and through her tears she whispered

"For better or for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health until——"

She got no further for his arms were round her and her face was hidden on his shoulder.

The band still played, and the dancers whirled as they had done half an hour ago. Miss Delaunay's discarded partners searched anxiously for her, and finally and very wisely gave up the search and consoled themselves with less evasive attractions, the moon still shone brightly as ever, and the waves rolled up and broke with their steady monotonous sound, but for the two people standing at the window the world had changed.

Beatrice M. Studdy.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

CRAWLEY DRUMMOND. Lady Peggy's old friend and adviser.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DUCHESS OF EASTACRES. His mother.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister, who visits Cairo.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. A celebrated French artist in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman and friend of Lady Peggy's.

At Midnight in the Studio.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ'S studio was an annexe of a large old house dating from the picturesque period of Paris, when gallants in velvet doublet and silk hose were beruffled and befrilled as any lady of fashion. The studio was of quite modern date; it had been the workshop of a famous sculptor. Alphonse had enlarged and decorated it almost out of recognition.

The studio opened into a large gymnasium, fitted with all the newest athletic appliances and lit by electric light.

From the gymnasium a door led into the garden, otherwise there was no entrance save through the studio.

It was in this gymnasium that I presumed the Duke and Hervé were about to fight. Belinda gave me a somewhat incoherent account of what had happened. I gathered, however, that Paul de Sonnaz's valet had told my maid, Felicité, that the artist had had words with the Duke that morning, and was going to fight that same night.

Felicité had, of course, imparted the information to Belinda, who in turn inflicted it on me. If Eastacres was going to fight the man, he might, I thought, have managed to keep the affair quiet. It was most disturbing to be called out at twelve o'clock at night to prevent two men flying at each other's throats.

When we arrived at the Rue Royale we found the house in darkness. Repeated rings at the bell and knocks at the door elicited no response. It being evident that there was no admittance that way, we went round the corner, down a side street, to a little door in the wall which opened on a covered passage leading to the studio. This door was reserved for the use of artists' models and Hervé's intimates.

A loud and clanging bell rang as I turned the handle. At the sound, the door of the studio at the end of the passage was cautiously drawn back. We hastened down the passage, and found ourselves confronted by Jean Lefroi—Hervé's valet—at the end.

I gave him no time to question or deliberate, but, with a gesture of command, swept past him, Belinda following close behind.

"Where is your master?" I asked imperatively.

"He is engaged, madam, much, much engaged."

The man's eyes glanced across the room as he spoke. I took the hint, and walked rapidly to the door that led into the gymnasium.

"Open," I called sharply, rapping at the panels, "open at once."

The walls were thick, otherwise I might have heard the substance of the parley that ensued. As it was I only caught a word or two in Hervé's voice.

"I can see no one—make excuse."

The door swiftly opened, was as rapidly shut, and the key turned once more in the lock. Paul de Sonnaz stood before me, a look of surprise on his face. He quickly recovered himself, and with a low bow observed:

"Hervé will be desolated not to see you, Lady Peggy. He——"

"Enough, enough," I interrupted hastily. "Tell me, have they fought, or is it yet to come?"

His face grew anxious, almost perturbed.

"It is useless to try to deceive me, Paul," I cried. "I know as well as you that Hervé and Eastacres fight a duel to-night."

"Then, my dear lady, permit me to ask why you are here?"

For answer I moved aside and pointed to Belinda!

White as death, her eyes full of fear, her mouth set in curves of suspense, her apppearance was an ample reply.

"If I had not come, Belinda would have done so alone," I observed, "and of two evils I chose the lesser. Now, perhaps, you will answer my question. Is Hervé going to fight the Duke?"

Paul made me a sign in the affirmative. Then with a smile bowed over Belinda's hand.

"My dear Lady Peggy," he said softly, "Hervé and the Duke are at this present moment on the best of terms."

"Then it is not true there is to be a duel to-night?" Belinda's blue eyes searched him through and through.

Paul shrugged his shoulders. "Surely not, mademoiselle; consider, is this the time for duels? It is an hour when all just people seek repose. Shall I not take you to your carriage?"

Belinda flushed, threw up her head and turned indignantly on Paul.

"You play with me," she said. "I am not a child to be deceived by foolish excuses, meaningless words. You told me you were my friend."

"To the death, mademoiselle," replied Paul gently.

"And yet, when I ask you a simple question, the answer to

Digitized by Google

which means much to me, you quibble, jest, *grimace*—oh, I have no faith in you."

Paul sighed, and looked romantic, but remained inflexible.

"If you only knew how anxious, how cruelly anxious I am," she said, with a suspicious tremor in her voice. "M. Hervé has been so good, so kind to me, that the thought of the danger he is in, or"—she paused—"will be in, is terrible. Ah! monsieur, please tell me what is happening in that other room"—she pointed eloquently to the gymnasium.

Then, clasping her hands about his arm, she gazed up at him with great, appealing eyes.

De Sonnaz was not proof against her pleading.

He flushed and cast a look at me, and then without any more ado shamelessly succumbed.

"I will tell you everything," he said, "if you will promise me to be discreet."

Belinda nodded.

"I'm not quite a fool," she remarked; "I'm not likely to make a scene, or any nonsense of that kind."

"Very good, I shall rely upon your word. There was a disagreement this morning between Alphonse and the Duke in the Bois."

"About me?" interposed Belinda. "I was sure of it."

De Sonnaz shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not at liberty to disclose the matter upon which they disagreed," he said drily. "Alphonse considered himself insulted, and sent a challenge to the Duke, who has accepted it. They fight to-night, the weapons, pistols, the place"—he motioned to the gymnasium—"the hour, within five minutes."

"But M. Hervé cannot shoot a bit," said Belinda; "he told me so when I challenged him to pistol practice at the Baronne's only last week. It will be murder, *murder!*" she repeated. "Eastacres can snuff out a candle with a pistol shot at thirty paces." She flashed a look of indignation towards the room. "Where is this noble English gentleman?"

"The Duke has not yet arrived," said Paul, "he and his second, Colonel Langton, will be here within the next few minutes." He looked at his watch. It was close on one o'clock.

"I shall go to him," said Belinda. "I will tell him what I and every other decent person will say and think of the man who fights a duel with an opponent who can no more shoot than—than Lady Peggy," she cried scornfully.

"Belinda," I interrupted, "you will do nothing of the kind."

"Do you think I can stay here and let a man be murdered in cold blood?" she said, crimson with passion.

"I must remind you of your promise, mademoiselle. You gave me your word to act with discretion. What you propose to do would bring everlasting disgrace upon Hervé. He challenged the Duke, who only acted as a man of honour in accepting the challenge. If you succeed in preventing the duel Alphonse will be covered with ridicule, and he will be accused of sheltering himself behind a woman. Your interference would merely delay matters. We should wait till to-morrow, that is all, and choose a quiet spot in the Bois."

"What can I do?" asked the girl despairingly.

"Return to my aunt's," he said gravely, "and——" he paused, "offer prayers for a brave man's life."

"Are you the Duke's second?" she asked.

"No, mademoiselle, the Duke is my guest; etiquette would forbid it. I am to be present as the friend of both, and now," he took her hand gently in his, "now you will return?"

She hesitated, and then, with an air of resolution, shook her head.

"No," she said firmly, "I shall remain here, not to create a disturbance or to make a scene, but to see fair play. I am resolved, monsieur; here I remain until the end."

At that moment came a knocking at the door of the gymnasium.

"It is the Duke," cried Paul. "I must go," then, stooping towards me, whispered, "You must get her away somehow."

"Is Alphonse likely to be hurt?" I asked.

Paul nodded, and passed into the gymnasium, locking the door behind him.

I looked towards Belinda, who had sunk back into a chair and wondered how I should persuade her to hear reason. I may explain that a close study of Belinda's character had convinced me of the impossibility of leading her in the way she did not wish to go. The only thing to do was to get her there without her knowledge! It was a mad and preposterous thing to have come to the studio on such an errand, and nothing but the certainty that if not with me, she would have started off without me, had induced me to accompany Belinda.

It now remained to take her back to the Hotel D'Arteuil.

"Now, my dear," I said with decision, "we will go to our carriage."

To my surprise she did not make the least demur, but rose and followed me quietly through the door, down the covered passage to the entrance in the wall, and out into the street.

The carriage was waiting for us round the corner of the Rue Royale. Belinda seized my arm and impetuously urged me towards it. Just as we passed the front of the house, I felt her fingers tighten on my arm, and before I had time to remonstrate or resist she had whirled me through the open gates.

"I'm going round to the back," she said, "to see if we can't get into the gymnasium from the garden. It's no use telling me not to, Lady Peggy; I'm sorry to go against what you say, but nothing will keep me back."

"You foolish girl," I cried angrily. "Don't you see what you are doing? You are proclaiming your infatuation for Hervé from the house-tops. It will create a positive scandal."

She dropped my arm and faced me in the darkness.

"You said that once before," she answered quietly. "That time I believed you and did as you asked me; this time I shall judge for myself—I shall go on."

"Do you want the whole world to know you are in love with Hervé?" I sneered. "You transfer your affections very quickly; a little while ago it was David Carr you adored, now——"

"It is still David and always will be," she said passionately. "I have no love for M. Hervé of that sort, but I have a great friendship, affection, if you like, and will not go back on him. David would be the first person to blame me if I did. In my class we don't forsake our friends when they are in danger and difficulty."

She spoke with a force and dignity which I could not contest. Her will was set, I could not turn her purpose, and all I could hope to do would be to guide it.

Together we crept round to the back of the gymnasium and softly tried the door that opened on the garden.

It was fast locked!

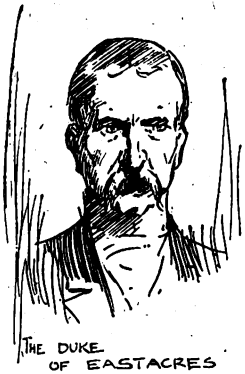
"This way," said Belinda quickly. "We can see what is going on through the window!"

Borne up by her desperate energy, I took my station by her outside the window, some three feet from the ground, and cautiously peered through the glass. The window was slightly open, we could see and hear what was taking place.

In the brilliant, searching light of the electric lamps the room was clear as daylight, but our faces and figures were not discernible, so dark was the night, so heavy the shadows in the garden.

There were six men present, Hervé and the Duke, their seconds, M. de Blouet, a noted duellist, and Colonel Langton, Paul de Sonnaz, and a dark, keen-faced man whom I took to be a doctor.

Breathless we saw the seconds load the pistols, measure the distance between the combatants, saw them thrust the swords into the oak floor to mark each man's position, the physician busy himself with his affairs, then, with fast-beating hearts we saw De Sonnaz advance.



THE DUKE OF EASTACRES

Digitized by Google

"Is there no hope of a compromise, messieurs?" he said, glancing from Hervé to the Duke.

"None," answered the two men simultaneously, and Paul retired.

"As the challenged in the duel, I claim the right to insist on three rounds," said Eastacres, "provided"—he gave a sneering laugh—"we are both here to fight them out."

De Blouet, Hervé's second, demurred, but the painter hastily interrupted.

"I agree," he said. "Three rounds, or thirty, if you will. Come, let us begin."

The pistols were then presented. Hervé took his carelessly, with a shrug of the shoulders; the Duke took his with the right hand and dropped it softly into his left, dropped it as carefully yet familiarly as only a man can who has known the intimate use of it for years.

Paul de Sonnaz stepped forward.

"Take your places, messieurs," he said gravely; the seconds fell back and the Duke of Eastacres and Alphonse Hervé faced each other. Then—

"I shall have the honour of counting ten," said Paul, "during which time you are required to fire or not at all."

Eastacres, who stood five paces at the back of his sword, remained quite still, his pistol in his left hand.

"One—two—three!"

Hervé sprang forward, aimed carelessly and wildly, his shot flew over the Duke's head and crashed into the oaken panelling. Simultaneously Eastacres, dropping the pistol into his right hand, sent a shot through his adversary's shoulder.

Hervé staggered, De Blouet caught him in his arms, and the physician hastily attended to him. Down the white shirt front crept a thin crimson stream, a stream of blood.

"You are hurt, my friend," said Paul de Sonnaz.

"But little!" The painter straightened himself, and glanced proudly at the Duke.

"If monsieur is recovered," said Eastacres, "we will proceed to the second round."

At this there was a protest from De Blouet, a protest in which De Sonnaz joined.

"If M. Hervé will make an apology to me for his insolence to me this morning, and will undertake to cease annoying a certain lady with his unwelcome attentions, I am prepared to forego the last two rounds," the Duke said.

Hervé laughed scornfully.

"To apologise to you," he said, "would be an infamy to which death is a trifle. Proceed—we will fight to the end!"

Once again the pistols were loaded, once again the seconds fell back, the combatants faced each other.

Belinda, who up to now had kept perfectly quiet, showed signs of agitation.

"Do you think," she said, seizing me in a firm grip, "do you think the Duke means to *kill* Hervé?"

"Not for an instant," I replied; "he will disable him."

"I will let them fight this round," she said between her teeth, "in the hope that Alphonse may hurt him, after——" She paused, Eastacres was speaking.

"Monsieur, I warn you," he said calmly, "that in the next round I shall smash your left hand. In the third"—he paused—"your right. Consider, is not your reputation as a painter worth an apology and a promise?"

It is impossible to describe the insolence, the contempt of the speech. He spoke to Hervé as a man speaks to his slave or to his dog. De Blouet went scarlet, Langton, the Duke's own second, interposed.

"You are here to fight, not to talk, Eastacres," he said, sternly; "go on with the business—if you are resolved," and he gave a gesture of repugnance.

Again the shots rang out upon the night. Hervé's left hand hung limp and useless at his side; from the Duke's arm trickled a streak of blood.

"Thank Heaven for it," cried Belinda.

"A mere scratch," remarked the Duke, handing his handkerchief to Langton.

"Well, M. Hervé," he asked sneering, "will you apologise *now?*"

"Never!" was the answer—"*never!*"

Then the Duke raised his pistol significantly.

"Say farewell to your art, monsieur. At present you cannot hold a palette, in a second you will never again finger a brush." He leant forward, his face awful with hate, his cold eyes gleaming like points of steel.

Hervé, white to the lips with pain and loss of blood, rallied at the insult.

"If I lose my hands," he answered, "I shall still have my tongue, my brain, my energy, my force of will, and all and every one of these shall be employed against you, coward, liar, scoundrel!" He flung out the words like blows, then reeling, leant against De Blouet.

"Make haste," he murmured, pointing to the pistols—"make haste, reload—I faint—I die—almost."

For a moment De Blouet hesitated to allow the last round to be fought; it was like countenancing a crime. The Duke would keep his word, Hervé would lose his hand—he would be infinitely poorer by the loss. Never to paint again, never to fix in glowing colours on a cold, grey canvas, the glory of the sunset, the blue of God's Heaven, the flower-like beauty of a woman's face.

"The pistol," gasped Hervé; once again his second, pale as death, loaded and handed it to him.

"One!" said De Sonnaz, in a low hoarse voice. The Duke and Hervé remained motionless.

"Two!" each raised their pistol.

"Three!" The Duke covered Hervé's right hand, the hand that, famous throughout the world, might the next moment for ever lose its cunning.

"Four!" On the instant Belinda stooping caught up a stone from off the garden path, and sent it whizzing through the window. The crash of the falling glass caused all the men to start. Even as Eastacres pressed the trigger, the pistol dropped to the floor—exploding as it fell.

Belinda followed quickly on her missile, and flinging up the window, she vaulted lightly over the sill into the room.

It was a dramatic scene. The huge room blazing with light, against which the black coats of the men looked even darker. The smoking pistols, the blood-stained floor, the look of apprehension and alarm upon the faces of all present as Belinda, drawn to her full height, her blue eyes flaming, her cheeks flushed, stood like a goddess of vengeance before them!

"Coward!" she said, pointing to the Duke. "Coward! If I were but a man I'd shoot you to the heart for shame of the manhood you've disgraced! Do you suppose I don't know *why* he challenged you?" she asked, her young voice ringing with scorn. "You spoke of me with insult, and he—took up my cause."

Then wheeling swiftly round, she pointed to Hervé, supported by De Sonnaz and the doctor.

"If he dies," she said, "I will not rest till you are punished."

"Your concern for M. Hervé is astonishing," said the Duke. "I trust he will prove grateful for your solicitude."

Belinda paid no heed to this remark, but, crossing to Hervé, bent over him, clasping his hand—the hand that she had saved. As she knelt there, the tears started to her eyes, but there was never a tremor in her voice, when next she spoke.

"Messieurs," she said proudly, "perhaps you think that I should not be here? It seems strange to you that a girl like me should interfere in a scene like this. I will tell you why I came."

Her French was of the grammar-book, prim and precise, but her voice was sweet and thrilling, and touched the heart of every Frenchman present.

"I came, messieurs, because"—she paused—"M. Hervé is my friend," she said, "and the friend of the man I love!"

Digitized by Google

I gasped, the men stared, Hervé smiled.

Belinda had done this mad, most audacious thing from *friendship*—not love!

"Happy is the man with such a friend," said De Sonnaz gravely. There was a little murmur of applause.

The doctor, unlike the rest of the men, thinking more of his patient than Belinda, noticed a change in Hervé's face.

In an instant the room was cleared, Paul and De Blouet alone remaining. The rest of us were shut in the studio. Langton, feeling the awkwardness of the situation, bowed to me, gave a frigid salutation to Eastacres, and, with a profound obeisance to Belinda, departed. Hoping the Duke would follow his example, I advanced to bid him "good-night."

"I am not going just at present," he said quickly. "I have first to speak to Miss North. Listen!"—he came close to Belinda, and before she realised what he was about to do, clasped her two wrists in his strong, cruel-looking hands. "No," as she tried to shake herself free, "I don't mean to release you, till you've heard what I have to say. You can't get away by yourself, if you call for help you'll frighten your friend," he sneered evilly, "and Lady Peggy has too much sense to interfere. I am your master now as I shall be always. I mean to marry you, I *shall* marry you. The longer the delay the more you will suffer. You shall belong to me, and to no other man. You shall have no friends, no lovers, no admirers—I will fight them one by one. After this I shall not wound but kill. Henceforth if you so much as smile on any man but me you sign his death-warrant. You hear me?"

"Yes, and regard you as little as the wind; I shall never marry you; I would rather die."

"Even so, you will be my wife." His fingers tightened on her wrists, his face set in a sneering smile, bent over her. He was hurting her cruelly, horribly, as I could see.

"Eastacres, stop," I cried, and laid my hand upon his arm. He paid no heed to me, but gripped her soft, slim wrists until her face grew livid with the pain. I tried to tear his hands away. I even beat them with my own, I might as well have dashed myself against a wall.

At last, with a sneering laugh, he let her go. She staggered and would have fallen, had I not caught her in my arms.

"Whenever you look at those little soft white hands, you will remember what I say," he added; "you will be my wife. You cannot help yourself, and no man will dare to help you. Who would risk crossing me after to-night?" and he glanced towards the room where Hervé lay—grievously hurt.

Even as he was speaking the studio door opened and a man walked quickly into the room.

"I dare!" he said, and calmly faced the Duke. "I—Stanley Forbes!" and the Duke fell back.

(Another powerful instalment will appear next week. I shall be very glad to have the candid opinions of readers regarding this series. Such opinions are of great value in deciding whether the matter I am giving you is appreciated or not.—Ed 'S.S.")

£50 FROM ONE READER TO THE REST.

A reader of SHORT STORIES won a prize of £10 in 1894 and with the help of this money emigrated to America, making a fortune out of the cycle boom of 1897 and 1898. He recently wrote a letter, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Dayton," to the Editor of SHORT STORIES, enclosing dollar bills to the value of £50, and asking that this money may be offered as prizes in five sums of £10 each.

The Editor has given the matter very careful consideration, and has arrived at the conclusion that, as his anonymous correspondent was in great want when he won his prize, the most satisfactory manner of distributing his gift of £50 would be to offer it to those who can give me the best reason for receiving it.

You may be wanting to emigrate to one of our Colonies. You may want £10 to buy something you have needed for a long time. You may want to clear off some small debts that have been worrying you. Or you may want to trade with the £10 and, like "Dayton," turn it into a fortune.

Whatever your reason for wanting it may be, write it down in the space below, and send it to "The Competition Editor of SHORT STORIES," Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "Dayton 2."

Readers may send as many reasons as they like, provided each is written on a separate coupon. Another coupon will appear next week. The Editor's decision is final, and competitors may enter only on this understanding.

CUT OFF THE COUPON HERE.

My reason for wanting £10 is.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name.....**Address**.....

Digitized by Google

The Chronicles o' Glencrackit.

BY G. VINCENT-HOLYTOWN.

No. 1.—MacTaggart's "First-Fit."

Amongst the quaint customs peculiar to Scotland, the genial practice of first-footing one's neighbours on the birth of the New Year is too well-known to need much explanation.

Suffice it to say that the fortunes of each household during the ensuing twelve months depend absolutely upon the manner of person who first crosses the threshold (from the outside) after the midnight hour has tolled the departure of the old year.

With the family fortunes hanging upon the fateful visitor, the nature of that visitor's coming is a matter of anxiety for all concerned. In many cases the fortune-bringer is carefully arranged for beforehand, for there are certain things a good first-foot must—and must not—be.

The first-foot must, above all things, be a man. No more disastrous start could be made for the year than the first crossing of the threshold by a woman. The first-foot should also be tall and dark, strong rather than handsome, and of military bearing, with well-shod feet turned out at the proper angle, for hen-toed men are an abomination. He must not squint, nor come empty-handed, for the prosperity of the house depends upon his bringing a gift, no matter how trivial, for his hosts.

* * * * *

The Old Year had barely an hour to live, and Sandy MacTaggart was seated chatting with his wife and daughter by the side of a cheerful fire, waiting to see the New Year in.

Suddenly he remembered that he had not arranged for an acceptable first-foot, and with a horror-stricken expression, he jumped from his chair.

"Weel, I declare," he exclaimed, "if I hadna clean forgotten tae tryst a guid first-fit till this very meenit. I maun awa' tae Glencrackit and bespeak Jimmie Niven or some ither proper man at once."

Nancy MacTaggart and her mother exchanged glances full of meaning, and then Mrs. MacTaggart spoke:

"Sit ye doon, guid man, and let come wha likes; it's far luckier tae ha'e your first-fit veesit ye kin' o' spontaneous——"

"Wumman," replied MacTaggart sternly, "would ye leave sic an important item o' oor destiny tae a mere chance, tae the whim o' a wanderin' neighbour, tae the caprice o' a casual tramp——"

"Saunders MacTaggart," interposed his wife reproachfully. "I wonder at ye, an Elder o' the Kirk, letting your superstetion get the better o' your judgment."

"Jean MacRae," retorted Sandy (who, when on his dignity with his wife, invariably called her by her maiden name), "Jean MacRae, o' all men breathin', I am the least superstetious, but on questions o' cause and effect I can be logical, which nae wumman could ever be. What I'm determined tae arrange, in spite o' ye, is that nae hen-taed, squint-e'ed, decrepit, empty-handed albino shatters my peace o' mind for the comin' year. And yet ye would ha'e me sit doon and let the wind blaw in what it likes. Ay, it's weel for ye all that Saunders MacTaggart can be loyal tae his convictions and his duty."

With this oracular utterance, MacTaggart strode to the door.

His pretty daughter, Nancy, hesitated a moment, and then flew to his side, with the words:

"Father, you needn't worry yourself about it. It's too bad to let you go down to the village this bitter night when I feel sure—that is, mother and I think—in fact, we are certain—oh, mother, why don't you tell him?"

She broke off in flushed confusion and MacTaggart looked from his daughter to his wife in blank amazement.

"What's the lass ravin' aboot?" he queried in bewilderment.

Mrs. MacTaggart set her lips hard, for a pitched battle of words was at hand, and she knew it. She had already fought a preliminary engagement with Nancy, had succumbed, and was now loyally ranged on her daughter's side. She was prepared, indeed, to bear the brunt of the fighting.

"She's no ravin'," she said sharply, "she's tellin' ye that there's sure tae be a proper first-fit without you botherin' yoursel' aboot him."

"Hoo dae ye ken?" inquired MacTaggart, in tones of cold suspicion.

"Because we've arranged for him," was his wife's decisive reply.

Saunders MacTaggart perceived at this juncture the imminence of some sort of an attack by the allied forces of his wife and daughter, and like a wise general he immediately seized all available strategic points.

"I thocht ye said it was far luckier tae ha'e your first-fit vee-sit ye' kin' o' spontaneous. Are ye sure ye kent the meaning o' the word when ye used it?"

Saunders MacTaggart had addressed these words to his wife with studied and withering deliberation, but he was promptly countered by his daughter.

"Yes, father, she meant what she said. Our first-foot is coming of his own suggestion. Indeed, he asked our permission to come. One volunteer is worth ten pressed men, so we arranged it beforehand."

The argument was unanswerable, and therefore unsatisfactory to Mr. MacTaggart.

"Hoo am I tae ken if he's a fit and proper man?" he demanded, with a searching look at his daughter.

Realising that there was a sweetheart in the case, he switched on another current of meaning through his next words. "Ye're far o'er young tae be thinkin' o' lads yet, my lassie, and I maun hold your mother responsible for allowing any sic developments tae transpire without my knowledge and consent."

He turned to note the effect of his peroration on Mrs. MacTaggart. No particular effect being visible and no reply forthcoming, he added grandly:

"Dae ye hear those words, Jean MacRae?"

"I do, Saunders MacTaggart, they're simply magneeficent. Are ye sure ye kent the meaning o' them when ye used them?"

"Oh, mother dear, don't quarrel, please," intervened Nancy, viewing with some anxiety her mother's tendency to forget, in the heat of a general engagement, the real issue at stake. "Tell father who is coming, he has a right to know."

Matters might have made much better progress if Nancy had made the dreaded revelation herself. Saunders MacTaggart was easily led by his daughter, and indeed by his wife too, only his wife liked to drive, and Saunders MacTaggart would not be driven.

As it was he braced himself up for resistance under any circumstances.

Digitized by Google

In response to Nancy's request, Mrs. MacTaggart snapped out the bald announcement :

"Young Angus Colquhoun."

Saunders MacTaggart raised his hands in speechless horror. His dramatic silence (whether real or affected) had considerable effect on his wife, for she continued hurriedly, and almost apologetically :

"He's after oor Nance, and he's a decent enough chap. Ye needna think that because auld Angus Colquhoun and yoursel' canna agree, the young generation are goin' tae perpetuate your private quarrels."

Here Saunders MacTaggart found his voice, and used it with no uncertain sound.

"Jean MacRae," he thundered, "daur ye stand there and disgrace the prood name I consented tae share wi' ye twenty-five years syne? Dae ye even suggest the possibeelity o'. an alliance between a MacTaggart o' Tullywhoop and a Colquhoun o' Aberquiech? For four hunder' years there's been an undying feud between the MacTaggarts and the Colquhouns, and far be it frae me and auld Angus Colquhoun tae profane oor ancestral enmity wi' the alliance ye seem tae contemplate wi' sic callous complacency. Avaunt, ye female apostates, begone," he bellowed, as his wife and daughter clung to an arm each, and endeavoured to calm the choler of his words, "nae female blandishments ha'e power tae destroy within me the speerit o' my forefathers."

Here he paused for words and his wife got a chance.

"Saunders MacTaggart, ye just rave o'er naething."

"What, Jean MacRae, dae ye call half-an-acre o' arable land naething? Does the law coont it naething? Have we no' already contested seeven law suits tae decide whether it shall come intae the richtful possession o' the MacTaggarts, or remain in the wrongous clutches o' the Colquhouns?"

"But, father," implored Nancy, "Angus—that is, young Mr. Colquhoun—says five minutes' friendly talk could settle the whole thing out of hand. He has told his father that, too, and half persuaded him already. You should let him speak to you about it."

"Never!" interrupted Mr. MacTaggart inflexibly, "I'm prood tae state, on behalf o' my hereditary foe, auld Angus Colquhoun, and mysel', that we havena spoken a ceevil word to one another since we could speak ava', and I'm no' goin' tae begin wi' the son."

"But you won't actually refuse to speak to him when he comes to first-foot you and wish you a happy new year, will you, father?"

The girl's eyes were tearful now, and MacTaggart weakened perceptibly.

"I w'u'dna actually refuse tae speak tae him, seeing he's coming wi' the express permission o' your mother and yoursel', but as it happens I'm no' goin' tae sit up and see the new year in, so ye maun just dispense the hospitality o' the hoose yoursel's, when he comes."

The faces of both mother and daughter clouded. They had won their victory, but it bade fair to be a barren one. The enemy was destroying all that was worth capturing before surrendering.

Mrs. MacTaggart made one more effort to retain her lord's presence to receive young Colquhoun.

"W'u'd ye no like tae see your first-fit? He's a good-lookin' lad, an' ye've never met him yet."

"No," replied MacTaggart tartly. "First-fittin's a heathenish custom at the best, and I leave ye tae perform your idolatrous rites yoursel's," and so saying he stalked majestically out of the room.

The moment he had gone, Nancy flung herself upon her mother's neck and wept—and was consoled.

* * * * *

It was simply out of the question that MacTaggart could so lightly abandon the cherished custom of watching for his first-foot, and, as a matter of fact, he had no intention of missing the event at all. His retreat was a merely strategic one. He certainly went to his room, opened the door, slammed it hard, and locked it with ostentatious noise, but he performed all these operations from the outside.

Then he slipped off his boots and carefully hid them. After that he dexterously swung himself into the loft, which exists in most one-storied houses of the Tullywhoop Farm type.

A square opening about three feet wide was let into the ceiling just inside the front door directly over the entrance-lobby.

Over the edge of this trap he could get a splendid view of his first-foot, and the proceedings generally, and he lay there like a cat watching for a mouse. After he had lain awhile in ambush he glanced at his watch by the light of the hall-lamp, and noted that it only wanted a couple of minutes to midnight.

From his perch he could already hear the shuffling of footsteps outside, and from that sound he gathered that his first-foot was there ready for action.

Then the hour of twelve struck on the hall-clock, and immediately the sound ceased, a loud knock at the door raised his excitement to fever-pitch.

Mrs. MacTaggart appeared from the parlour, followed by Nancy, both with smiling faces, ready to welcome their visitor.

The door opened and the ladies uttered a startled exclamation as a gigantic man, carrying with evident exertions an enormous box, staggered across the threshold shouting, "A happy new year to one and all of you!"

Obviously the first-foot was not the man they had expected, but he was warmly welcomed nevertheless.

With staring eyes MacTaggart gazed blinkingly at the newcomer, who was all that could be desired as a first-foot, six feet five in his boots, black-haired, straight-limbed, jovial, hale and hearty. It was his minister, the Rev. Marmion MacIvor, by whom, of all persons, he desired to be respected.

"Where's the good man?" domanded the reverend first-foot as he deposited his burden on the floor, and shook hands with Mrs. MacTaggart and Nancy.

"He's rather indisposed to-night, sir," replied Mrs. MacTaggart meekly.

"Rouse him up, good wife, rouse him up to feast his eyes on the biggest first-foot gift he ever got. Rouse him up, it will do him good!"

As he spoke he tore off the lid of the box, and there stood revealed to the astonished gaze of at least three pairs of eyes, a quantity of some substance that looked like newly-dug earth.

MacTaggart's curiosity caused him to over-reach himself, his hand slipped, and down he crashed into the box.

The women shrieked and the minister started at the unexpected visitation, and MacTaggart picked himself up with rueful gravity.

"Oh, you're there, are you, Saunders?" said the minister. "Allow me to present you with your first-foot gift, being the biggest sample I could carry of half an acre of arable land that has been in dispute for some little time. The land is now made over in its entirety to yourself by Angus Colquhoun, senior, of Aberquiech, who is here, with his son, to attest my words, with the deeds. Step forward, there, Colquhoun, shake hands with MacTaggart, and bury your enmity for ever in this earth!"

Of course, with such a splendid first-foot as the Reverend Marmion MacIvor, whose good offices had been secured by young Angus Colquhoun, with the approval of his father, the ensuing year was a specially propitious one for all concerned. The alliance by marriage of the MacTaggarts of Tullywhoop with the Colquhouns of Aberquiech is now an accomplished fact, accomplished in person by the reverend first-foot.

The following Tartans have already appeared on the covers of "Short Stories":

No. 1.—MENZIES	*Issue dated August 2nd, 1902.*
No. 2.—MACPHERSON ...	*,, ,, August 16th, 1902.*
No. 3.—MACLEOD	*,, ,, September 13th, 1902.*
No. 4.—ROB ROY	*,, ,, October 4th, 1902.*
No. 5.—MACMILLAN ...	*,, ,, October 25th, 1902.*
No. 6.—MACDONALD of SLEAT	*,, ,, November 29th, 1902.*

Back numbers can always be had on application to these offices.

Digitized by Google

A Literary Theft.

AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

In the small sitting-room of a modest little cottage situated in one of the least pretentious thoroughfares of Highgate, a middle-aged woman was sitting before the fire, and glancing ever and anon through the pretty curtained window which looked out upon the street. Presently the object of her thoughts appeared, walking briskly over the clean, wind-swept pavement, and soon after entered the room and divested herself of her hat and coat.

It was a frosty morning in November, and the girl's face glowed with healthy exhilaration after her walk, while her blue eyes sparkled with unusual animation. As she entered the room, however, her eyes fell on the little table which stood near her mother's chair, and the whole expression of her face changed to bitter disappointment and anxiety. The mother looked up quickly, and a look of tender sympathy shone in her eyes as she read her daughter's distress. Going up to the table, the girl picked up two foolscap envelopes, directed to herself, which had come by post during her absence. With indifferent fingers—for she well knew what they contained—she broke the seals and drew from each a folded manuscript.

A slip of paper lay in each manuscript, with the usual form of rejection: "The Editor presents his compliments and regrets his inability——" and so on. With a sigh she laid the papers down upon the table and looked anxiously into her mother's face.

"You do not look so well this afternoon, mother," she said. "Has this troubled you as well?" And she pointed to the rejected manuscripts.

"Your disappointments are mine, dear," said the mother, "and, like you, I had so hoped that one at least would have met with success."

The girl sighed.

"A year or two ago," she said, "my stories quickly found a good market, but latterly successes have been few. I must have lost the knack of writing, I think, for even I am conscious of the difference between my present work and what I used to turn out."

"It is not that you have lost the knack, dear, for your genius is as unquestionable to-day as ever it was," replied the mother, looking at her daughter with evident pride. "No," she continued, "you have lost nothing. But the past year has brought with it many anxieties, many dark forebodings of the future, many pressing needs which cannot be supplied, and all these things have weighed upon you and robbed your stories of their brightness and colour, until their vitality has almost disappeared. Do not think me cruel for saying this, dear Jessie, for I am only impelled to do so by the knowledge that to thus wound you would be infinitely better than to see you lose all faith in the abilities which, notwithstanding these bitter disappointments, you still possess, and thereby sink into lethargy and despair."

The girl looked gratefully into her mother's face.

"I think you are right, dear mother," she said, "and it is nice to know that someone believes in me in spite of all these recent failures." And she laid her head lovingly on her mother's shoulder. "But it is not my failure alone which troubles me, but what it entails. I called in to see the doctor while I was out, and asked him to tell me the truth about you. He says there is no immediate danger, but that, unless precautionary measures are at once adopted, he cannot answer for the consequences. Your recent affection of the throat, together with the weak state of your general health, make it imperative that you should enjoy a change of air. He recommends Ventnor, and declares I must send you there at once for six weeks at least. If this is done, he says, you will speedily recover your former health."

The girl paused and looked into the fire. "And I promised," she added in a low voice, "that you should go."

For some moments there was silence in the little room, broken only by the ticking of a gilt clock on the mantelpiece. Then the mother took the girl's head, with its cluster of brown curls, between her white hands, and kissed the troubled face with loving tenderness.

"My child," she said soothingly, "do not worry about it. I believe a way will be opened, although I cannot see how or what it will be, and some day we shall look back at these troubles of to-day and wonder why our faith in the future was so feeble as to make them oppress us so heavily. Now I will go and lie down till tea is ready, and in the evening we will talk over your two stories. Perhaps I may be able to suggest some way of improving them, and, if not, at any rate my sympathy may stimulate your greater ability to the accomplishment of the same end." And once more kissing her daughter's cheek, she left the room.

Left to herself, and feeling unfit for work, the girl took down an old number of the *American Monthly Magazine* and idly turned over the pages. It was five years old, and had been sent her by a cousin residing in New York because of an article which it contained written by a friend of hers.

Upon its arrival, Jessie Verrall had read the article in question, but, though she had preserved the magazine ever since, she had not even glanced at the rest of the contents. She looked at the titles of the short stories which it contained, until she came to one entitled "An Act of Dishonour." Carelessly she began to read, and, with the full flowing sentences, a living interest in the characters of the story grew up within her and absorbed her whole attention. More and more potent became the fascination of its influence as the girl read on—each incident standing out in bold relief, each word of its intensely impressive dialogue stamped with the hall-mark of truth, and each touch of pathos drawing the tears to her eyes. Spellbound she read on to the end, and then let the magazine fall in her lap.

"Oh, if I could but write like that!" she said with a sigh. "The editor does not live who could reject such a story. I wonder who wrote it!" She turned back to the title. It was signed "Pentaur." "'Pentaur,'" she said to herself. "It sounds like a man. I suppose he is an American, for the story has never appeared in any London magazine."

She stopped, and a strange expression came into her blue eyes. A thought seemed to have come to her—a thought that startled her and sent the warm blood to her face. She put the book on the table, and, rising, began to pace the room in nervous excitement. A frightened look came into her eyes as she walked to and fro, and her breath came short and quick.

Digitized by Google

Presently she stopped, and, glancing round as if fearful of being observed, looked again at the date of the magazine.

"Five years," she whispered. "Who would know? If it were for myself I would not think of it, but for her—for her—She *must* go to Ventnor at any cost! But it is horrible! And yet there is no other way. Oh, what shall I do?"

Her eye fell on the title which stood out in black type at the head of the story, and she shrank back with a low cry. "An Act of Dishonour!" she gasped. "Oh, I dare not—I dare not!" She started, and, going towards the door, listened intently. Up the stairs of the little cottage, she heard her mother coughing—a hard, racking cough that frightened the girl. She turned about and looked once more at the open pages of the magazine. "Oh, my God!" she moaned, putting her hands before her crimson face, "it is my shame—or—her life! No one will ever know and I only will bear the burden of my guilt. I must—yes, I must!"

With flaming cheeks and nervous fingers she carried the magazine over to her typewriter, which stood on a little table in one corner of the room, and her fingers were soon flying over the keys, while the same story, with the same title, grew out of the white sheets which she slipped into the machine. At the end of an hour and a half the task was completed, and, still with trembling fingers, she collated and fastened together the sheets of the story, signed the title-page with her own name, directed an envelope to a second-rate journal, and, putting on her hat, went out to post it. Once only did she pause, when she stood in the narrow passage with the letter held tightly in her hand. But again the sound of that racking cough from the room upstairs decided her.

"For her sake," she whispered, and closed the door behind her.

When she returned, she again took up the magazine, and, after a moment's reflection, carefully cut out the pages containing the story and thrust them, one by one, into the glowing fire. Then, replacing the magazine upon the shelf from which it had been taken, she sank into a chair and tried to think more calmly.

"'An Act of Dishonour,'" she murmured again, as if the title had for her a terrible and irresistible fascination. "I wonder," she continued after a brief pause, "what would be done to me if by any chance the truth were discovered. I know it would be termed 'infringement of copyright' in legal phraseology, but most people would give it an uglier name. But it cannot—it is almost impossible to be discovered. I must not think of it. It is for my mother's sake—for my mother's life—I do it, and she is all I have in the world!"

After tea, Mrs. Verrall joined her daughter in the sitting-room, and again proposed that they should together reread and discuss the two rejected stories which still lay upon the table. But the proposition met with no response from the silent girl. For the first time in all her life, she found herself afraid to meet her mother's eyes.

"My head aches," she said, with a little forced smile. "I think I will go to bed early."

Mrs. Verrall went to her daughter and kissed her, but the girl shivered at the caress and turned away her head.

"You are not yourself to-night, dear," said the mother gently. "Several things have happened to-day, and you are unstrung. But you will be all right again in the morning, and more enthusiastic about your work." She took up a book as she spoke, and settled herself in an easy-chair.

For some moments Jessie sat gazing into the glowing fire-light, until, afraid even of her own reflections, she too took up a book and attempted to read. But the story, though a good one, failed to engross her. Time after time she found herself wandering from the narrative to that other story, "An Act of Dishonour," and its shameful sequel. She was conscious, too, that her mother glanced up, from time to time, at her troubled face, and she grew nervous under the scrutiny.

At last she rose with a sigh, and, kissing her mother's cheek, bade her good-night and retired to her own room. But all through that night the consciousness of what she had done kept her from sleep, and though again and again she whispered to herself "For her sake—for her sake!" the words brought small comfort to the troubled girl. She was only five-and-twenty, and this was her first deviation from the path of rectitude. What untold torments do we not suffer when conscience lashes us for the first secret sin of our youth! But the morning came at last, and with it, sleep for the weary girl, and when she again awoke, it was broad day, and she rose refreshed and comforted in body, if not in mind.

Thus the days went by. Eagerly and sometimes apprehensively, she watched the post. Morning after morning she took the few letters which the post had brought her and tore them open with trembling fingers. And at last the one she hoped for, and yet dreaded, came, and a cheque fluttered on the floor. The letter which accompanied it was full of high commendation for the excellent story she had submitted, his appreciation of which the editor desired to practically acknowledge, by doubling the usual sum paid for short stories and by warmly inviting her to submit others.

The girl sat very still when she had read the letter, and a confusion of emotions passed through her

She glanced round as if fearful of being seen. "The story is five years old," she whispered; "nobody would know."

Digitized by Google

mind. How sweet would have been these commendations had they been honestly earned! Now, they only served to increase her shame. The coveted cheque had come, and for even a larger amount than she had dared to hope, and her mother could now go away where life and health would be restored. But the cheque meant the publication of the stolen story, and this awoke anew the dread of the shameful humiliation which would be hers when the discovery came.

While the acceptance of the story still hovered in uncertainty, she had almost persuaded herself that discovery was impossible. But now that she realised it would soon be scattered broadcast over the whole country, the dread of detection took fresh hold upon her and sent a chill of fear through her veins. With an effort, however, she stifled the many voices that seemed to clamour within her, and, picking up the cheque, she went to her mother's room.

"Mother," she said, trying to control her voice, "I wrote a story a week or so ago which I kept from you. It is a good deal better than any of my recent work, and it has been accepted. Here is the cheque for it, with which you will be able to start for Ventnor as soon as you like." There was a deep flush on her face as she spoke, but the fond mother attributed this to the excitement of the occasion and the joy which she knew her daughter must feel in giving her this good news.

"God bless you, my child!" she said, with tears in her eyes as she threw her arms about her daughter's neck and kissed her tenderly. "I said it would come. And this is the very best way in which it could come, because it is through you, dear."

The tears were in the girl's eyes also as she put out her arms and clung passionately to her mother—tears that would not be denied, but gushed out unhindered, while great sobs shook the slender frame. But with the tears came relief to the overwrought brain, and she grew more composed as the day advanced, helping her mother to pack and in other ways prepare for the journey which was before her.

The next day Mrs. Verrall took an affectionate leave of her daughter, and was soon travelling down to Ventnor. She had stayed there before, and therefore knew just where to go to obtain the rest and quiet of which she stood so much in need. So Jessie returned alone to the solitary little cottage in Highgate, and tried to find distraction in the production of new stories and in the improvement of the old. So the days went by, and, to her surprise, she felt her old power returning. Nor was the cause of this far to seek, for each day that sped by after the appearance of the story she had appropriated lessened the danger of detection, while the constant letters from Ventnor told of her mother's returning health and the delights of the long holiday she was enjoying.

Five weeks had slipped by since Mrs. Verrall's departure, and Jessie had almost lost the terrible dread which had haunted her, keeping only the shame and dishonour, which she felt could never fade from her memory, when a letter was delivered to her. Tearing it open, she read the following:

Office of "The Censor,"
95 & 97, *Desborough Street*,
Strand, *W.C.*

MADAM,—*I have been greatly interested by the story which appeared some weeks ago in the* "Metropolitan Magazine," *entitled* "*An Act of Dishonour.*" *As you are doubtless aware, our terms are considerably above those of the above-named magazine, and if you would favour us by submitting an occasional short story for publication in* "The Censor," *I shall be happy to personally and carefully consider them. Perhaps you might find time to call at this office, when we might discuss a few preliminaries. Yours faithfully,*

MAX ORMOND (Editor).

When she had read the letter, the girl glanced across at the little table upon which stood her typewriting machine. At one side lay a pile of manuscripts, the upper one of which contained a story she had finished only the previous day. She knew it to be the best thing she had written for many months, and, after a moment's reflection, she decided to take it herself to the office of *The Censor*. Accordingly about eleven o'clock she put on her hat and proceeded in that direction, with the manuscript clasped tightly in her hand. She was admitted at once to the editor's room, and Max Ormond—the well known author-editor of *The Censor*—bowed to her as she entered.

"Miss Verrall, I believe?" he said as he motioned her to a chair. "I am glad you have come, for I have been quite curious to see you since I saw 'An Act of Dishonour' in *The Metropolitan*."

The girl flushed.

"It is very good of you," she said in a low tone, "and I could do nothing else but readily respond to the invitation conveyed in your letter."

"Invitation? Ah, yes, I remember. Have you done anything else in the same style as 'An Act of Dishonour'? If so, I should like to see it."

"I finished a story yesterday," replied the girl, "and I think it is one of the best I have as yet turned out. If you would care to look it over——" And she put the folded manuscript on the table in front of the editor.

"Thank you," he said. "If you are not in a hurry, I shall be glad to do so." He turned and whispered a few words to his secretary, who immediately left the room. Then, once more turning to the girl, he said, "Perhaps you might amuse yourself with a magazine while I read your manuscript. Here is one in which you may find something to interest you."

The girl took the magazine he handed her, and, seeing that Max Ormond began at once to read her story, she turned over the pages and glanced at the titles. Something about them seemed familiar, but at first she could not tell what. Then a dreadful suspicion flashed upon her, and she hurriedly turned over the pages until she came to what she dreaded. For there, as in her own copy, she read the title "An Act of Dishonour—By Pentaur." It was another copy of the same old number of the *American Monthly Magazine*. A groan escaped her lips, and, letting the book fall to the floor, she sat there, trembling and bewildered, not even daring to move. Max Ormond appeared not to notice her agitation, but went on persistently reading the manuscript before him, and it was not until he had reached the last word that he lifted his head and looked at the terrified girl.

For some moments neither spoke a word. With searching, penetrating eyes, Max Ormond regarded the girl before him as though he would read her inmost soul. Then he spoke, firmly but gently, in words that left no doubt in the girl's mind that he knew all the terrible truth.

"Tell me," he said, "for I must know—why did you do it?"

The girl covered her face with her hands and was silent.

"I must know," the editor went on. "And I have a right to ask the question, for—I am 'Pentaur.'"

"I did it," she said, dropping her hands and looking at him through the tears which dimmed her blue eyes—"I did it because I knew that the money I should thus obtain would save the life of the only living creature in all the world who is dear to me—my mother! I used to write well at one time, and reaped success after success. But trouble and anxiety have robbed my work of its charm and its power, and failure and disappointment have met me at every turn."

"But what is this you say about your mother?" asked the editor.

"My mother has been ill," replied the girl, "and her doctor told me that she would die if she did not have immediate rest and change of air. If she went away at once, her life would be saved, but if not, there was no hope. It was that which drove me to it, for my mother's life is dearer to me than my own honour."

Again there was silence in the room.

Digitized by Google

"There is one other question I must ask," said Max Ormond presently. "It is one I have no personal right to put to you, but the answer must necessarily influence my view of the matter. Tell me—honestly and without prevarication—is this the only story you have appropriated, or are there any others which you have similarly treated?"

"This is the only one," said the girl in a voice that shook with emotion. "And God knows how great is the mountain of guilt which that one has heaped upon me."

"You swear it?"

"Yes."

Max Ormond breathed a sigh of relief.

"I cannot but believe," he said, "that you speak the truth. This thing that you have done would be a sufficient excuse for a contrary opinion. But to me your words carry conviction, and I believe you. It is fortunate that the copyright of the story in question is still in my hands, so that I am the only person to whom you are responsible for its misappropriation. And I, well, I should be less than a gentleman if I did not view your act in the light of its motive, and free you from all further anxiety in the matter." He took a sheet of paper from the rack before him as he spoke, and hurriedly wrote a few words upon it, signing his name at the foot.

"This paper," he said, as he handed it to her, "transfers to you the copyright of 'An Act of Dishonour,' and I have dated it prior to the publication of the story in the *Metropolitan Magazine*. You need, therefore, have no further misgivings on that score. I would extract from you a promise that you would never again act in this way, no matter what were the circumstances or the motives which actuated you, but I think this is unnecessary—first because it is all too evident that your punishment has been heavier than you ever anticipated; and secondly, because, while you can conceive such stories as the one you have brought me this morning you will have no need to appropriate other people's. I shall accept this story, and will send you a cheque as soon as it is published. Please let me see any others you may write, and, if they are like this one, you need have no fear of finding a good market for them."

Tears of gratitude were in the girl's eyes as she listened. For the first time during the five long weeks of shame and self-abasement which had passed, a gleam of sunny happiness returned to her life. She could scarcely speak the thanks which welled to her lips and trembled for utterance. But Max Ormond stopped her with a kindly smile. She had risen, and he, too, now followed her example. He held out his hand, and she put hers timidly within it.

"There is one thing more," he said quietly. "Will you regard me as a friend who will always feel an interest in your welfare?"

"Can I regard you as anything else?" returned the girl, "when you have treated me so magnanimously and punished me, not with severity, or even with common justice, but with kindness?"

Max Ormond smiled.

"There are many diversities of regard," he said, "and friendship is surely not the highest."

The girl's eyes fell.

"It is not far from it," she said shyly.

Max Ormond regarded her attentively for a moment, while a strange light played about his handsome face.

"Well," he said at last, "we are friends then. I shall come to see you sometimes when your mother returns. Do you know, I am quite anxious to see this mother upon whom you lavish so rare an affection. But I won't detain you any longer to-day. Good-bye. I shall see you again before long."

And with a warm pressure of the hand, he bowed her courteously out of the room.

A year later, a paragraph appeared in the marriage announcements of the *Times*, which ran as follows:

On December 1st, 19——, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, Jessie Beatrice Verrall, daughter of the late Rev. E. Bathurst Verrall, Rector of St. Cuthbert's, Hampstead, to Max Pentaur Ormond, Esq., son of Sir Gurney Ormond, M.P.

Walter J. Mowbray.

With penetrating eyes Max Ormond regarded the girl before him as though he would read her inmost soul.

Digitized by Google

FOR LOVE or MONEY.

The Story of a Case, and of the Circumstances which Altered It.

"AUSTEN!"

"Dick!"

"Man!—is it your ghost?"

"No—I don't think so; though I'm a little in doubt as to *your* substantial reality, Dick!"

"Seriously, Austen!—where, in the name of Fortune, have you sprung from? It's eight years and more since you and I forogathered, and—well—there's something about you, Earle, that to me, is—is new and strange."

"I might say the same Dick, of you, but I'm afraid that it wouldn't seem kind."

"Oh!—you couldn't hurt my feelings, old chap! I'm past all that."

"Well, it's no use denying it, Dick!—things *are* changed for the better with me. If I were to tell you what I am worth to-day, you would hardly believe me. When you and I lived together in the Pimlico lodging, years ago, change for a sovereign was like an angel's visit. Now!—but come out of this crowd; we'll get to Holborn, and find a quiet place for a snack and a chat."

"But, Austen, old fellow! I—I'm not exactly fit to pair with you in a swell restaurant. Besides, I have to look after business."

Austen Earle looked his new-found friend in the eyes with kindly cunning.

"Dick!" he said, "you can't deceive me! Do you think I forget who it was that pawned his watch to raise the money to make up my passage? Do you think I forget that a certain Richard Mowbray sat up a whole night to finish a story; worried his editor the next morning till he got the money for it, and with sly treachery slipped every penny of that money into the pocket of his friend who was about to sail for El Dorado?"

"I only thought, Austen, that my companionship would perhaps compromise you."

"Anything more in that strain, Dick, and I shall begin to think that there is something in the theory of doubles, after all; and, that it is not you but your counterfeit, whom I have run up against to-day."

The two men, eight years before, were chums, in the best sense of the word. Friends at college, they had continued their friendship in close companionship till ill-fortune in the case of Austen Earle, made it necessary that he should leave England, and begin life again in a new country.

A clerk to a member of the Stock Exchange, he was one day accused—and, as it transpired two years later, falsely accused—of betraying Stock Exchange secrets to a firm of outside brokers. Clever as a financier, beyond the ordinary, his prompt and ignominious dismissal from his position, meant for him utter ruin. His friend, Richard Mowbray, a hard-working writer of fiction for the weeklies, it was who, by devoted effort, raised the money necessary to start the other on his new career.

Bitter belief in his guilt, shut both the hearts and the purses of the unfortunate young fellow's family and friends, so that but for Dick Mowbray's faithfulness and sympathy, he would have inevitably drifted into the ranks of the shipwrecked.

As for Dick himself; one of those gentle-souled Bohemians, who in the midst of a selfish world, are the true apostles of unselfishness; he lived his life through those eight years, not unhappily. Beyond one letter from New York, that announced his safe arrival, he heard no more from Austen Earle, till, as time went on, he came to believe that his old-time friend had dropped out of the race.

He still continued to live in the street off the Vauxhall Bridge Road, the only difference being, that on his friend's departure, he moved up into the attic.

Long connection with the big publishing firm for which he almost exclusively worked, made him familiar with nearly everybody at the office; and it was with a young girl, Phyllis Howell by name, typine and shorthand writer to the managing editor himself, that Dick Mowbray, some three years before Austen Earle's sudden reappearance on the scene, fell in love.

It so happened that Phyllis lived also in the Belgravian paradise, which, when Dick had discovered, he utilised to his own advantage. If it was a fine evening, and Phyllis walked home through the park, Dick found that he, too, had the pedestrian fit upon him, and the pair strolled Pimlico-wards in company. Was it wet or stormy, Dick's umbrella, as far as Charing Cross underground station, sheltered two instead of one, the same service being again rendered at Victoria, and gratefully acknowledged.

They were both fairly lonely young people, Dick's family letting him, as an irresponsible and somewhat disreputable Bohemian scribbler, severely alone, while Phyllis, as an unappreciated unit in an unsympathetic household, was shut up, within herself, so far as human companionship was concerned.

For some reason, which he could not exactly explain to himself, Dick Mowbray did not confide the fact of his engagement to Phyllis to Austen Earle.

Over a well-spread dinner-table at the Holborn Restaurant, Austen Earle told how that he had been six months in London, where he had set up in business as a large speculator in the purchase and sale of new companies.

He had been exceptionally fortunate in his ventures in America, having returned to England with a fortune running into six figures, which, he told Dick, he anticipated doubling in less than twelve months.

"And, now, old chap!" he said as they sat in the smoking room, "this eternal grind of yours must cease! No more burning of the midnight oil! No more days of failure and disappointment! What I have, is yours to share!—for you shared with me when it meant sacrifice and even worse."

"It is very good of you, my dear fellow!" said Dick, "and I know you mean it out of the generosity of your heart, but——"

"I will not hear a 'but'!"

"I was but going to say, that, though I haven't a pound too much, I have no claim upon your purse such as you would have me believe I have."

"Well, think it over. Perhaps you will find that there is something my money can do which will add to your comfort and happiness. Think it over, Dick, come and see me to-morrow in Old Broad Street, Palmerston Buildings. I must leave you now, for in an hour I am to sign a contract, which will give me the purchase option of the biggest commerical undertaking in the three Kingdoms."

Dick Mowbray stood a moment, looking after the hansom that bore eastwards the busy man of money, and then turned his steps in the direction of the office, where a five pound note awaited him for work done.

* * * * * * *

"Am I late, Dick?" said a voice in his ear, as he stood waiting in the entry of the big building.

It was ten minutes past six and he was fidgeting in so unmistakable a manner that Phyllis could not help noticing it.

Digitized by Google

"Just a little bit, darling! But which is it to be, walk or train?"

"Whichever you like, Dick."

"Then we'll walk, for it will give me time to tell you of a most extraordinary experience of mine to-day.'"

"Anything good, dear, ?" she said, smiling up at him, for she had such unbounded faith in her lover's genius and ultimate success as a novelist of coming world-wide reputation, that she felt she would never be surprised at anything in the way of good fortune which might befall him.

"Well, in a way, yes; though the good really concerns someone else—an old friend of mine—you've heard me speak of him—Earle—Austen Earle?"

"Oh, yes, I know—he went abroad seven or eight years ago, didn't he?"

"Yes—and now he's come back with an enormous fortune, which he is using as a means to make, as he has just told me, the biggest pile of any one man in the City of London to-day."

"Oh, Dick!—why it's like a fairy-tale, isn't it?"

"But that isn't all, dear! Austen Earle, for old time's sake, and because he has an idea that he owes me a good turn, as he calls it, wants to share some of his money with me."

"Dick!—what a splendid fellow he must be!"

"Yes—he is a splendid fellow, but——"

"What did you say to him, Dick? Tell me, Dick!—tell me!"

"Well, I said scarcely anything; I was so full of that story I am doing this week—the one, you know, I told you of, that I am afraid my old friend's generous offer didn't quite appeal to me, in the way he perhaps looked for it to do."

"Dick," said Phyllis, after a moment's pause. "Are you going to slave, as you do now, all the rest of your life?"

"Hullo, Phyllis!" he answered her gaily. "What has come over you—I hope you are not getting mercenary! I shall always have to work hard, I expect; but for your sake, dear, I look forward to being more prosperous—some day."

"It does seem such a long time in coming—prosperity—doesn't it, Dick? Why you and I shall be too old to enjoy it when it comes, if it doesn't come soon. Fancy this Mr. Earle having all this money; and you obliged to write night and day almost, for so very, very little."

"Would it please you, dear then, if I let my friend throw me a charity dole?"

There was just a suspicion of irony in the question itself, and in the tone in which it was spoken.

"You should not put it in that way, Dick! Mr. Earle, I expect, has no such thought with regard to his generous intentions."

"I suppose not—or rather, perhaps not. But I am to see him about this time to-morrow, and will bring him to see you, if you will let me. I do not wish Earle to know that we are engaged."

"Why, Dick?"

"Oh, I don't know—it's a fad of mine, I suppose. I am jealous of almost every man, even of my old friend."

By this time they had arrived at Phyllis' door, where Dick left her, again promising to introduce Austen Earle to her at six o'clock on the following evening.

* * * * *

Phyllis awaited with impatience her introduction to the man of money.

It must not be imagined that she was inclined to waver over so little in her allegiance to Dick. She loved him too well and truly for that.

When she saw Austen Earle, a tall, dark, keen-eyed man of the same age as Dick, she was not unnaturally anxious to please.

The man of money thought he had never seen so dainty a specimen of fair womanhood before, and mentally made notes concerning her.

The three strolled through the park to the Howell's door, where, before Dick and his friend left her, Phyllis extended to the latter an invitation to accompany Dick on his next visit to her parents' house.

Phyllis' dreams that night were golden in every way, and it must be confessed that all through the next day strange thoughts arose in her mind, concerning the power of money. Austen Earle figured more in her imaginings than poor Dick, who, bringing her that evening an armful of chrysanthemums, noticed something wanting in her manner towards him.

The meaning of it all came upon him with full force when he heard that, without waiting for his company, Austen Earle had called one evening in Gillingham Street, and had created a very favourable impression upon the family generally.

Then, one day, the bolt fell.

For several days now, Dick had kept away from the six o'clock tryst. He was ill-at-ease, irritable, and afraid to trust himself with Phyllis.

He had called in the usual way one morning, on business, when the porter handed him a note addressed to him in Phyllis' handwriting.

It was a pitiful little letter.

"Dick," she wrote, "I am very unhappy—I want to see you, oh! so much. I have something to tell you, too, which you must hear. If I do not see you at six to-night, I shall break my heart. You have been very cruel, Dick.—

"PHYLLIS."

As he left the building a hansom drove up, from it descending Austen Earle.

"The very man I wanted to see!" he said, and then, when they had passed up the street a little way, turned short round upon Dick. "You and I, between us, have managed to do the worst day's work we have ever done. But the fault was more yours than mine. Why didn't you trust me, Dick? Why didn't you tell me that that dear little girl was going to be your wife? I'll tell you why I ask you. Last evening I went to her father and told him that I loved his daughter, when he at once replied that you had her promise; had had it for three years and more. Was it fair to me—to her—to yourself even, to keep me in the dark? I thought something was wrong when you did not turn up lately."

Dick didn't know what to say. He saw that his friend was hurt more sorely than he cared to confess, and he felt, almost for the first time in his life, ashamed of himself.

"That's about all I wanted to say, Dick. I'm going to Paris to-night, and afterwards I don't know what I shall do. You shall hear from me, and if you'll take a fool's advice, you'll comfort that poor little woman before you're many hours older, for, unless I'm very much mistaken, she is fairly wrung over this wretched business. Good-bye, old chap! I'll write you from Paris!"

* * * * *

It is satisfactory to know that between Phyllis and Dick there is no question now as to the respective merits of love and money.

With Phyllis there never had been any real hankering after the "golden calf." With her, it was but a young girl's natural bewilderment in the presence of a man who, like a magician, could, if he would, bring the world to his feet. Once the novelty of this feeling worn off, and there remained, as pure and as true as ever, the love, which Dick knows now, could never have given place to a mere desire for money, and all that money could buy.

A few days before the wedding, Dick received a letter from Austen Earle, dated from New York, where, he said, he had after all, decided to work and live.

Accompanying the letter, was a small box, containing some remarkably fine diamonds which the writer requested Dick to have made up into any form of ornament Phyllis liked, charging the setting of the same to his, Austen Earle's account.

"I wish," he said in conclusion, "both you and your wife the happiness that comes from perfect mutual love; just asking from you an occasional kind thought for him who would like always to be looked upon by you as your friend—"AUSTEN EARLE."

Ralph Enderby..

Digitized by Google

A KERRY LOVE IDYLL.

The Old, Old Story Ending as it Should.

She was a flaxen-haired, Irish maid of eighteen. He, an Englishman of eight-and-twenty.

Opposite in nature, tastes and education, the two nevertheless fraternised, as is so often the case with people whose views but rarely coincide.

Hard, sceptical, and a cynic on matters both human and divine, Arthur Haddon had arrived at Athlee to go over the ground which he had chosen for the scene of his next novel.

In the village of Athlee none knew what had induced him to come to that little out-of-the-way hamlet on the banks of the Feale. No one knew whence he came, his natural taciturnity and reserve repelling all pertinent questions of this description. Thus he remained, till one day in the course of a ramble in search of information his eyes lighted on Nora O'Roole.

From a smile and a nod a sort of friendship sprung up, a friendship which had deepened into a far deeper feeling ere a month had passed over their heads.

Days and weeks flew by unheeded. Then a letter arrived from his publishers who inquired when they might expect the first instalment of his new novel. The trade, they stated, had been given to understand that the book would be issued to the public early in October. They concluded their epistle, by stating, that it was the beginning of July and that so far not a page of manuscript had come to hand.

"I wonder if they think I am not aware of that most obvious fact," he mused aloud, as crushing the missive in his hand, he smiled grimly. "The beggars are right, however. There's no help for it. I must return to London and scribble for dear life and break the chain which binds me to this place."

He informed Nora of his resolution that evening, as the two were floating down the river in a boat, which he had hired for the summer.

"Going?" she echoed softly, turning her head to gaze apparently at the fields, bathed in the warm glow of a summer sunset.

"Going? When do you leave Athlee, Arthur?"

"To-morrow," replied Haddon, and paused abruptly, expecting a reply.

He was doomed to disappointment. His only answer being the splash of his oars as they clove the placid waters of the stream and a soft, silvery ripple as the stem of the boat cut its way through the tranquil surface of the river.

"Nora."

"Yes, Arthur."

"I don't suppose that it will make much difference to you whether I stay or go, will it?" His voice was pathetically inquiring.

"I would rather that you stayed."

"Why?"

He had rested the oars across his knees and leant forward, a hungry, yearning look in his eyes as he bent them on the girl reclining amid a bevy of cushions at the stern of the boat.

"I shall miss our rambles. Are you tired of Athlee, that you have taken so sudden a resolution to leave it? But sure, you must be wanting to get back to London," she said, then added slowly, "and a good-looking fellow like yourself is sure to have someone, waiting for him to come back."

There was the faintest trace of bitterness in the concluding words of her sentence.

"No," he said slowly. "I am not tired of Athlee, for I love the place. Neither have I a girl waiting for me to return to London. I must, however, leave here. I have stayed too long as it is, and my publishers——"

"Your publishers?" she echoed, inquiringly, steering clear of a floating snag. "What are they?"

"They are beings who print your books and sell them. You see, I am an author, Nora, so I am pretty dependent on them. It seems strange to me to hear you say that someone is waiting for me in England," he said wistfully. "If you only knew how I lived, you would realise how bitter is the irony of your words. My dear Nora, there is no one in England who cares for me enough to do that."

"Are you sure of that, Arthur?"

"Am I sure?" he laughed bitterly. "I know it only too well. Has a taciturn, sceptical man, friends? But rarely, Nora! My cynicism and suspicion have estranged me from my family. Have robbed me of my friends and deprived me of love. For years I have lived for myself alone, and see what I am now. True, I am rich and well known. But what is the use of either wealth or fame to a man if he be friendless and unbeloved! Nora, were I to die to-morrow, there is not a soul who would care unless it were my publishers. I am a source of revenue to them," he added sardonically.

"Do you not view life from too dismal a standpoint?" she queried lightly, steering the boat to the bank and jumping on to it.

"Perhaps," he replied sadly, grasping the hand which she extended to him and stepping out of the boat. "It has been owing to that failing that I am what I am. Now there is nothing left for me but to remain the cynic to the end of the chapter."

"I shouldn't if I were you," she said sagely. "Why not turn over the proverbial new leaf and view things from their rosiest side? Faith, I am thinking that it would be more pleasant."

"It is easy for you to speak thus," he said, a shade of bitterness in his voice. "What shadow has ever crossed your sunlit path? Nora, this has been the happiest time of my life. For three months I have lived in a sort of Eden. I have—that is—oh, I almost wish I had never come here, Nora."

"I don't. Why?"

"Because of the change which is about to take place in my life. Before I came to Athlee, Nora, I was quite content with my flat, my books, and my pipe. No one cared to visit me, and I, for my part, wanted none to look me up. Now, however, all this is changed. How can I return to them and be content when the memory of our happy days spent on the Feale and the vision of Athlee village come between myself and my work. I fear the recollection, Nora, that is why I wish that I had never come."

A sigh which was half strangled at birth escaped his lips.

Digitized by Google

"You surely do not mean to say that you prefer Athlee to London!" she said, her voice trembling oddly. "How strange!"

"It is, however, true," Haddon replied, bending down to tie the boat's painter to a neighbouring post. "Athlee to me is the loveliest spot in Christendom."

"Why?"

"Because, Nora, it contains the one thing I have ever loved in all this wide world of ours!" he replied, with a tensity which thrilled his hearer.

"A girl, of course," she remarked tentatively.

"As you say—a girl," he answered, unmindful of the pallor which was slowly creeping over Nora's face.

"Why don't you propose to her then?" she asked gently. "She might love——"

"Ah, might," he interrupted, wistfully. "That is where the shoe pinches. She might not care to marry me, and if this were the case, her refusal would extinguish for ever the one bright spark which has illumined my dreary life. No, Nora, I know that you will think that I am mad, but I prefer to live on in uncertainty. To think what might have been had——"

"It isn't fair to the girl if she loves you," said Nora, tremblingly. "You have no right to ruin her life, even if you have to do so to yours."

"But how do I know that such would be the case? How—"

"Faith, you can't know without finding out. Why, her heart might be—be—breaking—at this—mo——" Nora's voice grew huskier till it finally died away in a whisper, as she raised her eyes bright with tears to his.

A strange light illumined them, a very wealth of love and pleading looking up at him from their violet depths.

"Nora, Nora, do you realise what you are saying?" he cried hoarsely, as pressing her slim form to his he rained kisses on her resistless lips. "You are telling me that you love—oh, darling, is it true? I can't leave Ireland without its loveliest daughter as my wife! I love you, darling! Love you as no man has ever loved woman before. You told me to ask the girl I loved to be my wife, I am waiting for her answer—I am waiting for yours, Nora, love."

And as he pressed her slim form to him and felt her trembling with happy sobs, he knew his answer before she spoke it.

Tristam K. Monck.

MRS. CALLER: "What is the name of your new servant?" Mrs. Wifey: "We call her Bliss." Mrs. Caller: "Why?" Mrs. Wifey: "Because ignorance is bliss."

DEMONSTRATOR (in clinics): "You will notice that the subject's right leg is longer than his left, which causes him to limp. Now, what would you do in such a case?" Bright Student: "I'd limp, too."

"YES," said the chairman sadly, "our temperance meeting last night would have been more successful if the lecturer hadn't been so absent-minded." "What did he do?" "He tried to blow the foam from a glass of water."

"YER lordship, I didn't steal this man's cornet; indeed I didn't," pleaded the prisoner. "I bought if from him. You know me better than that. I live in the same street as you." "Oh, you do, eh?" said the judge. "Well, five years. Call the next."

TELESCOPE PROPRIETOR: "Step up, ladies and gents, and view the planet Mars. One penny, mum." Old Lady: "Oh, law! Hain't it round and smooth?" Telescope Proprietor: "Will the bald-headed gent please step away from the front of the instrument."

GENTLEMAN: "You ask me for a small gift, and do not even take off your hat from your head. Is that the way to act?" Beggar: "Excuse me, most honourable sir, I dare not, for yonder stands a policeman. If he should see me take off my hat it will occur to him at once that I am a beggar, and he will arrest me. At present, as we are now, he merely supposes we are old acquaintances having a friendly chat!"

YOUR EDITOR CHATS.

A GOOD deal of correspondence has reached me as the result of the publication of the instalment of "HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA," containing reference to the efforts of Honoria to become married to El Hamed, the Egyptian. Many readers look upon this incident as ridiculous, and say that no lady of title such as Lady Honoria would think of falling in love with an Egyptian, no matter how high his position may be. In making such statements, of course these readers have only convinced me of how little the average person knows about life in High Society, and it is with a view to spreading knowledge on the subject that I am publishing such series of articles as "THE CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA" and "HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA."

That such an affair as that between Honoria and El Hamid is not only possible but probable, is pretty obvious when one reads the following news item which appeared in a recent number of the *Daily Express*:

EMIR'S ENGLISH WIFE.

"RIVAL IN THE HAREM CAUSES HER IMPRISONMENT.

"Constantinople.

"The English and American residents at Constantinople were much surprised in May when it was announced that Miss Isabel Dunn, an English lady, had married an Arab, who was a descendant of the prophet Mohammed and who aspires to be the next Emir of Mecca. The marriage has turned out to be a most unhappy one, as everybody expected.

"Miss Dunn was introduced into the house of the Arab as a governess for his two sons, and after some months in that position she became a convert to Mohammedanism, and was secretly married to her employer.

"For some time the marriage was kept secret from the other wives, but it was soon discovered, and the other ladies of the harem did everything they possibly could to annoy the new bride. The favourite wife discovered that, according to Mohammedan law, it was impossible for anyone to become the Emir of Mecca who married anyone who had ever been a Christian. She communicated this news to her friends, and in consequence the Emir fled into the country, and has not been heard of since.

"Meanwhile she caused Miss Dunn to be imprisoned in a small kiosk in a little garden near Scutari. Here she remains for the present time, a prisoner and friendless. She is visited once a day by a servant, who brings her food and attends to her other wants, but otherwise she is cut off from all communication with the rest of the world. As she is now a Turkish subject, and also a Mohammedan, she cannot claim any protection from England."

This reads more like fiction than fact, does it not? Yet every word of it is true. Those who are sceptical as to the facts contained in the "BELINDA" series will perhaps now feel convinced that what we say is perfectly correct, viz., that all the statements made are exactly as they happened, the only alteration being that of the names of the chief characters concerned.

A very simple way of obtaining £10 is to turn to page 13. There you will find an announcement to the effect that this sum will be given to the person who sends in what the Editor considers to be the best reason for having it. I don't know of any simpler way of distributing money. If you cannot think of a reason why you should receive £10, then, of course, you don't deserve it. If there is a reason why you should receive £10, then send it along to the COMPETITION Editor, and if he considers it the best of those received you will be the richer by a £10 Note.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Domestic Taste.

FIRST CLUBMAN: "Is Jackson a man of domestic tastes?" Second Clubman: "Very; I understand he flirts with his servants."

What She Had in the Bank.

HE: "Before proposing, Miss Lulu, I wish to know if you have anything in the bank?" She: "Yes, Mr. Poorman, I have a lover there. He is the cashier, and we are to be married next week."

Mary Didn't Know.

MISTRESS: "How is it, Mary, that whenever I enter the kitchen I always find a man there?" Mary: "I don't know, ma'am, indeed, unless it be them there soft shoes ye wears, that don't make no noise!"

An Unfair Advantage.

JESS: "I thought that you hated Jack, and yet you have accepted him." Bess: "I did hate him; but he proposed under an umbrella, and said if I refused he would let the rain drip on my new hat."

Father's Condition.

BANKS: "What did her father say when you told him that you wanted to marry his daughter?" Rivers: "Well, he didn't absolutely refuse, but he imposed a very serious condition." Banks: "What was it?" Rivers: "He said he would see me hanged first."

There Was no Mirror Handy.

MRS. MYLES: "I told Mrs. Styles I had heaped coals of fire on her head, and she looked worried." Mrs. Fyles: "What made her look worried, do you suppose?" Mrs. Myles: "She didn't know whether they were on straight or not."

The Very Reason.

MRS. O'BRIEN: "Good-mornin'; Mrs. M'Cabe. An' phwat makes yez look so sad?" Mrs. M'Cabe: "Shure, Dennis was sint to gaol for six months." Mrs. O'Brien: "Well, shure, don't worry; six months will soon pass." Mrs. M'Cabe: "Shure, that's phwat worries me."

Hands Off!

ONE afternoon, when a perfect gale of wind was raging, a gentleman, in feeble health, was struggling to reach his home, aided by his wife. Just as they reached the corner of a street a huge tin chimney-pot was torn from the roof of a house by the power of the wind, and dashed to the ground just in front of the feeble gentleman and his wife. "Good gracious!" cried the gentleman, "that was a narrow escape for us." "If it had struck us it would have killed us," she replied. The two stopped for a moment to examine the chimney-pot, more dangerous in a high wind than a bomb-shell; but just as they were scrutinising it a window near by was opened, a female head was thurst out, and in a shrill tone she shouted: "You needn't think you're going to carry that 'off cause it b'longs to my house!"

How it Happened.

GREENE: "How did Jones come to marry that red-haired girl?" White: "Poor Jones didn't notice it; he is colour blind."

Just as Well to Know.

PAPA: "So you asked my daughter to marry you. Can you support a family?" Suitor: "How many of you are there?"

Easily Accounted For.

"Do I squint, Charlie?" asked the rich girl. "A little, Maudie," he said tenderly; "but who wouldn't with your eyes? If mine were as beautiful as yours, I'd be trying to look into them myself."

Why Women Dislike Prominent Bachelors.

WINKERS: "Why is it that women always dislike a prominent man who is an old bachelor?" Blinkers: "Because they can't say he would never have amounted to anything if it had not been for his wife."

There Are More Ways.

TOMMY: "Yes, cats can see in the dark, and so can Ethel, 'cause when Mr. Wright walked into the parlour, when she was sittin' all alone in the dark, I heard her say to him: 'Why, Arthur, you didn't get shaved to-day!'"

Not What He Wanted to Know.

STERN PARENT: "Quite so, sir, quite so! You tell me that you have proposed to my daughter, but—er—you say nothing about your position." Nervous Suitor: "My position, sir? Oh—er—the—the—usual one, I believe—on my knees, you know."

A Necessary Alteration.

HUSBAND (impatiently): "What is the reason my wife doesn't come down? I thought she was almost ready to go to the ball an hour ago." Maid: "She will be ready in a minute, sir. She has been changing her colour to match her new hair."

Perfectly Safe.

PRETTY DAUGHTER: "Ma, may I go boating?" Fond Mother: "Indeed you shan't. The idea! Who invited you?" Daughter: "Mr. Bliffers." Fond Mother: "Oh, yes, you may go with Mr. Bliffers. He has a cork leg, and if the boat upsets just you hang on to that."

Its Own Punishment.

MR. PARAKAY: "These two seats you gave me are in different rows, one behind the other." Ticket-seller: "One seat is for a lady, is it not?" Mr. Parakay: "Yes." Ticket seller: "Well, that is all right, then. You are expected to sit behind the lady, and if you bring one with a big hat it's your own fault. That's the way we sell 'em now."

Now Reginald Doesn't Call.

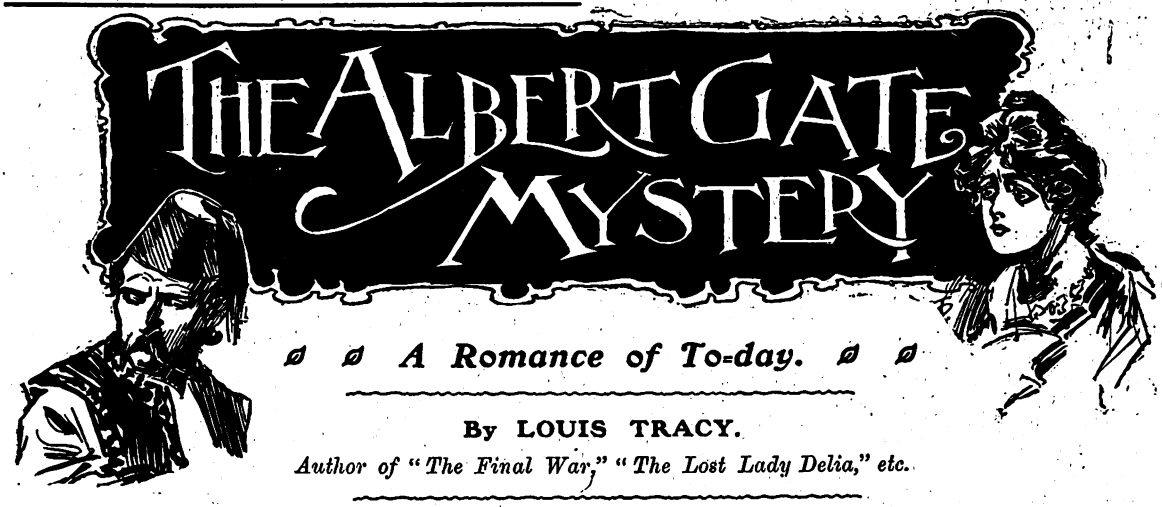
SHE: "Yes, Reginald, I confess you have awakened in my heart tender throbbings of a first and only love." He: "Dovey! Darling onliest only!" Her young brother (peeping from behind the curtain): "Hullo! Caught yer! Look here, if yer don't give me a tanner I'll split." She: "Tommy, you little beast, go away, and if you hold your tongue I'll give you a sixpence—to-morrow." Relentless Fiend: "No fear, no more tick! You promised me a bob if I didn't tell ma about Sammy Spooner kissing you, and you never brassed up yet."

A Young Philosopher.

MRS. MURRAY was reading a story to her son Justin, aged five years. Mrs. Murray: "Now, Justin, if your father were to die, would you work to help mamma?" Justin: "Why, mamma, what for? Haven't we got a nice house to live in?" Mrs. Murray: "Yes, Justin, but we can't eat the house, you know." Justin: "Well, mamma, haven't we got a whole lot of good things in the pantry?" Mrs. Murray: "Certainly, pet, but we would soon eat them up, and then what would we do?" Justin: "Well, mamma, isn't there enough to last until you could get another husband?"

Digitized by Google

OUR NEW SERIAL STORY.



A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Mr. Brett's Quest.

A NUMBER of priceless diamonds having been most mysteriously stolen from an Albert Gate Mansion, and four of the custodians of the jewels murdered, Mr. Brett, barrister and detective, in conjunction with the police, is called upon to help clear up the mystery.

The diamonds, it appears, were sent over by the Sultan of Turkey in charge of a number of Turkish officials, and, being of political importance, the mission was placed by the British Government in the care of Mr. Jack Talbot, of the Foreign Office. Upon the night of the robbery and murder, Mr. Talbot disappears.

The Earl of Fairholme, being engaged to be married to Talbot's sister, intrusts Brett with the finding of Talbot.

Brett's first clue is the statement of Mr. Winter, a Scotland Yard detective, that Mr. Talbot and a lady have been seen in Paris, Talbot having signed his name in a hotel register. Brett goes to Paris to see if the signature is genuine.

On board the boat going across he finds a Scotland Yard man, probably sent to arrest Talbot, as being a party to the crime.

CLINGING to the hand-rails and executing some crude but effective balancing feats, he reached the dining saloon, which was woefully denuded of occupants, for the English Channel that night had sternly set its face against the indiscriminate use of cold ham.

Near the bar, however, solemnly digesting a liqueur, stood a man to whom the choppy sea evidently gave no concern. He had the square shoulders, neat-fitting clothes, and closely clipped appearance at the back of the neck which mark the British officer; but he also stood square on his feet, and swayed with unconscious ease whether the vessel pitched, or rolled or executed the combined movement.

"Now, I wonder," said Brett, "if that is Captain Gaultier. He must be. Gaultier, from his name, should be a Jersey man, hence his facility in foreign languages and his employment as a Foreign Office messenger. It's worth trying. I will make the experiment."

He reached the bar and ordered a whisky and soda. Turning affably to the stranger, he remarked:

"Nasty night, isn't it? I hope we shan't be much behind time."

The stranger glanced at him with sharp and inquisitive eyes, but the glance evidently reassured him, for he replied, quite pleasantly:

"Oh, no. A matter of a few minutes perhaps. Then they usually manage to make up any delay after we leave Calais."

"That's good," said Brett, "because I want to be in Paris at the earliest possible moment."

The other man smiled.

"We are due there at 5.38," he said. "Rather an early hour for business, isn't it?"

"Well, yes," assented the barrister, "under ordinary circumstances, but as my only business in Paris is to examine a hotel register and then get something to eat before I return, I do not wish to waste time unnecessarily on the road."

The other man nodded affably, but gave no sign of further interest.

"So," communed Brett, "if it be Gaultier he has not heard the latest developments. I must try a frontal attack."

"Does your name happen to be Gaultier?" he went on.

The stranger arrested his liqueur glass in the final tilt.

"It does," he said, "but I do not think I have the pleasure of knowing you."

"No," said Brett, "you haven't."

"Well?" said the other man.

"The fact is," said Brett, "that I heard you had been in London. I guessed from your appearance that you might be a King's messenger, and it was just possible that the Captain Gaultier in whom I was interested might start back to the Continent to-night, so I just put two and two together, don't you see, with the result that it made four, a thing that doesn't always happen in deduction if not in mathematics."

Now, Foreign Office messengers are not chosen for their simplicity or general want of intelligence. Captain Gaultier eyed his questioner with some degree of stern suspicion as he said from behind his cigar:

"May I ask who you are?"

"Certainly," said Brett, producing his card.

After a quick glance at the pasteboard, Gaultier continued:

"I suppose, Mr. Brett, you have some motive in addressing me? What is it?"

"I am interested in the fate of a man named Talbot," was the straightforward reply, "and as you told the Under-Secretary that you had seen Talbot crossing to Paris in company with a lady last Tuesday, I hoped that perhaps you would not mind discussing the matter with me."

Captain Gaultier was evidently puzzled. Private conversations with Under-Secretaries of State are not, as a rule, public property, and his momentary intention to decline further conversation with this good-looking and fascinating stranger was checked by the remembrance of that fact.

"Really, Mr. Brett," he said, "although I do not question

Digitized by Google

the accuracy of your statement, you will readily understand that I can hardly discuss the matter with you under the circumstances."

"Naturally. You would not be holding a responsible position in His Majesty's service if you were at all likely to do any such thing. But I propose, in the first instance, to reassure you as to my *bona-fides*, and I may point out, in the second place, that as I have met you by a fortunate chance, you can hardly deem it a breach of confidence to discuss with me the mere accidental appearance on a cross-Channel steamer of a man known not only to both of us but to Society at large."

Gaultier clearly hesitated, but he did not refuse to accept the Under-Secretary's letter, which Brett handed to him, with the words:

"You know the handwriting, no doubt."

"That speaks for itself." The King's messenger smiled when he returned the note. "It is an odd coincidence," he added. "And still more curious that you should spot me so readily. However, Mr. Brett, we have now cleared the air. What can I do for you?"

"Simply this," said the barrister, "do you mind telling me how you came to recognise Mr. Talbot?"

"Well, for one thing," was the thoughtful reply, "I knew his overcoat. I often met Mr. Talbot in the Foreign Office, and one day he drove me to his club wearing a very handsome coat lined with astrachan. It struck me as a peculiarly comfortable and well-fitting one, and although there are plenty of men about town who may possess astrachan coats, it is a reasonable assumption that this was the identical garment when it happened to be worn by the man himself."

"Then you are quite certain it was Talbot?" went on the barrister.

"Quite certain."

"Would you swear it was he, even though his life depended upon your accuracy?"

"Well, no, perhaps not that, but I would certainly swear that I believed it was Mr. Talbot."

"Ah, that is a material difference. The only way in which you could be positively certain was to enter into conversation with him, was it not?"

"Yes, that is so."

"I do not want you to think, Captain Gaultier, that I am cross-examining you. Let me tell you at once that I believe the man you saw was masquerading in Talbot's clothes, and made up to represent him. Was there anything about his appearance that might lend credence to such a view?"

The other reflected a little while before answering.

"There was only one thing," he said, "and that was the fact that he did not seem to notice me. Now, he is a sharp sort of chap, and as it was broad daylight and a fine day he must have seen me, as he knows me well. Again, from all that I have heard of him, I do not think that he would either pass an acquaintance without speaking to him, or take trips on the Continent with ladies of the music-hall persuasion."

"You have supplied two very powerful reasons why the individual you saw should not be Jack Talbot. Yet, as you say, it was broad daylight, and you had a good look at him."

"No, no," interrupted the other. "I had a good look at his coat—and the lady. Whoever the man was he appeared to be wrapped up in both of them, and he certainly did not court observation. I naturally thought that the feminine attachment accounted for this, and, for the same reason, I did not even seek to scrutinise him too closely. To put the thing in a nutshell, I saw a man whom I believed to be Jack Talbot—and who certainly resembled him in face and figure—attired in Talbot's clothes, and wearing a coat which I had noted so particularly as to be able to describe it to my tailor when ordering a similar one. Add to that the appearance of an attractive lady, young and unknown, and you have my soul laid bare to you in the matter."

GIFT OF £50
From One Reader to the Rest.
See page 13.

"Thank you," said Brett, "I am much obliged."

He would have quitted the saloon, but Captain Gaultier laughed, as he said:

"Hold on a bit: it is my turn now. Suppose I try to pump you."

The Fellow-Passenger.

A GIANT wave took hold of the vessel and shook her violently, and Brett, though an average amateur sailor, felt that the saloon was no place for him.

"Between you and the ship, Captain Gaultier," he said, "the success of the operation would be certain. I have secured a quiet corner of the deck, so if you wish for a further talk we must adjourn there."

The transit was effected without incident, much to Brett's relief. After a minute or two he felt that a cigar was possible. He turned to his companion with a quiet observation:

"The vessel has failed. You can start now."

"Well," said Gaultier, "tell me what is the mystery attaching to Talbot's movements. I only heard the vaguest of rumours in the Department, but something very terrible appears to have happened, and, indeed, I heartily wished I had kept my mouth shut concerning my supposed meeting with him last Tuesday, as the affair was no business of mine. Moreover, you have now somewhat shaken my belief in his identity, although I can hardly tell you why that should be so." Brett glanced round to make sure that no one would overhear him, but the fierce wind that whistled round the charthouse and bridge, the seas that smote the ship's quarter with a thunderous noise, the all pervading sense of riotous fury in the elements, rendered the precaution almost unnecessary. Despite the weather, however, there was no one near enough to act the part of eavesdropper, and Brett, exercising his power of rapid decision which frequently impressed observers as a gift of divination, determined that to let such a man as the King's Messenger into the secret could not possibly be harmful to the interests of his client, whilst his aid might be very beneficial.

In the fewest possible words, therefore, he poured the tale into the other's wondering ear.

When he had finished, Gaultier remained silent a few minutes.

Already the clear radiance of the magnificent light at Calais was sending intermittent flashes of brightness over the deck, and the long shoulder of Cape Gris Nez was thrusting the force of the gale back into mid-channel.

"I think," said Gaultier, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, "that your view is the right one, Mr. Brett. There is much more in this business than meets the eye, and any man who believes that Jack Talbot would mix himself up in it must be a most determined ass. Of course such people do exist, but they shouldn't be in the police force. You are going on to Paris, you said?"

"Yes."

"Then we might travel together. All that you have said is quite new to me. Curiously enough I have just returned from Constantinople and I may be able to help you."

Brett silently thanked his stars for the gratuitous circumstance that threw him into the company of Captain Gaultier. He recognised that the King's Messenger, with the precaution that might be expected from one whose daily life depended entirely upon the exercise of that faculty, desired to mentally review the strange facts made known to him before he committed himself further. With ready tact the barrister changed the conversation to matters of the moment until they reached the pier at Calais, when both men, not encumbered with much luggage, were amongst the first flight of passengers to reach the station buffet.

On their way they captured a railway official and told him to reserve a *coupé lit* compartment. In the midst of their

Digitized by Google

hasty meal the Frenchman arrived, voluble, apologetic. The train was crowded. Never had there been such a rush to the South. By the exercise of most profound care he had secured them two seats in a compartment, but the third had already taken itself. He was sorry for it, but he had done his best.

When they entered their carriage they found the third occupant in possession. He was French, aggressively so. Phil May might have used him for a model. The poor man had been wretchedly ill from the moment he left Dover until the vessel was tied to her berth in the harbour at Calais. He paid not the least attention to the newcomers, being apparently absorbed in contemplation of his own misery. The two Englishmen, though experienced travellers, were sufficiently insular to resent the presence of the stranger, whom Brett resolved to put to the language test forthwith.

"It is very cold in here," he said, "Shall I turn on the hot air?"

The Frenchman seemed to understand that he had been spoken to. He looked up with a shivering smile and explained that he had only booked one seat. The remainder of the compartment was at their disposal. He was evidently guiltless of acquaintance with the English tongue, but Brett did not like his appearance.

Though well-dressed and well-spoken he was a nondescript individual, and the flash of his dark eyes was not reassuring. Yet the man was so ill that Brett forthwith dismissed him from his thoughts, though he took care to occupy the centre seat himself, thus placing Captain Gaultier on the other side of the carriage. After a visit from the ticket examiner, the Frenchman disposed himself for a nap and the train soon started.

Captain Gaultier, by this time, had made up his mind as to the information he felt he could give his new acquaintance.

"It is very odd," he said, "that those diamonds should disappear just at the moment when there is every sign unrest in Turkey. You know, of course, the manner of th last Sultan's death?"

Brett nodded.

"And you have heard, no doubt, something of the pr cautions taken by the present Sultan to safeguard his life?"

"Yes," said Brett.

"Well, these have been redoubled of late, and the ma never goes out that he is not in the most abject state of fea He is a pitiful sight, I assure you. I saw him less than fortnight ago, driving to the Mosque on Friday, and hi coachman evidently had orders to go at a gallop through th streets, whilst not only was the entire road protected b soldiers, but every house had been previously examined b police agents. There is something in the wind of more tha usual importance in the neighbourhood of Yildiz Kiosk jus now, I am certain. I suppose you did not chance to see an mention of the fact that Hussein ul Mulk, the Sultan's nephew has recently fled from Turkey, and is now under the pro tection of the French Government?"

"Yes, I noticed that."

"You don't seem to miss much," was Gaultier's shar remark, pausing in his narrative to light a cigar.

"One of my few virtues is that I read the newspapers,' said Brett.

The train was slowing down as it neared the town statio in Calais, and Gaultier's voice could be momentarily hear above its diminishing rattle.

"Well," he said, "I happen to know Hussein ul Mulk and if we could find out where he lives in Paris I would intro duce you to him."

Brett looked at the slumbering Frenchman out of the corne of his eye. The man appeared to be dozing peacefully enough but the alert barrister had an impression that his limbs wer not sufficiently relaxed under the influence of slumber. Indeed

(*Continued on next page.*)

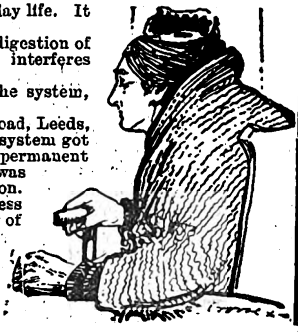
AFTER EFFECTS of Influenza!

An attack of Influenza leaves the human system too weak to stand the strains of ordinary every-day life. It disorganises the digestive organs, and as a natural result, it leaves the liver in an unhealthy condition.

The ordinary duty of the liver is to separate the bile from the blood. Bile is necessary to assist the digestion of food, and it also helps the bowels to act regularly. The liver is easily disorganised if anything whatever interferes with its action.

It is quite plain, then, that an attack of Influenza brings about a generally debilitated condition of the system, and a tonic is required which will tone up the organs of digestion and the liver to their normal condition.

To accomplish this, follow the EXAMPLE set by Mrs. C. Strafford, 18 Crawford Street, Meanwood Road, Leeds, who has arrived at the mature age of 63 years. Having suffered from two severe attacks of Influenza her system got completely run down, but after taking a course of Bile Beans for Biliousness she found a speedy and permanent cure. Interviewed by a Leeds journalist, Mrs. Strafford said: "My illness dates four years back, when I was much distressed by a family bereavement. My appetite began to fail me, and I suffered from Indigestion. I was attacked by influenza, which left me in a weak condition. Pains in the chest and a sense of fulness tortured me, and I had to be careful what I ate. About last Christmas I had another very severe attack of Influenza, which left me in a still weaker state. I could not sleep at nights, and when I got up on a morning I was troubled with a splitting headache. In fact I was completely run down. I tried every means I could think of to get cured, but without success. I obtained medicine from three different doctors, but it did not benefit me. About this time I heard of Bile Beans, and as a last resource I determined to try them. I began to take the Beans, and soon found they were doing me good. As I continued with them I grew stronger, and the pains in my chest disappeared. After completing the course of Bile Beans, Indigestion and the morning headaches are things of the past, and I am glad to say that I am completely cured, which is due to Bile Beans alone.



Bile Beans for Biliousness cure Headache, Influenza, Constipation, Liver Troubles, Rheumatism, Colds, Liver Chills, Indigestion, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Mfg. Co., Red Cross St., London, E.C., on receipt of price, 1/1½ and 2/9 per box. Sample Box Free on receipt of penny stamp (to cover return postage) if this paper is mentioned. Address: The Bile Bean Mfg. Co., Greek St., Leeds.

HALF-A-GUINEA'S WORTH FOR 6d.

THE "BILOSCOPE"

and Outfit (an advertising novelty) for producing life-like pictures. Post free on receipt of 7 stamps. Address: The Bile Bean Mfg. Co., Box 686, Greek Street, Leeds.

Digitized by Google

he felt sure that the Frenchman was wide awake and endeavouring to catch the drift of their conversation.

"I will be most pleased to meet your friend, Captain Gaultier," he said, "and lest it should slip your memory I will give you a reminder."

He opened his card-case and wrote on the back of a card: "Grand Hotel. Breakfast 11.30. No more at present."

The quick-witted King's Messenger read and understood.

"It seems to me," he went on, "that my friend is the very man for your purpose, and though he is not in favour at Court just now he has plenty of friends in the various departments, and he could give you letters which would be certain to secure you some excellent orders. I suppose you are going to the East as the result of the rumoured intention of the Turkish Government to reconstitute the navy."

Brett made a haphazard guess at Gaultier's meaning.

"Yes," he said, "we ought to place a good many thousand tons with them."

Gaultier leant forward to strike a match and glanced at their companion. For some indescribable reason he shared Brett's views concerning this gentleman, and immediately started a conversation of general significance. They soon discovered that they had several mutual friends, and in this way they passed the dreary journey to Paris pleasantly enough.

At the Gare du Nord, their knowledge of French methods enabled them to get quickly clear of the Octroi, as neither of them had any baggage which rendered their presence necessary at the Custom-house. The Frenchman, who seemed to be thoroughly revived by the air of his beloved Paris, hurried out simultaneously with themselves. He had no difficulty in hearing Brett's directions to a cabman, but Gaultier had entered a vehicle at some distance.

Brett was the first away from the station. He fancied he saw his French travelling companion hastily whisper something to a lounger near the exit, so he suddenly pulled up his *voiture*, gave the driver a two-franc piece and told him to go to the Grand Hotel and there await his arrival. The cab had halted for the moment in the Rue de Lafayette, at the corner of the Place Valenciennes, and the cabman, recognising that his fare was an Englishman and consequently mad, drove off immediately in obedience to orders.

Though nearly six o'clock in the morning, it was quite dark, but as Brett walked rapidly back towards the station he had no difficulty in picking out Gaultier, who drove past him in an open vehicle. Some little distance behind came another, and herein the barrister thought he recognised the man to whom his French companion in the train had spoken. By this time many other cabs were dashing out of the station-yard, so Brett took the chance that he might be hopelessly wrong.

He hailed a third vehicle and told the driver to follow the other two, which were now some distance down the Rue de Lafayette. Not until the three cabs had crossed the Place de l'Opera and passed the Madeleine could Brett be certain that the occupant of the second was following his friend Gaultier. Then he chuckled to himself, for this was surely a rare stroke of luck.

Quickly reviewing the possibilities of the affair, he came to the conclusion that the Frenchman in the train really understood little, if any, English, but that he had caught the name of the fugitive from the Sultan's wrath and had forthwith betrayed an interest in their conversation which was, to say the least, remarkable. At the exit from the Gare du Nord the stranger had readily enough ascertained Brett's destination, but he clearly regarded it as important that Gaultier—the man who claimed Hussein ul Mulk as a friend—should be tracked, and had given the necessary instructions to the confederate who awaited his arrival

Special Story for Scottish Readers.
See page 14.

Although Gaultier had not said so, Brett guessed that his destination was the British Embassy in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. The route followed by the cabman led straight to that well-known locality. The Frenchman in the second cab evidently thought likewise, for, at the corner of the Rue Boissy he pulled up, and Brett was just in time to give his driver instructions to go ahead and thus avoid attracting undue notice to himself.

Gaultier turned into the Embassy, and Brett himself halted a little further on. Dismissing his driver with a liberal fare, he walked rapidly back, and was just in time to see the Frenchman enter into conversation with the night porter on duty. The latter personage, however, was clearly a trustworthy official, for he loudly told the other to be off and attend to his own affairs.

Then followed for Brett a most exciting and perplexing chase through many streets, and it was only by the exercise of his keenest powers of observation that he finally located his man at a definite number in the Rue Barbette, a tiny thoroughfare in the Temple district.

By this time dawn was rapidly advancing over Paris, and the streets were beginning to fill with early workers. He inquired from a passer-by the most likely locality in which he could find a cab, and the man civilly conducted him to the Rue de Rivoli. Thence he was not long in reaching the Grand Hotel, where he found the astonished driver of his first vehicle still safeguarding his bag and arguing fiercely with a porter that he had unquestionably obeyed the Englishman's instructions.

Tired though he was, Brett did not fail to scrutinise the list of arrivals at the hotel on the preceding Tuesday. He instantly found the entry he sought. The arrival of "Mr. and Mrs. John Talbot, London," was chronicled in the register with uncompromising boldness. Hastily comparing the writing in Talbot's letter with that in the visitors' book, Brett was at first staggered by their similarity but he quickly recognised the well-known signs which indicate that a man who himself writes a bold and confident hand has been copying a signature of another with the object of reproducing it freely and with reasonable accuracy. There are always perceptible differences in the varying pressure of the pen and the distribution of the ink.

Allowance had evidently not been made for the fact that Englishmen almost invariably write their names very badly in Continental hotel registers owing to their inability to use foreign pens. The man who had not only forged Mr. Talbot's name, but had also supplied him with a wife, laboured under no such disadvantage. Indeed, Talbot himself would probably not have written his own name so legibly.

"That is all right," said Brett wearily, traversing a corridor to gain his room. "Now I wonder if there is any connection between Hussein ul Mulk and the Rue Barbette."

The House in the Rue Barbette.

BRETT was called at ten o'clock. After reinvigorating himself with a bath and a hearty breakfast, he was ready to meet Captain Gaultier, who arrived promptly at 11.30.

In the spacious foyer of the Grand Hotel it was impossible to say who might be looking at them.

"Come to my room," said Brett. "There we will be able to talk without interruption."

Once comfortably seated, Brett resumed the conversation where he had broken it off in the train overnight.

"You said you knew Hussein ul Mulk," he commenced.

"Yes," replied the King's Messenger, "and what is more I have discovered his residence since we parted. It seems that one of the attachés at the Embassy met him recently and

(*Continued on page 31.*)

Digitized by Google

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

A CELEBRATED

NELSON WATCH & CHAIN

FREE FOR ONE DAY'S WORK.

We send this Genuine 30-Hour Nickel-Plated WATCH, Warranted an ACCURATE TIME-KEEPER, with Chain and Pendant, for Selling Seven Beautiful Articles at 1/- each. Sterling Value. Send your full Name and Address (Post-card will do) by Return of Post, and we will at once forward the box of Handsome Goods, Post Paid, and a large Premium List. No Money Required. WE TRUST YOU. We send the Goods at our own risk. Send us the money that you get for them, and we send you the Watch, Chain and Pendant by Registered Post.

THE NELSON MANUFACTURING CO., 72, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

EVERY LADY

should BUY AT ONCE for NEXT TO NOTHING from the stock of the latest fashionable COSTUMES and MILLINERY, worn only once or twice, placed for disposal by ladies in the HIGHEST LONDON SOCIETY with Miss Selwyn, **The Ladies' Mart**, 99 Regent Street, London, W. *Or send 2d. in stamps for details.*

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Guaranteed 4 years. Will work by hand or treadle. To ensure satisfaction, machine sent on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL; or, if desired, can be paid 5/- **Monthly.** Write for terms, designs, and Samples of work. **39/-**

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., 184s High St., Camden Town, London, N.W. 63 Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn

RUN NO RISK

KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE

THE WORST COUGH

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you ho (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED).

Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; th most efficacious substitute for cod liver o invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/ 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefto Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by Mr **CONYERS, Morchard-Bishop, Devon.**

Many will tell you that "Tatcho" is the only remedy they have found serviceable after years of trying.

"TATCHO"

Gets the hair back. Puts the hair right. Keeps the hair right.

WHO SAY SO.

The Hon. Mrs. GORDON—

"The Hon. Mrs. Gordon has derived much benefit from 'Tatcho.'—3 Northumberland Street, Edinburgh, August 28th, 1902."

PRINCESS EUGENIE CRISTOFOROS PALÆOLOGUE—

"'Tatcho' is invaluable. I would not be without it on any account. — Belvedere Hotel, Kensington."

Major-General KEATE—

"I find 'Tatcho' excellent, and better than anything I have ever tried in the course of a long life. I could not have believed that any preparation could do so much good in so short a time.—High Croft, Winchester."

LADY SYKES—

"I can recommend 'Tatcho.' It has entirely renovated my hair.—Mayfair, W."

Commander T. WOLFE MURRAY, R.N.

"I have found 'Tatcho' of distinct benefit to my hair.—Trobridge, Crediton, June 18th, 1902."

Colonel PERRY—

"My dear Mr. Sims,—'Tatcho' is wonderful, and all to whom I recommend it praise it. I hope others have advised the use of 'Tatcho' as I have.—Royal Hibernian Hotel, Dawson Street Dublin."

Colonel BAGOT-CHESTER—

"I well know how valuable 'Tatcho' is.—Zetland House, Maidenhead."

"TATCHO" is sold by all Chemists and Stores throughout the World, in Bottles at 1/-, 2/9, and 5/-.

A 4/6 full size Trial Bottle for 1/10

is supplied to enable the public to test the possibilities of "Tatcho." Chemists, Stores, and Hairdressers, or direct, carriage paid, from the "Tatcho" Depot, Lincoln's Inn, London.

"A hair on the Head is worth two in the brush."

WHY THIS FALSE SHAME?

False shame is a robber. It takes from us our pleasures, joys, and rightful inheritances, and gives us nothing in return. Is a woman ashamed of desiring beauty, or a man of acquiring strength? According to the publishers of Professor Boyd Laynard's great work, SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE, there are hundreds of thousands of such cases. In a recent interview with the publishers the following statement was made: "It is perfectly astounding the thousands of letters we are receiving from the public requesting us to send Professor Laynard's work privately packed! Of course we have always made a custom of doing so; but why people should be ashamed of receiving such a book is beyond our comprehension and very uncomplimentary to the Professor, who is the greatest living authority upon personal hygiene. But for all this, the sale of his work in the English language is rapidly approaching one million copies. Hindustani, Arabic, and Malayalam are among the latest translations."

The first part of this remarkable book, which contains 127 chapters, consists of a practical guide to the attainment of good looks without the aid of art. Professor Boyd Laynard will have nothing to do with powder, paint, face-washes, and the like; but gives plain instructions for the scientific cultivation of beauty. The rest of the book deals with health and long life. These chapters are of the highest value.

Its publishers, Messrs. Hammond, Hammond and Co., 19, 21, and 23 Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., have just produced a new and complete popular edition. The book, although published at Two Shillings, will, if ordered direct from the publishers, be forwarded, carriage paid, to all readers of SHORT STORIES at the low discount price of

ONE SHILLING & SIXPENCE.

Among the numerous subjects dealt with the following are but a few. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS**, enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the Publishers.

Analysis of beauty—Beauty a possible attainment—The way we make our own faces—Secrets of face transformation — Changeableness of beauty and its causes—Some strange facts concerning the variableness of beauty—"Odd-faced" beauty—The countenance the counterpart of the mind—How pleasing expressions become permanent—How a person's habitual look is acquired—How permanent expressions can be transformed—Metaphysical secrets of keeping young and preserving a youthful appearance—The author's investigations into the causes why some individuals look younger than others at a certain age—Discovery of a great metaphysical secret—Wonders of the skin—Effects of mental emotions upon the skin—Bad complexions and their causes—Diet that spoils and diet that improves the complexion—General care of the complexion—Construction, growth, and wonders of the hair—Why hair falls out—Premature greyness: its causes and prevention—General care of the hair—Superfluous hairs and how to treat them—Wrinkles: their prevention and treatment—Freckles, tan, and blackheads—Oily skin, dry skin, and loose skin—How the nose can be improved—Protruding ears and their treatment—Offensive breath—Anatomy of the teeth—Why teeth decay—General care of the teeth—Tallness, and how to attain it—Round shoulders, and how to cure them—How to acquire a full chest—Perfect form and figure: their proper proportions — Thinness, and its treatment—Excessive stoutness—Care of the hands—Care of the feet—Physiognomy; or, the art of reading character from the face—Mental influences upon health—Power of the mind over the body—Influence of the mind in curing diseases—How the mind can cause dyspepsia—Effect of the direction of thought to the heart—How real diseases often supervene upon fancied ailments—How violent passions injure health—Laughter as a medicine—Ailments cured by laughter—Wonders of digestion—Relative value to our bodies of the principal articles of food—Fruits and vegetables as medicine, their various influences upon the physical system—Health-preserving diet and its consistency—Diet favourable to mental exertion and intellectual culture—Influence of various foods upon our passions and propensities—The influence exerted by the mind upon the appetite and digestion—Some perilous articles of food—Exercise and its relation to health — Baths and bathing: their influence upon health—The way we breathe, and how it affects our health—The marriage state, and its influence upon health—Statistics showing the comparative vitality of married and single persons—100 professions, trades, and occupations: their respective influences upon health and long life—Sleep, and its relation to health—Insomnia, and its treatment—The eyes, and how to preserve them—The ears and hearing: how to prevent deafness—The voice: its cultivation and preservation—Memory, and how to improve it—Sudden failure of memory—Rules for cultivating the memory—Influence of diet upon memory—Stammering, and how to cure it—Prevention of disease—Nervousness—Blushing: its physiology and treatment—Rules of life for attaining longevity—Compendium of the mental, moral, physical, and external influences that lessen the years of our earthly existence—How to live to a hundred—Premature old age and its causes—Short biographies of 30 modern centenarians, whose ages range from 115 to 185 years—General principles that can be laid down for the anticipation of longevity—The eight signs of long life.

ORDER FORM 7392577.

To HAMMOND, HAMMOND & CO., 19, 21, & 23 Ludgate Hill, London.

Please forward me Professor Boyd Laynard's complete work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE" (carriage paid), for which I enclose the sum of One Shilling and Sixpence.

Name .....

Address .....

Digitized by Google

thought it advisable to keep in touch with the Young Turkish party, of which Hussein ul Mulk is the shining light. So he asked him where he lived, and as the result I have jotted down the address in my notebook." Gaultier searched through his memoranda, and speedily found what he wanted.

"Wait a minute," interrupted Brett. "Does it happen to be No. 11, Rue Barbette?"

The barrister had more than once surprised his companion during the night, but this time Gaultier seemed to be more annoyed than startled.

"If you know all these things so glibly," he said stiffly, "I don't see why you should bother me to get you the information. I certainly gathered from your remarks that the only acquaintance you had with Hussein ul Mulk was obtained from the newspapers, and that individual himself has the best of reasons for not publishing his address broadcast."

Brett smiled.

"You mean," he said, "that Hussein ul Mulk does live at No. 11, Rue Barbette."

"Why, of course he does," was the irritable answer.

"That is very odd," said the barrister. "It was a mere guess on my part, I assure you."

His assurance evidently did not weigh much with Captain Gaultier, who replaced his note-book in his pocket, and obviously cast about in his mind for a convenient excuse to take his departure.

Brett knew exactly what was troubling him.

"I am quite in earnest," he said, "in telling you that I simply hazarded a guess at the address. To prove that this is so I must place you in possession of certain incidents that transpired after we parted at the Gare du Nord."

Rapidly but succinctly he told the amazed King's Messenger of the chase in the cab across Paris, and how he, Brett, had followed the Frenchman who was tracking Gaultier's movements so closely.

"You will understand," he concluded, "that, in view of my preconceived theory, it was not a very far-fetched assumption to connect Hussein ul Mulk with the house in the Rue Barbette into which your spy vanished."

"Well," gasped his astonished hearer, "I must say, Mr. Brett, that I owe you an apology. I really thought at first you were fooling me, whereas now I learn that you simply kept your eyes open much wider than other people perhaps. Nevertheless, you have given me a genuine explanation of circumstances that were otherwise puzzling. For, do you know, I heard about that chap calling at the Embassy last night. The incident was unusual, to say the least, but I paid little attention to it, and certainly failed altogether to connect it with your visit to Paris. Even yet I do not see what reason anyone can have for shadowing my movements."

"I think it is mere chance," said Brett, "I imagine that our fellow-passenger in the train caught the name of Hussein ul Mulk in our conversation, and this decided him to shadow your movements, by means of the confederate who awaited his arrival at the station. As it happened, they simply hit upon the wrong person. It might have paid them much better to follow me. The outcome of the blunder is that I am in a fair way towards ascertaining all I want to know about them, whereas, up to the present, they do not even suspect my existence as an active agent in the affair."

"Well, now," said Gaultier, "since you have so satisfactorily cleared my mind of suspicion, in what way can I help you regarding Hussein ul Mulk?"

"Could you introduce me to him?"

"In what capacity?"

Brett reflected for a moment before replying.

"It would best suit my purpose if I met him as a political sympathiser."

Gaultier evidently did not like the idea. Foreign Office messengers do not care to be associated with politics in any shape or form.

"Is there no other way?" he asked dubiously.

"Plenty," said Brett. "I might pose as a friend of yours interested in Turkish carpets, or coffee, or cigarettes, but for the purpose of my inquiry it would be well to jump preliminaries at once and make this chance acquaintance under the guise of a wire-puller."

"All right," said Gaultier, "I can't see that it matters much to me, and the letter you have in your possession from the Under-Secretary is sufficient warrant for me to give you any assistance that lies in my power."

He glanced at his watch. "It is just about time for *dejeuner*," he continued. "What do you say if we drive to the Rue Barbette at once?"

The barrister assented, and they were soon crossing Paris with the superb disregard for other people's feelings that characterises the local cab-driver.

"By the way," inquired Gaultier, "have you learnt anything else since your arrival?"

"Only this—it was not our friend Talbot who came here on Tuesday with a lady."

"You are sure?"

"Positive. I have compared the handwriting in the hotel register with that of a letter undoubtedly written by Mr. Talbot, and the two do not agree. The appearance of the entry of 'Mr. and Mrs. Talbot, London,' in the visitors' book of the Grand Hotel, was a mere trick intended to amuse the police for a few hours until the conspirators had perfected their scheme for final and complete disappearance."

"It was a bold move," said the King's Messenger.

"Very. Quite in keeping with the rest of the details in the history of an uncommon crime."

At last the fiacre stopped in front of the house in Rue Barbette which Brett had already scrutinised during the early hours of the morning.

"Here we are," said Gaultier, with a laugh. "If we find Hussein ul Mulk at home I don't know what the dickens we are going to say to him. Remember that I depend upon you to carry out a difficult situation, because my Turkish friend will become suspicious the minute he finds me dabbling in intrigue. He knows quite well that such matters are quite outside of my usual business."

"I think I shall be able to interest him," said Brett, calmly; and without further preliminary Gaultier ascertained from the *concierge* that the Turkish gentleman was within.

The two men ascended to the second storey.

Gaultier rapped loudly upon the first door he encountered, and the summons appeared to scatter some of the inhabitants, judging by the rapid opening and closing of doors that preceded the appearance of an elderly and solemn-looking Turk, who cautiously unbolted the outer door and demanded their business.

Gaultier sent in his card, and the servitor locked the door in the faces of the two men while he went to ascertain his master's orders.

"They evidently do not mean to take many risks," he said, in a low voice.

"You are right," said Brett, "though they appear to take the greatest one of all without giving it a thought."

"And what is that?"

"This exhibition of nervousness and precaution before visitors are admitted. Why, the best way to excite suspicion is to behave just as they are doing."

But now the door was reopened, and the elderly Turk ushered them into a spacious room on the right of the entrance-hall, where they were received by a young man—a tall, dignified Mohammedan, who rose hastily from a chair, having apparently abandoned the perusal of a newspaper.

(To be continued.)

Ask your Bookseller for . . .

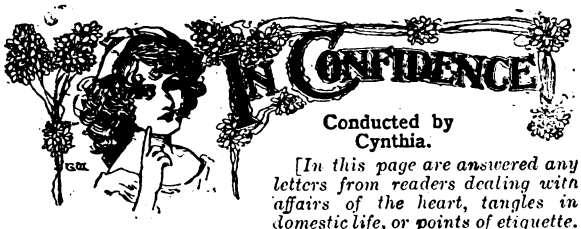
HOW TO CHOOSE A HUSBAND

By ROSALIE NEISH.

A Book every Man and Woman should Read.

Charmingly Illustrated. *Six Shillings.*

Digitized by Google



Conducted by Cynthia.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Non-Love Letters.

"F. R." met a girl a few months ago, and corresponded with her. She answered his letters in a very friendly strain. He now hears that she is engaged to another man. Should he continue writing to her?

* * * * *

I should certainly reply to her last letter definitely, giving a hint, if possible, that it is for her to decide whether or not she wishes to write to you any more or hear again from you. Of course if she replies and her letter invites another from you, you will write. But you should not take the initiative in continuing the correspondence as she is engaged to another man. There would, however, be no harm in a purely-friendly correspondence, such as many engaged girls exchange with male friends, with the knowledge and consent of their *fiancés*.

Loving a Married Man.

"Can a girl fall in love with a married man?" inquires "X." Unfortunately, "X.," there are no human limits to those whom one may love. Love knows no boundary lines. Consequently only too many married lives are wrecked through attachments entered into with others than husband or wife. But there is a point at which principle prevents such love attachments from ever assuming a dangerous stage. No right-minded man or woman would allow their feelings to develop towards a person who is another's property.

The Punishment of Coldness.

"F. B." is a girl of eighteen, and admits to me that she is very pretty. Until a year ago, she had been receiving attentions from a young man who had treated her very well indeed, and was much in love with her. She, however, only coldly returned his affections, and offended him. He left her, and she has not seen him since. Now she is anxious to resume the friendship, but she has heard that the man is going out with another girl. Should she apologise to him by writing, or not at all?

* * * *

The best thing would be to ask him to call on you, and then say how sorry you are that the quarrel took place, apologising if you think you were in the wrong. And then if he takes the apology as it is meant, beware against being too cold in future. There are many men who are very sensitive to coldness, and much discouraged by it. It often alienates their affections entirely. Do not exhibit it again.

Forming an Acquaintance.

"ANXIOUS ONE" has fallen in love with a young lady he sees at a church where he worships once a fortnight in company with his cousin. It is away from his own home. How should he try to form her acquaintance? He has her name and address.

Perhaps the clergyman knows her family, and also your cousin. If you move in the same social circle, it might be possible for you to meet in connection with some parochial affair, such as a bazaar, concert, or meeting. It may take some time to accomplish your desire, but as you belong to the same congregation, I should think there must sooner or later be some opportunity for your knowing each other, which would not exist if you attended different churches.

A Seaside Love.

"CAUTIOUS" has the usual doubts which follow on chance seaside acquaintanceships. He met a girl a year younger than himself—sixteen—and exchanged "sweet" letters and photos. Now he thinks he will get into trouble if he continues the affair, as he finds he "will not want the girl," to quote his own expression. He asks me if I think it wrong for him to continue writing love letters to her, seeing he is not really in love with the girl. They will meet at the same seaside town next year.

* * * *

I should say it would be very nice for "CAUTIOUS" to keep up a "sweet" tone in his correspondence. As he is only seventeen, I scarcely see that there can be any particular danger in doing so. One does not expect girls and boys at his age to exchange formal letters. When next year comes and they meet again, will be quite time for them to consider whether there is any lasting affection between them. If there is, well I am sure nothing could be nicer. But if "CAUTIOUS" really does not care for the girl, he should avoid any deception in the matter of correspondence. It is possible, he should remember, to write a sweet letter and yet not to commit himself to any false statement.

Sending Presents.

"LEONARD" is engaged to a girl, but she never sends him a present, though he constantly sends her things. Do I think he should continue to send them when nothing ever comes in return, even on his birthday?

* * * *

It is rather unusual for a girl engaged to a man to neglect his birthday. But perhaps the girl cannot afford to give you as good a present as she would wish, and thinks it better not to send a trifling object. Anyhow, one does not give presents merely in the expectation of receiving them. There is, I imagine, a pleasure in giving to those you love which is independent of any self-interest. If you are still fond of the girl, I suppose you will continue to give her presents. It would be nicer if she occasionally returned them, but after all, I suppose she would do so if it lay in her power.

Sowing Suspicion.

"M. M." has fallen in love with a young man, but her friends warn her from making his acquaintance. They will not, however, give the reason. The young man has announced that he is much attracted by "M. M." Should she try to know him under the circumstances?

* * * *

Probably your friends have some reason for warning you against the young man. It is unkind of them not to tell you the reason they wish you not to know him, so that you could make up your own mind on the point. If they continue to refuse to tell you, the best thing is to refuse to believe anything. If you are brought together, you should easily be able to judge for yourself whether he is or is not a desirable friend for you. The warning may have been based solely on Rumour, and she is, as we all know, a lying jade. The man may be really quite a good fellow, and yet the victim of some petty scandal.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET," "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and "MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its

ABSOLUTE PURITY.

Digitized by Google

"IT'S CHRONIC!"

What a curious saying, or rather exclamation, has now caught the popular fancy—"It's chronic!" And what a flavour of keen sarcastic humour there is about it, too. Mention the torn-up condition of the roads in every direction "It's chronic!" Speak of the flatness of trade—of the iniquity of combines—of the lock-outs and strikes—of slumps and falling markets—of the matinée hat. "It's chronic!" When a thing has become chronic, it represents a fixed evil.

FOR INSTANCE, an occasional bilious attack, or indigestion, or a run-down state of the nervous system, may not be very remarkable; but as these ailments, by slow degrees, take on a more or less permanent character, why then, "It's chronic!" And none but sufferers from such diseases can realise the dire meaning of those words. If it were only not chronic—if the particular cause of trouble was transitory—so that its victims could hope for peace; but no, they sorrowfully think, "It's chronic!" Nevertheless, in the great majority of cases the evil need not be chronic. It can be quite cured; and in many other cases it never need become chronic at all. It can be nipped in the bud. An old and faithful remedy is always at hand. Already you have a feeling that you ought to have remembered

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

Just so. That approved vegetable medicine is, without doubt, a specific for most of those diseases which have their origin in a disordered state of the stomach, liver, or kidneys. They regulate the digestive secretions, stimulate the action of the liver, and are one of the most powerful aids in eliminating uric acid from the system. As a general and family medicine they are beyond praise, and when **BEECHAM'S PILLS** are judiciously taken or administered, according to the directions which accompany each box, few of the troublesome ailments which make life a misery to thousands need become, or continue to be, **CHRONIC.**

Digitized by Google

Short Stories.

No. 732.] Week ending January 10th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

"THE RING SHALL BE ON HER FINGER, BUT SHE SHALL NEVER MARRY."

(SEE OUR THRILLING STORY, "FORTUNE'S WHEEL.")

Digitized by Google

TO BE FIRST

Is to occupy an enviable position. Many aspire for first place, but few attain it. To acquire the lead, aspiration and push alone are not sufficient. Merit is required. This is exactly why . . . .

BEECHAM'S PILLS

stand foremost among medicines. They possess real merit, and have proved themselves worthy of a permanent position in the family medicine chest. Trial purchasers become regular users, because they find nothing to equal Beecham's Pills for dispelling

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS, Indigestion, Sick Headache, Languor,

and other such troubles which arise from a Disordered Stomach. They regulate and tone up the entire system. The genuine worth of BEECHAM'S PILLS has obtained for them the unique position of having the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World.

Sold Everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills) and 2/9 (168 Pills).

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Cutlery

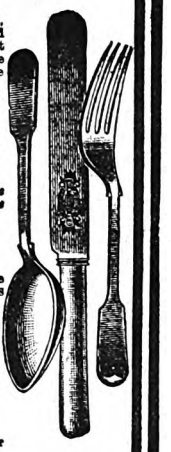
THE "ENTERPRISE" PARCEL 25/-

Household Cutlery & Plate.

Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white "Ivorette" Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of 'Columbian' Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.



HOW TO PAY.

Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if the Goods are not perfectly satisfactory in every respect.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms and particulars. No. Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints, etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box.

A CELEBRATED

NELSON WATCH & CHAIN

FREE FOR ONE DAY'S WORK.

We send this Genuine Nickel-Plated WATCH, Warranted an ACCURATE TIME-KEEPER, with Chain and Pendant, for Selling Seven Beautiful Articles at 1/- each. Sterling Value. Send your full Name and Address (Post-card will do) by Return of Post, and we will at once forward the box of Handsome Goods, Post Paid, and a large Premium List. No Money Required. WE TRUST YOU. We send the Goods at our own risk. Send us the money that you get for them, and we send you the Watch, Chain and Pendant by Registered Post.

THE NELSON MANUFACTURING CO., 72, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."*

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

ZOX for Neuralgia at Night.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Short Stories

No. 732.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 10th, 1903.

Fortune's Wheel.

See the Coloured Illustration on Cover.

"Let the gipsy tell your fortune my pretty lady! Silver—a little bit of silver—to cross the hand, and I will tell you the future—the beautiful, shining future I see before you!"

The queer old gipsy face peered up into Constance Leslie's, the shaking old voice rose into a kind of whining cry.

"Shall I, Felix?" The woman turned eagerly to the man by her side. "Shall I just let her tell my fortune, to see what she says? Now that I know what Fate has arranged for me it will be amusing just to hear what this old thing says," she added, in a whisper, whilst the sharp black eyes of the gipsy woman watched the two young people, half curiously, half indifferently.

Felix Maitland smiled indulgently down into the lovely laughing face of his betrothed, and, drawing from his pocket a silver piece, tossed it to the old woman with the words—

"Tell the lady's fortune, mother, and be sure it is a good one!"

A chuckle broke from the old woman's lips as she took the coin, and then bent over the hand Constance held out to her.

"I see a bright pathway," she said, her voice dropping into a strange, monotonous drone, "it shines to the end, and one walks it with you. All is fair—all is good, joy goes before, joy follows, unless——"

Her voice ended abruptly, and Constance glanced at her in surprise.

"Unless—what?" she asked.

"Unless you choose the wrong turning," came the reply, abrupt, short, almost harsh, and the piercing black eyes of the old gipsy looked long and searchingly into the woman's blue ones.

A little tremor passed over Constance's form.

"*Unless you choose the wrong turning,*" the gipsy repeated slowly and emphatically, with again that long, long glance, which, for some inexplicable reason sent a long shiver through Constance's frame. "Farewell, lady, farewell; sir, beware the wrong turning!" and, saying the words thus for the third time, the old woman turned away and vanished from their sight amongst the trees that bordered the lane.

For a few seconds after she left them the man and woman remained silent, then Constance said lightly—

"After all, dear, what does it amount to? Simply that if one makes mistakes in one's life, one must suffer for them. I don't know why the old thing's words gave me that odd, creepy feeling which came over me for a minute."

All rights reserved.]

Her lover laughed tenderly, putting his arm round the girl and drawing her towards him lovingly.

"Silly child!" he said softly, as his lips touched her forehead. "Fancy minding what an old beggar woman tells you! She had to say something, and she has a string of phrases which she turns on promiscuously. She is much like one of those automatic fortune-tellers after all!"

"Is she?" Constance glanced back across her lover's shoulder's in the direction taken by the old woman, and once more she shivered. Then she shrank closer into Felix's embrace, saying gently—

"Of course she is—just what you say. Don't let's talk about her any more. After all—Felix, surely you and I can defy Fate and fortune-tellers—when we are together."

"Certainly we can!" he answered gaily, "And in three weeks hence we shall be together for always, sweetheart, have you realised that? Do you remember that our wedding day is in three weeks from to-morrow?"

"Yes," she said, but there was a mechanical ring in her voice, and throughout the rest of their walk she was curiously distrait and absent. Some change seemed to have passed over the very afternoon itself. The sun, that had shone brilliantly when the two started for their walk, had sunk behind a great mass of grey cloud; a chilly wind crept up from the south-west, and set the leaves in motion, a strange shivering motion that foreboded a storm, and the birds were ominously silent.

"I wish we had not met that old woman," Constance said to Felix when, half an hour later, they entered the house where she was staying as his father's guest, "she—she was like a bird of ill-omen!"

"Oh, nonsense, dear!" Felix spoke lightly. "The coming storm is having the same effect upon you as upon the birds! You are upset, overwrought by the electricity in the air. After tea *I* will tell your fortune. I am a perfect marvel over fortunes in tea-leaves!" And thus talking and laughing pleasantly, the two joined old Mr. Maitland in the little study in which he always sat, having relapsed, after his wife's death, into bachelor habits and ways.

And whilst the trio sat together in the small, cosy room, an old gipsy woman was slowly threading her way through a tangle of undergrowth back to the gipsy camp, muttering as she went—

"Why did I say that? Why did I say that which I never meant to say? I had meant to read her a fair fortune—a

Digitized by Google

fair fortune throughout, but the words came to me, and I must needs speak them—I must needs say that which it was willed I *should* say. 'Unless you choose the wrong turning,' I said to her—aye, and she *will* choose it, she will choose it. The gipsy's magic never fails—it never fails!"

* * * * *

"Your betrothed is a very beautiful woman, my son. Pray Heaven she be as good as she is beautiful!"

"She is, dad, she is!" The voice of the younger man was full of eager enthusiasm. "I can never be thankful enough for the good luck which threw me in her way!"

"How did you first meet her? Tell me about it again. The whole thing has come to me so suddenly, as such a surprise, tell me the story again, my boy."

Old Mr. Maitland leant back in his armchair in the study. Felix stood with his back to the mantelpiece, his handsome face illumined with love and happiness, a dreamy light in his eyes, as he looked back over the past few weeks to the day when he had first met Constance Leslie, the beautiful woman who, in three weeks, would be his wife.

He and she had arrived on the previous day at Monkswell, his father's little country cottage, and the old man had immediately fallen a captive to her charms. Now that he and his son were alone together for a few moments after the tea at which Constance had gracefully presided for them, the above questions had fallen from the lips of the elder Mr. Maitland.

"I met her," Felix said, after a moment's pause, a little smile hovering about his lips, "at the house of a mutual friend. She had only just returned from America, where she had been singing. You know she is a singer, father?"

Mr. Maitland nodded.

"I caught sight of her directly I entered Mrs. Danby's drawing-room that night. I saw her dear face, and—I loved it—from the first I loved it. She sat in the circle of light thrown by a big lamp. In its brilliance her hair gleamed golden like a halo, the colour came and went on her cheeks whilst she talked, a smile played on her lips, and, when her eyes met mine their radiance made me catch my breath in wonder. Sometimes I think Helen of Troy must have been something like my darling, and I do not wonder all the world went mad over her!"

"Helen of Troy was, perhaps, not an altogether ideal wife," the older man said drily.

"No-o—possibly not," Felix laughed happily, "but Constance will be! She is so sweet, dad, her every thought and wish seem to agree with mine. I loved her the first moment I saw her beautiful face, and—and—well, I am mad about her!" he ended abruptly, with an embarrassed smile.

"And her family? They have made you welcome?" Mr. Maitland's shrewd eyes glanced up into his son's happy face.

"She has no family, poor darling, she's an orphan and alone in the world. She has told me over and over again that she never knew what love meant until she met me."

Felix's father still eyed him gravely, but the old man said nothing, perhaps because he felt that his son was scarcely the person to whom to point out that so beautiful a woman as Constance Leslie could hardly have lived an absolutely loveless existence.

"My dear boy," he said very gently, rising and laying a hand on his son's shoulder, "God grant you all happiness! If your future wife is as good as she is beautiful, your life should indeed be blessed above the common lot of man."

"She is good!" The younger man's tones were very fervent. "She has a nature clear as crystal. I believe I know her every thought; her truth, her purity are alike flawless, and, dad, you know that a man of my character must be sure of *truth*, of sincerity in the woman he loves. It is more to me than her great beauty."

Father and son smiled at one another. Both singularly upright men, they shared an almost equal love of truth, with a detestation of insincerity that amounted to mania, and old Mr. Maitland said to himself as he went upstairs:

"God grant all may be well! I wish my boy had found a wife from amongst our old friends and acquaintances. This woman has beauty enough to turn the sanest man's head. If she is as true as she is beautiful, my son's happiness is assured. If not, she will break his heart."

Felix, left alone in the study, sat down beside the table on which the tea tray rested, and idly picked up the cup from which Constance had been drinking, looking into the mass of tea-leaves with that happy smile still on his face.

"My darling!" he whispered. "I must find her fortune here, as I promised. I must look for the shining pathway the gipsy told her would be hers. I——"

As he spoke his eyes had been riveted on the cup, which he turned slowly in his hand, and all at once his voice ceased, the smile faded from his lips, a strange, fixed expression came into his eyes.

"Heavens!" he murmured, "I must be mad, what does it mean?"

He passed his hand over his eyes, shuddering violently, as though the sight he saw transfixed him with horror, then, as if compelled to do so, he fixed his gaze once more upon the contents of the cup, while his lips moved mechanically, and words dropped from them as the words drop from one who is dreaming, or unconscious in delirium.

"Evil behind and evil before," he said slowly. "I see a black past—I see a black future—unless—unless," he frowned wearily, "unless she chooses the right turning. There was a man before—a man who—who——" He broke off suddenly, and once more brushed his hand across his eyes. "I see him kiss her"—the long shudder shook him again—"I see love in his eyes—and in hers—and her face—is—like the face of a beautiful devil!" There was a long pause, and he turned the cup in his fingers still almost mechanically. "There is evil to come," he began again after a moment. "The ring shall be on her finger—yes—on Constance's finger, but she shall not marry the man who stands with her at the altar. The register shall not be signed—because another—another——"

"Ah!—stop—stop!" The door had opened quietly. Constance herself stood upon the threshold, her face white as ashes, her eyes looking at Felix with blank, awful dismay; "what—is—it—you—say?" she gasped out, stumbling to his side; "that—that—cannot be—my—fortune—I—there was—never another. I——" and before Felix could spring from his chair, or put out a hand to help her, she had dropped down like a stone, and lay unconscious at his feet.

Too terrified at first by the ghastliness of her face to realise what she had said, Felix occupied himself in restoring her to consciousness, and only after he had seated her in the arm chair, and she had somewhat recovered her customary calm, did a wave of intolerable doubt sweep over his soul.

It was impossible to him to leave that doubt unsolved. Leaning over her, speaking in his tenderest accents, he said to her:

"Sweetheart, why were you so troubled, so upset by the words you heard me say? I promised to read your fortune—but—we know it is all nonsense! Why did it trouble you so terribly?" He spoke with apparent lightness, but his eyes scanned her face earnestly. That wave of doubt would not be at once stilled.

Constance laid a hand on his and smiled up into his face—a smile that might well have turned a stronger brain than her lover's.

"Naturally a tea leaf fortune is absurd," she said, with her

Digitized by Google

soft, delicious laugh. "Surely you did not think *that* upset me. Oh, Felix, how funny! I think I—I was tired, dear—and—and—it was foolish of me to faint. Forgive me." The clinging touch of her hands—her fascinating smile—the lovelight in her eyes that met his, made Felix, for the moment, ashamed of his doubts, but later in the evening they recurred to his mind.

He and Constance were alone upon the terrace, in the moonlight, and after a long silence, during which his eyes had been fixed upon her face, he exclaimed brokenly:

"Do you know how I love you, my sweet? If I thought what I saw in that teacup was true—if—I thought another man had kissed your lips as I saw him do, I——"

"*Saw him?*" she panted out the words, and Felix saw that her face had grown very white—"saw someone kiss me?"

She grasped his arm, and he felt that her hand shook.

"Yes—I saw him kiss you. I saw your past," Felix spoke rapidly, hoarsely—"it was all evil—evil—and the picture was evil too. I seemed to hear a voice that said:

"'The shining pathway will all turn to blackness if she chooses the wrong turning now!' Constance—Constance"—he caught her hands and wrung them passionately—"tell me the truth—tell me if I read your past aright. Tell me the truth now. I could forgive everything—everything but deceit—tell me the truth."

His tone rang with vehement excitement, his grasp of her hands hurt her, her eyes contracted with pain—and with—was it fear?

"The truth?" she answered, twisting her head from side to side and speaking fast and nervously; "I have nothing to tell you, dear. My past—has been—has been—just what I have always told you—I was a lonely child and girl—I was a lonely woman till you came. I did not know what love meant—until—you taught me."

In the moonlight he could see her eyes wavered under his glance, and the colour came and went on her lovely face; he heard her hurried breathing and felt the trembling of the hands he held. His voice grew suddenly stern.

"Tell me all the truth now," he said, "I love you—I love you with my whole heart and soul—but—by Heaven, if I found you had deceived me I would spurn you utterly and for ever. *I can never forgive deceit.* Be true with me, dear; tell me why I saw evil—evil—evil—in your past and future. Tell me if another man ever——"

She wrenched her hands from him, her face flamed with indignation, as she drew herself up to her superb height and looked at him with gleaming eyes.

"I swear to you," she said, "that no other man has ever been anything in my life. I swear no other man has kissed my lips. The tea leaves have lied—there is nothing to tell of my past—I swear it."

She looked full into his eyes now, no wavering in her own glance, nothing but the passionate resentment of an innocent woman.

"Ah, believe me—dear," she cried, her voice breaking into tenderness; "believe in me, and love me, or I shall break my heart."

And Felix, maddened by her loveliness, shamed by her indignation into new hatred of his own doubts, caught her in his arms and held her close against his heart. But that night a whitefaced woman looked out into the moonlight, and stretched appealing hands towards the starlit sky, crying wildly.

"Was I wrong? Was I wrong after all? Have I taken—the wrong turning?"

A solemn hush fell over the congregation in the church, as Felix Maitland's voice rang out clear and firm.

"With this ring I thee wed"—as his hand slipped upon Constance's finger the golden circlet that bound her to him.

Never had the beautiful woman looked more beautiful than on the June morning when she and Felix stood side by side in the great London church, vowing to love and cherish one another till death should part them. The sun streamed in upon her golden hair, till it shone like a halo round her exquisite face—the face that had made those who watched her go up the nave in her sweeping white draperies say breathlessly:

"She looks like an angel from Heaven." And now the ceremony was nearly over! The ring was on the bride's finger; she had turned up to Felix a face radiant with happiness and triumph, and he was looking down at her in speechless love and admiration when a sudden stir at the end of the church arrested attention.

A verger hurried up the aisle and murmured a few words to the clergyman, whose face grew perturbed, and who looked at the two figures before him with a bewildered expression.

"An unforeseen event has occurred," he said at last, meeting Felix's astonished gaze, "I—I must ask you to come to the vestry before we can continue the service," and before the eyes of the greatly wondering congregation the bride and bridegroom, preceded by the officiating clergyman, made their way to the vestry. It was observed by all that the bride's face had grown as white as her dress—and that she seemed scarcely able to drag herself across the church even with the help of her bridegroom's arm—it was observed too, that he had also grown white as death—and little wonder! One sentence rang in his ears persistently, "The ring shall be on your finger but you shall not marry. The registers shall never be signed."

The verger had flung the vestry door open—the two entered the small square room—and then a cry of horror broke from the bride's lips; she staggered backwards, holding out her hands before her as though in desperate appeal.

"Ah, Jem!" she cried, "why have you come? How did you find me out?"

The words were addressed to a man who stood in the centre of the vestry, eyeing the bridal party with a cynical smile.

"Well! Who should be at your wedding but your own brother?" he said slowly, "and is this my new brother-in-law?"—he turned and gazed at Felix—"and—what *have you done with your first husband?*"

"Your *first* husband?" said Felix, "what does that mean? I *must* have the truth now."

"You shall have it—you shall have it," she cried, flinging herself on the ground at his feet, "only forgive me, and I will tell you all—all."

And to the ears of her listeners she poured out a wild story of a past in which she had married a man from whom she had long been parted.

"But he is dead—my first husband is dead," she moaned, at the end of her terrible confession.

"I daresay he is dead right enough," her brother struck in cynically, "and Miss Constance has planned a nice marriage for herself with a rich man! Sorry I put a spoke in your wheel, my dear, but I didn't quite see you marrying a good chap under false pretences."

"Is that man your brother?" Felix asked sternly.

"Yes—he is. He hates me—he always spoils my life."

"I always spoil your little games, my dear, and I always shall," the man said harshly, "if this gentleman forgives you—he'll be a fool"—and so saying the man turned on his heel and left the vestry. The other spectators had also stolen away—Felix and Constance were alone.

"Forgive me," she moaned again, looking up into his remorseless face; but he shook his head.

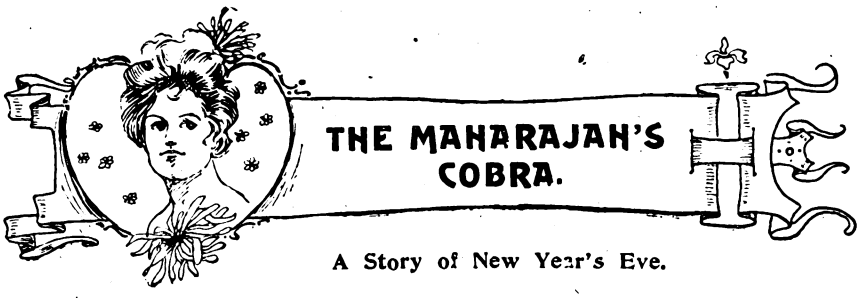
"I could have forgiven all but the deceit," he said, drawing away from her clinging hands, "I can never forgive that. You may wear my ring if you choose—my wife you shall never be. I never wish to see your face again," and drawing himself away from her clasp, he moved out of the vestry and out of her sight for ever.

Vera.

£5 a Week for Life.

This is the huge prize offered by *Pearson's Weekly*. For further particulars see page 43.

Digitized by Google



THE MAHARAJAH'S COBRA.

A Story of New Year's Eve.

IT was New Year's Eve, and the air was clear, crisp, and frosty. All day long guests had been arriving, with sparkling eyes and shouts of joyous greeting, at the great grey Elizabethan mansion, in the wooded heart of Huntingdonshire, which was the country seat of that most popular of all British officers, Colonel Hawkesbury.

And now that night had stolen over the white, snow-carpeted earth, and the bright stars shone in a purple sky, the blinds were drawn about the great windows glistening with innumerable pendants of crystal ice, and the sound of gay voices and merry laughter resounded through the old and stately house.

For it was Colonel Hawkesbury's homecoming.

For five years he had been on foreign service, and an Indian sun had bronzed his handsome face to an almost Oriental hue. He was scarcely forty, for his popularity—admitted alike by officers and men—had gained him rapid promotion.

And yet, despite these numerous qualifications—his comparative youth, his handsome face and tall, commanding figure, the frank, kindly nature which had won him his popularity, and, above all, his unquestionable military skill and the bravery he had displayed in action—despite all these things, Colonel Hawkesbury was a bachelor.

There were many flippant and irreverent persons, it is true, who, owl-like, temporarily and expressively closed one eye whenever the subject was broached, and gave utterance to mysterious prophecies, which seemed to imply that the gallant officer, like themselves, still had one eye wide open, and that changes *might* be expected. And there certainly was some reason for these mysterious hints.

"Bob," said one of these prophets to another, as he meditatively chalked the end of his cue in the Colonel's billiard-room, "I suppose you noticed the arrival of the Colonel's last guest to-night?"

"Rather!" responded Bob. "I admire the Colonel's taste—what do you say?"

"You're right there," agreed Captain Tracy enthusiastically. 'For, though her profession is the art of simulating sentiment, I believe she is capable of the real article also, especially," he added with a twinkle, "where the Colonel is concerned."

"Yes," assented the Hon. Robert Winchester, "she's a jolly good actress, but she is as good a woman. I wonder whether this meeting will bring matters to a head?"

Then the two prophets, having finished their game of billiards and cigars at the same time, left the solitude of the billiard-room and joined the rest of the party in the big drawing-room, where a great log was blazing on the wide hearth, and the rosy glow of the softly-shaded electric lamps danced on the animated faces of the assembled guests and their genial host.

The Colonel's only sister was there, with her tall, military-looking husband. They had one child, a pretty, blue-eyed, curly-haired boy of five, who was a great favourite with his uncle, the Colonel. But the boy, together with the other children who had come with the Colonel's guests, was upstairs with the nurses in a big room which the master of Hawkesbury Hall dimly recollected as once being his own nursery.

Whenever the door opened the shrill laughter of the children floated down the wide staircase to the drawing-room beneath, and told that they, too, were making merry in their own particular way.

In the drawing-room the guests were amusing themselves in many ways, though all were bent on adding to the enjoyment of the party generally.

There was one other figure in the great room, almost as conspicuous as the Colonel himself.

Seated in an embrasure by one of the windows was a lady, still in the first beauty of youth, upon whose face the stamp of individuality was clearly traced, even through the wondrous changes of expression which from time to time illumined it.

It was clear, too, that Sybil Carrington, the famous English actress, owed much of her rare beauty to ancestral intermarriage with the subjects of other than British monarchs.

Indeed, her grandfather had chosen his wife among the noblest of Castilian beauties, and in Sybil Carrington the peculiar loveliness of her Castilian ancestress could be clearly traced.

The oval face, the delicate, clear-cut features, the pure olive complexion through which the rich blood mantled so warmly on the slightest provocation, were all evidences of her Spanish descent.

And beside these there were the large, black, liquid eyes through which looked forth a soul, keen, restless, and loving, and the free, proud poise of the small head, crowned with rich, heavy coils of raven hair, which were now shot through with a golden arrow.

Her slender throat was incircled by a heavy necklace of opals, set in dead gold, and her delicately tinted dress set off, by its harmonious contrast, the full measure of her dusky loveliness.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that Colonel Hawkesbury should have fallen a victim to such radiant beauty. Scores of other men had done the same, but Sybil Carrington had smiled but coldly on their amorous attentions, and they had retired discomfited. And now it really seemed as if she were making an exception in favour of the Colonel.

Presently Bob's voice was heard at the other end of the room.

"By the way, Colonel," he said, "is there any truth in the paragraph which appears in to-day's *Morning Post*, and which has reference to you?"

"I must plead guilty to complete ignorance of to-day's news," replied the Colonel.

"Curiously enough," said Bob, with his finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket, "I cut it out on my way down this afternoon. It's somewhere here—oh, here it is! May I read it?"

"Thank you!" said the Colonel. "We shall be delighted."

There was complete silence in the big drawing-room as Bob read the small slip of paper which he now held in his hand.

"We are informed that, before Colonel Hawkesbury's recent return to England, the Maharajah of the Province in which his regiment was quartered presented him with the thrice-sacred cobra of the temple. The creature is a magnificent specimen, and, though not yet fully grown, is considerably above the average, both in size and beauty. From an Indian point of view, no greater honour, we believe, could have been conferred on the gallant officer, though what the Colonel will do with his gruesome gift is matter for some speculation."

The Colonel fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"Gruesome gift indeed," he assented grimly. "The editor, or the reporter, has well expressed the situation. I have no affection for such pets, and could well have dispensed with the 'honour'!"

Sybil Carrington laughed—a silvery, rippling laugh, which even the uncomfortable Colonel found infectious.

"Can't you get rid of it?" she said.

"That is what I have been endeavouring to do ever since this very questionable honour was conferred upon me,"

Digitized by Google

retorted the Colonel. "We had not been forty-eight hours at sea when I tried to bribe the crew of the *Indus* to heave the great, perforated, jewelled casket and its loathsome occupant overboard. But the Maharajah had done the thing properly, and had deputed two villainous-looking fanatics to attend his Majesty the Cobra on the passage, and these worthies watched the reptile night and day. So it had to come to England, where, fortunately, the two attendants bade both me and their charge an affectionate adieu.

"But in England my plight was no better than at sea. I dared not shoot the brute, for that, had it become known, would have bred dissatisfaction among the Maharajah's subjects. So here I am, the nervous possessor of the finest cobra in Europe, and there is but one hope left. I shall try to shift the responsibility, with its gruesome cause, on to the shoulders of the Royal Society."

"And have you really got the brute under this roof?" asked Captain Tracy.

The Colonel nodded.

"But let me caution you," he added, "not to breathe a word of this before the servants. If they suspected the presence of such a villainous-looking visitor, they would decamp in a body. I had the casket conveyed to an empty room in the old west wing of the house. I feed the brute myself, and keep the door of the room religiously locked, so that there is little or no danger of the proximity of such a creature becoming known among the domestics. But I regret this paragraph has appeared, for it might lead to unpleasant suspicions. However, it cannot be helped. But let us change the subject, since this is scarcely conducive to unqualified enjoyment. What shall it be?"

"Ghosts," suggested pretty Mrs. Carew, the Colonel's sister.

"Almost as bad as cobras," said the Colonel with a laugh.

"As we seem slow to choose a topic," said Pat Neville, glancing across to the embrasure by the window, "may I suggest that, at Colonel Hawkesbury's request, Miss Carrington might be induced to treat us to an exhibition of her marvellous talent?"

The Colonel looked at the lady with a winning smile on his handsome face.

"The very thing," he said, "if Miss Carrington would consent to grant us so great a favour."

Sybil looked perplexed.

"With pleasure," she said doubtfully, "but how can I impersonate any existing and well-known character without the costume and scenic effects which are so indispensable to a realistic rendering of the part chosen?"

"Can you not discard those time-worn characters for the nonce, and create another on the spur of the moment?" suggested the Colonel.

Sybil laughed.

"Since we are asking questions without answering them," she said with a bewitching smile, "let me ask another. Would not that sound extremely like burlesque?"

"On the contrary," responded the Colonel warmly, "it would, to my mind, contain a deeper ring of realism than the words which we, from our very childhood, have been taught to quote. We should be wholly unprepared for the subject, and could, therefore, almost mistake for reality and truth the simulated earnestness of your words."

Sybil smiled a gracious acceptance of the Colonel's argument.

"I will do my best," she said, rising. "And, if you will allow me, I will leave you for a moment or two in order to make a few trivial but necessary preparations."

There was a murmur of pleasurable anticipation as the Colonel rose, and, courteously opening the door for the lovely actress to pass through, expressed his appreciation as much by one of those rare smiles that won his way into all hearts as by the courtly bow which accompanied it.

Scarce two minutes had passed since the closing of the door when it again opened, and the beautiful actress, with frightened dilated eyes and parted lips, rushed breathlessly into the room and closed the door behind her.

For some moments she uttered no sound, but stood, as if transfixed with fear, gazing into the face of the Colonel. Her very limbs trembled as if with uncontrollable agitation, and she pressed one hand convulsively to her heart as if to still its beating. Every lineament of the dusky face, every movement of the lithe and supple form, bespoke the utmost intensity of horror and alarm.

The eyes of all present were fascinated by the tragic spectacle, which had, almost in a moment, transformed a lovely, smiling, self-possessed woman into a terrified, horror-stricken creature, struggling to articulate the words which froze on her parted lips. In spellbound expectation the onlookers awaited, while a murmur of admiration broke from one or two. Then her words came, broken and disjointed, as she tottered to the wall for support.

"Oh, my God!" she gasped. "The cobra—the cobra! Oh, it has escaped! Come—in Heaven's name, come and destroy it before it is too late! It is on the great staircase, between us and the children! Oh, think of the little ones, who are so near the terrible thing! Even now the door may be opening, and an innocent child stepping out into that hideous death-trap. Come—you must come! Oh, why do you stand there, with your smiling faces, when death is at your very door? Oh, my God, what shall I do! Is there no one to heed me? You, who have the heart of a lion"—and she sprang to the side of the Colonel's chair—"you, who know no fear in the hour of danger—come—come you—and destroy this hideous creature that menaces the life of the little ones as well as that of ourselves!"

She stopped, panting for breath. A deep flush overspread the Colonel's handsome face, for the words she had addressed to him were music in his ears. There was a momentary silence, and then the spell was broken, and a burst of applause resounded through the room. For one moment Sybil stood, stupidly staring at the smiling faces around her, and then, with a wild, inarticulate cry, she bounded back to the door, and, again darting out, closed it swiftly behind her.

"By Jove!" said Bob, as she went out. "That was real, if you like! Do you know, I really thought she meant it until I heard everybody else applauding." And he mopped his brow nervously.

A general laugh followed this confession.

"It certainly was intensely realistic," said the Colonel, still with the flush on his face and a curious light in his eyes. "But I was prepared for it, you see, for it only bears out my argument."

And so they talked on, waiting until Sybil should return.

But outside, another and more terrible scene was being enacted.

As soon as Sybil had closed the door behind her, she glanced, with frightened eyes, up the broad staircase, and the sight which met her gaze was one calculated to inspire the bravest hearts with horror and alarm. For, half way up, coiled about the stout oak banister which skirted the staircase, and glowing in the white light of an electric lamp which hung above it, was the Maharajah's cobra.

The coils of its great body were writhing in horrible undulations, and the huge head, with its coldly glittering eyes, was uplifted to the glowing lamp, against which the cruel forked tongue was flickering to and fro and the white venomous fangs grating with a harsh, rasping sound. Evidently the monster had not noticed the reappearance of Sybil Carrington, being wholly absorbed in its enjoyment of the light and scanty warmth which the great lamp afforded it.

For a moment Sybil stood and gazed in terrified bewilder-

Digitized by Google

ment at the writhing reptile. Then she looked about her.

"Since they will not heed me, and think I only play a part," she whispered, "I needs must do the thing myself! Yet what can I do? Where can I find a weapon?"

A passage led out of the hall at right angles, and, noiselessly traversing this, she came at last to the door of the Colonel's library.

Entering the room she felt along the wall until she touched the switch of the electric light. Instantly three or four lights blazed up around her, and, turning to the secretaire upon which the Colonel's papers were scattered, she tore open drawer after drawer with frenzied fingers, tossing the contents of each upon the floor, in a hurried search for what she knew would, in all probability, be found there.

At last her fingers touched something cold which lay at the bottom of a drawer, and, drawing it forth, disclosed a glittering six-chambered revolver. She had handled such weapons before, and a glance sufficed to show her that all six chambers were loaded. Cautiously she crept from the room, and approached the broad, brilliantly-lighted staircase.

Yes, the snake was still there, but this time it saw her, and a low, menacing hiss greeted her appearance, while the coils of its great body began slowly to unfold themselves from the banister in order to prepare its attack. At this instant the door of the nursery softly opened, and a little merry, blue-eyed boy of five ran laughing to the top of the stairs.

Sybil's heart stood still, and the hand which grasped the butt of the revolver faltered.

"Back!" she said hoarsely. "Go back and shut the door! Don't stay a moment! Quick—quick!"

But the child had caught sight of the uncoiling, glittering reptile on the staircase, and, unconscious of the danger which threatened him, saw only that the creature was beautiful. For a moment he stood gazing in wondering admiration at the great cobra, whose attention was now divided between Sybil and the child.

"Oh, isn't he just lovely!" exclaimed the boy. "I *should* like to play with him. I'm sure he wouldn't hurt me! Oh, do please go and ask my uncle if I may! Don't ask papa—ask my uncle, the Colonel—he always lets me do as I like. Oh, what's that?"

There was a flash, and a report rang through the hall. A bullet whizzed close to the cobra's head, and buried itself harmlessly in the ceiling beyond.

With a hiss of infuriated anger, the hideous monster dropped with a soft thud upon the broad staircase and began swiftly to descend.

Sybil's breath seemed to choke her as she beheld the failure of her first shot.

Slowly she moved the barrel of the revolver, following the downward course of the writhing brute, until it had almost reached the lowest stair. Then, with a brief prayer for strength, she pressed the trigger, and, with death at her very feet, waited for the smoke to clear.

One glance, and a cry of joy broke from her lips. The monster's head had been pierced by the ball, and the great folds of its hideous body were writhing in the convulsions of death.

The relief was almost more than Sybil could bear, and she staggered against the wall, almost unable to support her trembling form.

At that instant the Colonel, startled by the shots, stood in the doorway of the drawing-room. One glance up the broad staircase revealed to him all that had happened—the form of his little fair-haired nephew on the topmost stair, gazing down with wide eyes of unspeakable surprise; the rapidly stiffening body of the great cobra, not five yards from where he stood; and the trembling figure of Sybil, with the revolver still tightly clenched in her right hand, and clutching the wall for support.

In a moment his strong arm was about her, and, leading her into an adjoining room, he sent his pretty sister to her and returned to the drawing-room.

A few words informed the astonished guests of the all too realistic drama which the lovely actress had enacted—a drama which had well-nigh ended in grimmest tragedy.

One by one they peered out to view the Maharajah's cobra, now stiff and lifeless, and every voice was heard in praise of the beautiful actress who had so bravely and courageously risked her life to save them from the danger they had not believed.

Other ladies among the Colonel's numerous guests now began to leave the drawing-room in search of the lovely heroine, and it was not long before Sybil was sufficiently recovered to rejoin the rest of the party in the great room, where she was received with a burst of enthusiastic applause from all present.

The voice of the Colonel's brother-in-law shook with deep emotion as he thanked her, in a few simple, earnest words, for the noble way in which she had saved their darling's life.

Only the Colonel was silent, sitting for a long time in meditative thought, but the light had deepened in his eyes, and, when the party broke up for the night, his hand detained the retreating figure of the lovely actress and drew her unresistingly into the library, where the lamps were still aglow and the papers strewn upon the floor.

"Sybil," he said tenderly, when he had closed the door, "I will not add to the well-earned commendations you have to-night received from my guests. But there is one thing I must say, though I am sure it will not come wholly as a revelation to you. Will you not consent, by your bright presence, to fill with sunshine the home of a rough old soldier like myself? It is my only hope, my one ambition—the one cherished and predominant desire of my life. Tell me, dearest!" And, taking a step towards her, he held out his strong arms and waited.

There was no affected confusion in the lovely face that was still turned towards him—no downward drooping of the large liquid eyes that looked so frankly into his—but, with that pure and fearless love that sees no shame in sweet confession, she let the outstretched arms close about her in a lover's strong embrace.

"Sybil," he whispered in her ear, "you have made me very happy—happier than I can ever tell you; but, may I not have one word—a word that shall tell me 'tis not only I who love?"

Sybil lifted her head and gazed for a moment into her lover's eyes.

"Maurice," she said in a voice of intensest feeling, "Maurice, I have loved you even as you have loved me, and though you waited I read your purpose and was glad—waiting, too, for the time when your final return to England should give to you the opportunity you sought, and to me the greatest joy that ever gladdened a woman's heart. Does that content you? If not, then stoop your head that I, too, may confess the secret I have kept so long in a lover's lingering kiss."

* * * * *

It only remains for us to say that for some time the mystery attending the cobra's escape from its prison remained unexplained, in spite of the strictest investigation to which the Colonel subjected the occurrence.

As soon as the great creature had grown stiff in death the Colonel found the door of its prison open and the casket forced, but, though the servants were questioned, no light was thrown on the mystery.

But a strange story is current in the far-away province over which the Maharajah rules. For it is whispered among the dark-skinned denizens of that vast and mysterious jungle-land that the great white lord who dwelt among them, and upon whom their mighty Maharajah had conferred so great an honour, had violated the thrice sacred trust reposed in him by attempting the life—the immortal life—of the great Temple cobra.

And they affirm that one of its faithful attendants—Firmali the Righteous—having discovered the sacrilegious plot, had secretly followed the white lord to his great house, and, entering it all unobserved in the darkness of the night, had picked the lock of the door and set the monster free to wreak its own vengeance on the head of the unsuspecting Colonel and his guests.

Walter J. Mowbray.

Digitized by Google

THE GIRL AND THE IDEALIST.

The Transformation which Love Brings.

THE Girl sat in her chilly bedroom and stared gloomily at the wallpaper. From its cheerlessness and ugliness there seemed no way of escape. Particularly when she was discouraged did its hideousness oppress her—and she was thoroughly discouraged to-day. Discouraged with herself, her work, and the dreary unloveliness of her life.

"How can there be inspiration among such surroundings?" she sighed.

Truly, the room at best was but a blankly comfortable abiding place, although there were touches that told of a brave effort towards improvement. The feminine yearning for warm colours and graceful lines had vented itself in such trifling adornments as a limited income permitted.

But the Girl's passionate love of the beautiful was expressed all too inadequately in these pitiful attempts at decoration—attempts which seemed, after all, mere makeshifts and mockeries—caricatures of the glowing designs her imagination created.

"There is little that is lovely in my world," she said sadly, as her gaze shifted to the view from her window—smoke-begrimed roofs and chimneys showing sullen outlines in the drizzling dampness of the dull Autumn afternoon.

She rose with sudden decision and got out her hat and jacket. "I may as well walk," she said. "It is better out-doors, in spite of the weather. I will at least have fresh air."

As she opened the front door she came face to face with the Idealist, who was about to enter.

She always associated him with that name, regardless of his real cognomen. One of the boarders had used the title in speaking of him, and since then she called him that in her own mind.

"You are going for a walk?" he asked pleasantly.

"Yes," she answered.

"I'll go, too, if you'll let me," he said promptly, turning round to descend the steps with her.

The Girl was somewhat astonished. It was so unlike him. None of the boarders felt at all acquainted with him—he was so quiet, so unobtrusive. No one knew much about him. Mrs. McAvoy, the landlady, surmised that he was a writer "or something" from the litter of papers usually found in his room. He had the skylight room—a cheerless affair—and often sat up late at his desk.

The Girl had really never noticed him particularly before. But just now, as he spoke to her, she observed the winning light in his eyes, the fine lines of his face.

After they had walked several paces it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should be with her.

"You seem happy," she said to him frankly, "and on such a day! I cannot understand it."

"Why not?" he asked. "Days do not control us."

"They control me," she replied. "And so do my surroundings. You can't mean that you are independent of such things!"

"I have no time to think of them," he answered. "There is so much else. What are more externals, anyway?"

"Oh," she cried, recollecting, "you are an idealist. I forgot. Of course you can say it. But I never could. I do not understand. It does not seem practical, somehow."

"Not practical?" he echoed. "And why?"

"What good is it?" she questioned him in return, "to deceive one's self with dreams when the cold, blunt facts of life are constantly smiting one in the face? Facts are greater than ideals or theories."

"But facts are not greater than you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that these outer things—surroundings, circumstances, conditions—are in no wise so potent as the reality of your own self—your own individuality—your own soul, if you will. That soul, that consciousness, need not dwell down among these disagreeable conditions. It may by its own decree know a life of exalted happiness."

"Beautiful," said the Girl, "but vague and vast and impossible."

"Impossible? You might say, indeed, that it was impossible for anyone to be happy on a dismal day. Can you not imagine a condition which would make one entirely oblivious of the weather?"

The Girl smiled. "Yes," she said, "I can. If one were in love, for instance."

She said it naturally and without embarrassment. He seemed the sort of man she could talk with in just that way.

"Yes," he responded quickly. "If one were in love. Now, imagine such a state of mind perpetuated—a state of mind which draws its gladness, not from externals, but from some inner realm of radiance. A state of mind dependent, not upon the meagre happiness which a grudging Fate affords, but upon such glory as comes to it through its love of humanity, its study of high things, its contact with great minds, its loyalty to duty and to truth."

"Perhaps I will understand it, too, some day," said the Girl.

"See," said her companion, "there is the promise of it in the sky. The clouds have cleared and the west is ruddy."

"But there are mud puddles at our feet," she laughingly reminded him.

"Look again and see if you can call them mud puddles," he said.

She looked and saw the rose glory of the sky reflected in them. "They are pools of beauty," she confessed.

"There!" he cried. "You are converted already."

Her dingy little room looked strangely bright when she returned to it. She felt buoyant, happy, music-filled.

"And yet these are the same surroundings," she told herself, marvelling. "After all, happiness is from within."

There were other walks and further talks with the Idealist in the days that followed.

"I see the change in you," he said to her triumphantly one day. They had returned from one of these walks and were standing together in the dim hallway.

"I, too, am changed," he went on. "A greater happiness has come to me. When one is in love——"

The Girl raised a startled face to his.

"Dearest, let me say it!" And drawing her to him he kissed her on the lips.

Angela Morgan.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

CRAWLEY DRUMMOND. Lady Peggy's old friend and adviser.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DUCHESS OF EASTACRES. His mother.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. A celebrated French artist in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman and friend of Lady Peggy.

The Duke and I Go into Partnership.

EASTACRES did not answer immediately. The entrance of Stanley at so critical a moment seemed to deprive him of the power of action. The blow had fallen with such crushing force that it benumbed his faculties. Stanley, tall and erect, faced the Duke, his head thrown back, his eyes flashing, his whole attitude expressive of an indignant contempt only held in check by a strong will.

For the time being neither of the men was conscious of our presence. The nature of each was antagonistic to the other; their temperaments would have clashed under any circumstances, the present state of things brought their antagonism to a white heat.

Belinda, restraining her outcry of joy at Stanley's appearance, glanced from one to the other, the light of battle in her face.

Eastacres brought the silence, the tense silence that preludes a fight, to a sudden termination.

"You will find me an inconvenient person to interfere with, Mr. Forbes. Your friend Hervé knows that, to his cost."

Belinda, with a flush of hot colour in her cheeks, interposed.

"He has been trying to murder M. Hervé," she said, "fighting a duel with a man who can't shoot. Oh, I am glad you are here, Mr. Forbes. He," and she pointed to the Duke, "is insufferable in his insolence. He dares to say he will compel me to marry him against my will. Tell him," she threw up her head, "tell him that rather than marry him I would kill him."

The Duke sneered and laughed insultingly.

"You tire me with your mock heroics, Miss Belinda," and with that he walked towards the door. Forbes stopped him with a gesture.

"Stop," he said sternly, "stop!" as the Duke paused' his hand upon the door. "You have first to hear what I have come some miles to tell you." Then, as Eastacres, with a shrug, declined to listen further, Stanley made what seemed to me a single bound across the room, and, clutching him tightly by the collar, half led, half dragged him back, helpless as a child in his firm grip.

"Listen," said Stanley, in his ringing voice, "listen, and, when you have heard me, make your choice of what I offer. Leave Paris here and now, resigning all notion of marriage with Miss North, and I will let you be in peace. Remain," his fingers tightened on Eastacres' coat, "and I will ruin you, disgrace you, force you from respectable society, publish your infamies and your dishonours, close the doors of every decent house upon you. I have it in my power to utterly discredit you, and you know it! Now," he released the Duke, stepping back a pace, "now, do you go or stay?"

"Stay!" was the answer, flung like a challenge in the other's face. "Your threats are idle. What can you do? Society will laugh at your efforts to prove me as an undesirable acquaintance as"—a vindictive look crept into his cold grey eyes—"it will jeer at your attempts to re-establish Sheila Kenwyn. You are powerless to injure me or help her. Try both if you like and see what your efforts will accomplish. Bah!" he sneered, "you are a wind-bag. What can you do with your boastful talk? Go back to your cousin, Mr. Forbes, you may, perhaps, impress her. Here we are not so easily convinced. Go back to your innocent Irish girl who——"

The sneer remained unspoken. Like a flash, Stanley had fallen on the Duke, gripping his throat with merciless hands, forcing him to silence.

"You dog!" he cried, shaking him to and fro. "You dog, another word against her and I'll kill you as you stand!"

"You shall give me reparation for this," gasped Eastacres, when Stanley at last released him. "You shall fight me or be known throughout the length of Paris as a coward."

"I don't fight with men of your stamp," was the answer. "I cane them. No," as Eastacres sprang forward, raising his hand to strike the other's face, "no, it's no use, you are powerless. I could crush you with a blow. You may take this"—he laid his hand heavily on the Duke's arm—"You may take this as a token of what I shall do with you in the future if you remain in Paris. I will give you one last chance—Go!"

"Never," returned his Grace, "I shall remain, and in defiance of your threats and prophecies I shall achieve my end. He laughs best who laughs last. I shall have cause for merriment at the end, Mr. Forbes," with which the Duke, after a sweeping bow to Belinda and myself, departed, not, I thought, without some of the honours of war.

It was past three o'clock when Belinda and I at last regained the Hotel D'Arteuil. The events of the evening had much

Digitized by Google

tried me. I was beginning to despair of Belinda, despair of marrying my charge. The thought fell on me cold and grey as a mist from the marshes that unless I were very clever, very careful, the twenty thousand pounds would slip through my fingers. I remembered the Duke's words that morning in Cairo, when we drove to the docks at Boulag. He had sworn he would force Belinda into marriage with him; I had tried my best to bring it about and I had failed. It might be that I should be compelled to adopt the Duke's plan after all.

Somehow or other, the mystery of the midnight duel in Hervé's studio leaked out, and formed the chief topic of conversation in Parisian society. Belinda's part in the affair was magnified to an almost incredible extent. It was reported that she had received the shot intended for the artist, and had been severely wounded. Only the sight of her, serene and smiling, in the Bois, reassured Society as to her safety. Her popularity was immensely increased, and the number of proposals she received, and, alas, refused, grew more numerous daily.

I spoke to her, imploring, upbraiding, even threatening, but my speeches and reproaches were alike of no avail. The girl really possessed no taste. It is impossible otherwise to account for her determined rejections of the many brilliant offers she received. Some of the handsomest, most distinguished men of France laid their titles and their fortunes at her feet. To them all she turned a deaf ear. The love of David Carr seemed a talisman against which power and fortune, position and prestige fought in vain.

The Marquis de Fontenoy, a young and extremely fascinating man of good family and assured income, was dismissed without a second thought. Baron Rolla, the famous financier, came next on the list. He was middle-aged, of vast fortune and great personal charm. He was more diplomatic than Fontenoy, and laid siege to Belinda by slow, almost imperceptible degrees. Hardy North was terribly discouraged at Belinda's conduct, and wrote expressing his strong disapproval of her treatment of the Duke.

Stanley Forbes, after his dramatic entrance at the studio, passed for the time being out of sight. He was not seen in fashionable Paris, but was reported to be living in a charming villa on the outskirts of the town.

Eastacres also had disappeared. He had left the Hotel D'Arteuil quite suddenly, in response to a summons from the Duchess, and the date of his return to Paris was uncertain.

Meantime, Baron Rolla took advantage of every opportunity to further his suit. He took Belinda and me for long excursions in his motor-car, arranging some charming and novel expedition almost daily, and, rumour said, neglecting his business in consequence. The girl's every inclination and her slightest whim were law. Did she express a wish to help a charity, relieve a society or hospital in urgent need of funds, a cheque from Baron Rolla was immediately forthcoming. He worshipped, almost adored her. And she, a mere girl in her teens, accepted his worship as a matter of course, as a mere incident in her life. It is marvellous how unconscious, how egotistical a young girl can be! Rolla had known the most beautiful and the most accomplished women of his time. Rumour said that not a few had been more than willing to share his future and his fortune. Hitherto, however, the Baron had remained untouched, only to fall a victim to blue-eyed seventeen!

One day, returning from a spin to Versailles, we encountered all people in the world, Mark Striven and Honoria! Belinda gave a cry of recognition.

"Please stop," she said to the Baron, "I want to get out, I simply must speak to Honoria."

Fearful of complications, I followed. Honoria was a fool, and in my experience I have known a fool prove more dangerous than many a wise man.

Honoria was looking better dressed than usual, but there was still the same air of depression, the same suggestion of fear that had characterised her before marriage. She brightened at the sight of Belinda, however, and led her aside, leaving me to hear Mark's fulsome compliments. He talked loudly, but not loudly enough to drown Honoria's voice.

"*Belinda*," she clutched my *protegée* in the old appealing fashion, "you aren't going to marry Eastacres?"

"Of course not, I've told you so a hundred times, Honoria!"

"But he says you are, and that"—Honoria broke off and glanced fearfully at her husband, "Belinda, whatever you do, don't come to us. We've taken a house just outside Paris"—she raised her face and spoke with a strange emphasis "a house where all sorts of strange and dreadful things could happen and no one be any whit the wiser. You mustn't come there, Belinda, no matter what they say or what they tell you, *don't* come."

"Honoria, you're silly," said Belinda mildly. "Of course I shall come and see you in your home, and bring Lady Peggy with me. You're looking very nice, dear." Then, with a quick change of voice, "Is he kind to you?" pointing to Mark.

A look of terror flashed into the poor thing's face. Mark had overheard the question and was waiting for her answer.

"Kind?" she said, with a hysterical attempt at a laugh, "that's not the word, Belinda. He's a devoted, yes, a most devoted husband."

Then with a flush in her sallow cheeks she dropped Belinda's arm and hastened to that most devoted husband. Turning to look after them as they entered the Luxembourg Gardens—almost deserted at that hour—I saw him raise his hand—a a moment later I heard a scream, a woman's scream. On the instant the memory of a dark and passionate face flashed across my mind—the face of El Hamed, the Egyptian, touched with the light of a great love—love for Honoria! And at the thought I sighed.

At the same time I resolved not to encourage Honoria; marriage had merely increased her opportunities and capacities for mischief.

Eastacres had been foolish to marry his sister to Mark Striven. As I told him, he would have done better to keep her single.

I had yet to learn the part he had determined Honoria should play.

That night was the occasion of a ball held at the Hotel du Nord—a subscription ball for the benefit of a popular charity. All the newspapers had puffed it weeks beforehand, and great ladies had vied with each other in the sale of tickets. All classes were represented there—high born women of the old school, *grandes dames* of the Faubourg St. Germain, wealthy foreigners, a good sprinkling of the financial element, and some representatives of the wealthy middle classes.

Millionaries elbowed each other, and their wives fairly blazed with diamonds.

The ball had arrived at that stage when only real beauties look well, those who, like Belinda, can withstand the glare of the gaslights and the incessant waltzing; the others fade and wither like flowers in the sunlight, and the blue circles under their eyes betray their age with the indiscretion of a birth register.

People were getting *blasé*, even Belinda for once showed signs of boredom, when an incident took place that raised the jaded spirits of all present.

Fashionable Paris is in touch with all the scandal of Mayfair, and gossip had been very rife in both capitals concerning Stanley Forbes' quarrel with the Duke. It was known that a woman was the cause of the disagreement, and the name of Sheila Kenwyn crept into the discussion. This being the case, you can judge of the sensation that ran through the room on the announcement that Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Forbes had arrived. The sensation was increased a thousandfold when Stanley and his wife appeared. He looked

Digitized by Google

unusually distinguished, and leaning on his arm, pale and fragile, but exquisitely lovely, was—Sheila Kenwyn — or, I should say, Sheila Forbes.

It was a most daring and most audacious and most extraordinary thing to do. To marry a girl with a past like Sheila's was a mad or a chivalrous thing, according to one's point of view. To introduce her in public, to throw her, as it were, in the face of Society, was courageous or nonsensical, according to the result. A visible thrill ran through the assembly. Stanley advanced towards the Duchess de Chartres, who, as patroness of the charity, received the guests at the ball given in its aid. It was an awkward moment for her. According to her behaviour during the next few minutes Society would decide on its treatment of the girl. If the Duchess received her the world of fashion would receive her also. If the great lady declined to notice her, we should follow suit, and, casting her from our midst, condemn her to outer darkness.

I was sorry for the girl. She had been cruelly deceived, and had suffered for her folly. There were plenty of women whose faults were far less worthy of excuse than Sheila's, but their faults were in secret. They were not the cause of a scandal. The Duchess de Chartres herself had more than one shady chapter in her life, but with consummate skill she had kept them from the knowledge of all but her intimates. Sheila had displayed no such finesse.

The Duchess—remembering perhaps certain passages with Stanley, and retaining some of her old tenderness for him—advanced with heightened colour to receive them. At the moment when her Grace was about to shake hands with Mrs. Forbes there was a slight stir among the guests assembled round a door at the other end of the apartment. A slight figure pushed a way through the throng, a slight figure with a set face and cold, grey eyes.

Eastacres had chosen this very moment for his return to Paris.

He came forward rapidly, and stood a little to the right of the Duchess, in line with Sheila. At the sight of him she lost her nerve, the hand that the Duchess was about to press dropped limp to her side. She gave a little startled cry, and clung to Stanley's arm.

It was an awkward predicament; women without courage have no business to depart from the straight path of custom and conventionality; at any rate, having once left they should not return to it. Such returns distress themselves and other people.

I was sorry for Stanley. He had played a bold game, a game that would have proved successful but for Sheila's cowardice and Eastacres' malignity.

As it was she all but fainted. There would have been a scene—a scandal, had not Belinda, with that calm self-confidence that marked her out, come to the rescue.

She went quickly to the girl's side, grasped her hand in a firm, I had almost said manly, clasp.

"It is nice of you to have come," she said. "I wanted to see you *so* badly." Her voice or her touch reassured the girl. She raised her head, stammered a few words of greeting, and Belinda whirled her off to a seat in the conservatory.

For a moment Eastacres' triumph had been turned to defeat, but it was not for long.

Some half an hour later the two girls reappeared. Stanley advanced to meet his wife. Eastacres approached to greet Belinda. With a low bow he murmured a compliment on her appearance. Belinda, staring straight in front of her, paid no more attention to his Grace than if he'd been a statue or a footman.

"My dear," I murmured in an agony, "what are you thinking of? For Heaven's sake, Belinda, answer the Duke! Everybody's looking. Whatever will they say?"

"I don't wish to speak to the Duke of Eastacres," said the terrible girl in her clear voice. "I don't like him, he's not the sort of man I care to know. In future I shan't know him. Paul"—she turned to De Sonnaz—"I think this is our dance." And without the least compunction, she waltzed off the Comte, leaving the Duke white with rage and nearly mad with mortification.

"You shall pay for this," he said to Stanley, as the latter passed, "and within a week." Sheila shuddered, and clung closer to her husband. Stanley smiled scornfully, and passed on.

The next moment the Duke offered me his arm.

"Come," he said briefly, "I want to speak to you." He piloted me skilfully through the crowded rooms until we reached an ante-chamber where we might hope to be left undisturbed. Then with a look in his eyes and a twist about his mouth that caused me some uneasiness, he opened the conversation.

"What are you going to do about Belinda?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't follow you, Duke," I replied.

"Nonsense," he answered rudely. "You know what I mean quite well. But if you prefer plain language you shall have it. How are you going to secure that provision for your old age that Belinda's marriage would give you? Don't play the hypocrite," he added savagely, "I've no patience with that sort of thing just now. I know as well as if you had told me the terms on which you agreed to find a titled husband for the girl. You were ruined in Hammond's Bank, and but for Hardy North's offer you'd have been stranded. Now"—he brought his face level with mine—"the question is: How are you going to secure your terms? You've done your best to cajole and coerce Belinda into taking a husband. You've tried me and half a dozen other men. But she's refused them all. Now I'm going to try in my own fashion and my own way, and I'm going to succeed. By yourself you've failed, and you'll continue to fail, and as a result at the end of a year or two years at most, you'll be penniless."

He smiled quite calmly but most evilly as he spoke, and with the remembrance of that scene in the ball room upon me I could not repress a shudder.

"I repeat, you will be penniless, unless you come into partnership with me. Consider"—he laid his hand upon my arm—"it's your only chance. No other man would be skilful enough, clever enough, brave enough to do what I propose. Listen"—he bent his head and whispered in my ear. As he spoke my heart almost ceased to beat and I turned cold.

"You consent?" he asked when he had finished. "Will you help me?"

For a moment I paused. The nature of his plan, the thing he asked me to help him bring about, made me feel faint and dizzy. If—if he should play me false, if he should break his word——

"Eastacres," I cried, "are you doing this as a mad scheme of revenge against Belinda?"

"On my honour, no, merely as a means to induce, or, if you will, force her to become my wife. You risk nothing, you gain everything by the attempt, why do you hesitate?"

Again I paused. Belinda's face rose before me. Her eyes, large, clear, limpid as a child's. It was like plotting to hurt a child to plan to injure her. And yet she had been very obstinate, very tiresome. It was nonsensical to suppose she would or could be happier married to that miserable engineer than as the Duchess of Eastacres. And, besides, I had to consider myself. The thought of a penniless old age was one I could not bear. Belinda must be made to do what was best for her.

"I consent," I said, and clasped Eastacres' hand.

"Very good," he answered, "between us we shall conquer."

"When is it to be?" I asked, and despite myself the colour left my cheeks and my lips twitched as I spoke.

Digitized by Google

"Within a week, on the day of the races. By-the-bye, don't bet on Forbes' horse, Lady Peggy. I hear he has no chance." Eastacres' eyes glittered as he spoke. I thought of his words not five minutes since to Stanley: "You shall pay for this within the week."

The races were within a week. Stanley had entered a horse and backed it heavily! Remembering these things and bearing in mind Eastacres' words, I felt that Stanley might have cause for apprehension. I did not warn him, however; it was not my business.

During the next week I lived in a state of nervous tension, waiting impatiently for the all-important day, the day when Eastacres was to carry out his scheme. My *protégée* meantime daily grew more lovely and more courted.

The morning of the races dawned fair and fresh. Belinda was in high spirits, she had donned Stanley's colours—mauve and green—and looked, so Baron Rolla told her, like the spirit of Spring. We went down to the course some few miles out of Paris, on the Baron's motor. Rolla was more infatuated than ever. It was evident to my mind he would propose to Belinda before the day was out. For her own sake I hoped she would accept him. His title was hereditary, not bought, and his wealth and prestige tremendous.

The racecourse was a brilliant sight. There were gathered statesmen, heroes, celebrities, royalties—their rivalries forgotten in their eagerness for sport. Diplomatists who had lately been quarrelling over the knotty points of national frontiers, now only vied for a twenty franc rosebud from a pert and pretty *bouquetière*; Knights of the Garter and Knights of the Golden Fleece, who had hated each other with the deadliest rancour with the width of the Channel between, became friends over a mutually good book on the race. Brains that were the power depôts of one half of Europe let themselves be fanned into amusement by a fair idiot's coquetry, or lulled into quiescence by the persistent cries of eager bookmakers.

Stanley's horse, Maraschino, was a beautiful, satin-skinned chestnut. As I looked at the glossy bow of his neck, the width of his magnificent ribs, marked his high-bred, delicate-looking head, I felt a contempt for the Duke's capacity to injure Stanley's chances of success. Maraschino was good to win against a much more powerful field than would gather against him. His jockey, a famous rider from the Newmarket stables, was true as steel. Neither horse nor rider could be got at. The Duke for once, I felt convinced, had missed his mark.

But I was yet to learn the full extent of Eastacres' purpose.

At last the signal for the start was given. Maraschino broke away with the force of a pent-up torrent suddenly let loose. He shook himself clear of all the horses and led off in a grand canter in front of his chief rival, a French bay mare.

Half way down the course his jockey turned pale, swayed in his saddle, fell forward, resting his head almost in his arms. The glittering throng spreading over the plains gazed in amazement; they thought the famous English jockey was dead beat, and sneered at his failure.

"He's been doctored," said Stanley between his teeth, and gazed savagely round, seeking with eagle eye to detect the man who had done so foul, so base a thing.

Eastacres smiled serenely and passed his glasses to a woman at his side, an opera singer famous for her diamonds, and her lack of morals. Belinda glanced indignantly at Eastacres. I, remembering what was to happen to her after the race, caught my breath, and waited.

The field swept on with a rush. Maraschino, startled at first to miss the guiding hand upon his rein, recovered his nerve and bending his mettle to the task, put out his strength, and gained once more the advantage over his foes.

On, on, till they came into the straight, and a great cry breaks from the throng.

"Maraschino, Maraschino leads!"

And then, in a gasp of horror, rises as a single cry from a thousand throats:

"The jockey! Look at the jockey. *The dead jockey wins!*"

(Next week tells of what happened to Belinda after the race.)

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

AND

£1,000 IN CASH CONSOLATION GIFTS.

THE MOST LIBERAL PRIZE EVER OFFERED BY ANY PERIODICAL IN THE WORLD.

The prize of £5 a Week for Life will be paid to the person (perhaps *you*) who correctly solves the set of pictures which appear in "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," under the conditions published in that paper.

Each of the pictures represents the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom, and every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

A further sum of £1,000 in cash will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:

FIRST CONSOLATION CASH GIFT: £100.

2nd	Cash Gift	£50,
3rd	" "	£50.
4th	" "	£25.
5th	" "	£25.
6th	" "	£25.
7th	" "	£25.
8th to 57th	Cash Gifts	£10 each.
58th to 97th	" "	£5 "

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of £5 a Week for Life (*which will be paid under any circumstances*), you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash prizes.

In order to form some idea of the size of the prize of £5 a Week for Life, we would ask you to glance over the following figures. Assuming that you live to the age of 70—which is quite reasonable—you will have received one of the following amounts, according to how old you are when you start receiving the prize:

If you are	60	you will have received	£2,600.
"	50	" "	£5,200.
"	40	" "	£7,800.
"	30	" "	£10,400.
"	20	" "	£13,000.
"	15	" "	£14,300.
"	12	" "	£15,080.

From this table you will be able to calculate exactly the amount of money which will come to you.

The first set of pictures will appear in the issue of *Pearson's Weekly* published on January 23rd. Order a copy to be reserved for you.

Digitized by Google

FOR GLADYS' SAKE.

A Pretty Little Tale of a Sister's Devotion.

"I WANT to go on the merry-go-round."

"Nonsense, child! come along at once." And the eldest Miss Norman caught her sister's arm and tried to pull her past the piece of waste ground on which a feeble attempt at a fair was encamped.

The Norman girls were the daughters of a retired Colonel, who imagined himself an invalid, and, having lived his own life, had no particular wish that his girls should live theirs. So he had bought a cottage in this remote fishing village, and lived in the utmost seclusion. He was scornfully tolerant of his practical eldest girl, who acted as his housekeeper, and he considered Alice, the youngest, commonly called Baby, a decided nuisance, but he was intensely proud of Gladys, the second girl, and the beauty of the family. For her he intended at some future date, to conquer his indolence, and give the beautiful girl a chance in the great world. The three girls were accustomed to go freely about alone, since their governess had been dismissed a year ago, on the ground that Baby was too stupid to learn anything more, and there was no use wasting money on her.

Baby was nearly seventeen, and it was therefore quite impossible for her elder sisters to sanction her joining in the amusement of the fair.

"I do so want a turn, Nellie," she said. "What harm will it do? I shall go whether you let me or not."

"I've got the purse," significantly responded Nellie, clasping closer the shabby little *portemonnaie* wherein reposed the slender pocket money of the three sisters.

Baby dived her hand into her pocket, and, discovering a stray penny, she tossed it to the man who was just starting the merry-go-round again, and sprang into a gilded car. The elder sisters were powerless to stop her, and could only exchange dismayed glances, as Baby swept past, her loose hair floating on the summer breeze, her face bright with mirth and mischief.

"Oh, if father were to come by, what *would* he say?" murmured Gladys, looking round to make sure no fatal chance had brought that upright figure strolling round the bay. Her glance met a pair of laughing dark eyes, fixed in mingled amusement and admiration on her face. A young man had just been rowed ashore from his yacht, and, springing up the bank, had been an amused witness of Baby's little escapade and her sisters' consternation. The merry-go-round was beginning to slow down, preparatory to coming to a stop, and Baby sprang out, slipped, and fell heavily. In a moment, the stranger had raised her, and was reassuring the frightened sisters.

"It's nothing," he said. "She can't be hurt; she fell on the grass. She's only shaken."

"It's my foot," murmured Baby, scarlet with confusion. "Let us get away. Gladys, you must give me your arm home."

"I think you had better have mine," said the stranger, but Baby disengaged herself, and tried to move away. The attempt was a failure, and she was glad to catch at the arm the young man hastily offered.

"You see," he said, with a kindly smile. "Indeed, you had better let me help you home. My name is Rex Thornecliffe. I am here for a few days on my yacht."

"We are Colonel Norman's daughters," Nellie introduced herself and her sisters. "I don't like to trouble you, but I'm afraid we could not get my little sister home without your aid. We live in that cottage on the hill in the distance."

"No trouble at all," he returned. "Did you say Colonel Norman? My father had a very dear friend of that name in his young days."

"That couldn't be father," said Baby, decidedly. "He *never* could have been anybody's dear friend."

"I have heard father speak of a friend of his called Daylesford Thornecliffe," observed Gladys.

"That's my father. They were old friends, I believe, but lost sight of each other after my father came in for his brother's estate, and left the Army."

"You must come in and make father's acquaintance," said Nellie. "He'll be delighted to see you. We live very quietly because of father's health, but I know he will be pleased to see the son of his old friend."

So when the party reached the cottage, while Nellie hurried Baby away to have her foot attended to, Gladys conducted Rex Thornecliffe into her father's presence. The young man had the good fortune to please the old autocrat, and after spending an hour or so with him, was dismissed with the genial request to look upon "The Cottage" as his home during his stay.

"And what about James Fleming?" asked Baby. She was sitting on the window-seat, devouring with healthy appetite, a slice of bread and butter covered with apricot jam. Gladys stood beside her, gazing with dreamy eyes into the wood behind the house. At Baby's question, she started.

"What do you mean?"

Baby finished her bread without answering, looked lovingly at the jam pot which stood conveniently at hand on the window ledge, and seemed contemplating a fresh attack.

"You'll spoil your dinner, and make yourself sick," went on Gladys. "Leave the jam alone, and tell me what you mean."

Baby pushed the jam pot aside, and threw herself, a heap of white cambric, on the floor.

"Oh, isn't it hot?" she sighed, stretching her arms above her head. "What was I saying? Oh, I know. Yes; Gladys, what about James Fleming?"

"What in the world do you mean, Baby?" demanded Gladys, turning from the window, and fixing flashing eyes on her sister.

Baby closed her eyes languidly.

"That voice of cold anger is so refreshing," she murmured. "You are nicer than Nell when you get angry. You get into a cold fury and speak in an icy voice, but Nell gets red and her very voice sounds hot."

"Baby, have the goodness to explain yourself," commanded Gladys, in a voice still more icy.

"It's difficult in such hot weather," remonstrated Baby, "but I'll try. Isn't it very plain what keeps Rex Thornecliffe here?"

"No, it is not," returned Gladys, each word an icicle.

"You are right; it is *not* plain," agreed Baby, opening her eyes and looking mischievously at her sister. "How lovely you are, Gladys!"

There was a pause.

"If you mean that Rex remains here because of—of me," began Gladys, after a minute's silence, "you're wrong. He likes Nell just as much, and you more, than me. He's fond of you, Baby."

Baby suddenly turned her head aside, and her sister did not see the change in the soft, childish face.

Digitized by Google

"Oh, yes, he's fond of me," assented Baby presently. "He thinks me a little girl to be petted and teased. And of course, considering my unfortunate introduction to him, that is the most charitable view he can take. But, Gladys, he loves you. Nell sees it; her rector, her beloved Timothy, sees it; father sees it; and you have seen it, too, haven't you?"

She had turned her head again, and was looking eagerly up at her sister.

"Haven't you, Gladys?" repeated Baby, but without answering, Gladys dashed out of the room.

"What about James Fleming *now?*" called Baby after her, with a burst of elfin laughter, but next moment the mirth vanished from the child's face, and Baby lay still, lost in thought.

James Fleming was the son of the village bookseller. He had had a good education and was superior to his position, so the Norman girls had got into a way of chatting with him when they went into the shop. This had ripened into a kind of friendship with the two younger girls. Nellie's mind was fully occupied with her housekeeping duties and with her future life as the rector's wife, but her sisters had nothing to fill up the empty, aimless days. Both were fond of novel reading, and gladly accepted James Fleming's offer of the loan of new books from his father's shop. The young man arranged to meet the girls in the little wood behind "The Cottage," and exchange the books.

He was gentlemanly, good-looking, amusing, the only young man of their acquaintance, so it was no wonder that Gladys and Baby were glad to relieve the monotony of their lives by spending an hour strolling in the woods with James Fleming. It was soon plain that he was violently in love with Gladys, and Baby sometimes thought it might be imprudent to allow James Fleming to meet them, but she believed implicitly in Gladys, and thought her the wisest as well as the best of created beings. So she said no more about the luckless lover, not even when, some days later, Rex Thornecliffe proposed to Gladys, and was accepted.

It was a lovely August evening, a fortnight later. The three sisters were in the drawing-room, Nellie and Baby reading, Gladys at the piano. Colonel Norman had carried off the two lovers to play cards directly after dinner, and the deserted maidens knew that they should see nothing more of the gentlemen that evening.

It was beginning to grow dusk when a servant brought in a note for Gladys. Baby's book was not interesting, and she idly watched her sister read the note, slip it in her pocket, and rise hurriedly. There were two windows in the room, one a French casement opening on the garden, and through this latter Gladys disappeared with a speed which left Baby breathless, and did not give her time to ask where her sister was going. She was still marvelling when the rector, whose losses at cards had made him desperate enough to rebel against his future father-in-law and break up the card-party, marched into the room, and took a seat beside his betrothed.

"Where are father and Rex?" asked Baby.

"Gone out to smoke a cigar in the wood," replied Mr. Harvey.

An idea flashed on Baby, and in another moment she had darted through the French window and sped to the place in the wood where they had always met the bookseller's son.

There he was, deep in conversation with Gladys.

"It cannot be helped," Gladys was saying, as Baby came up. "You know it must come to an end. We cannot meet you again."

"I know," the lad replied. "It was a liberty to write to you, but—to see you once more—to say 'Good-bye'—I could not help it."

"Gladys, go. Rex is here; and father," broke in Baby. "Go at once."

Gladys gave one startled glance round, and vanished. Baby held out her trembling little hands to Fleming.

"You are not angry?" she said, in a breathless whisper. "We are not ungrateful. It was kind of you to bring us books; it has been very pleasant. But it was foolish of us to meet you. We meant no harm, but it was foolish, and so—it must come to an end. You understand?"

"I understand," answered the boy, taking the two little hands, and looking sadly into the frightened face upraised to his. "I never hoped—anything. But I loved her. I am grateful for her kindness and for yours." He bent his head, and kissed the hands he still held. "My undying love to Miss Gladys," he added, and was gone like a flash.

At the same instant, Baby heard someone breaking through the bushes, and before she had time to escape, Colonel Norman and Rex Thornecliffe were beside her.

"It's Baby. It's my daughter," shouted the Colonel, catching the girl's arm and shaking her violently. "And who was that fellow? Speak out, child. Who was that man? And what were you doing with him at this hour?"

Baby stood motionless and speechless. Her silence enraged her father still more, and her face of ghastly terror convinced him there was something very far wrong indeed. She was hardly conscious. She saw Rex Thornecliffe's shocked and reproachful face, and felt vaguely thankful that Gladys had escaped. Better that she should be thought the sole culprit. The whole story was harmless enough, but it would be so difficult to explain. She knew her father's rigid notions, too, and concluded that Rex shared them. They would think such conduct unladylike, unwomanly. Perhaps Rex, who was looking at her in such a horrified way, might break off his engagement, and that would break Gladys' heart.

"Are you imbecile, girl?" asked her father, with a shake that might have scattered any brains she chanced to possess. "Answer me; who is that man?"

"Be gentle with her," interposed Rex. "Take her home, and she will explain. There is some mistake."

The Colonel pulled his daughter along to the house. Baby made an effort to free her arm and escape upstairs as they entered, but her father held her firmly, and led her into the drawing-room. All looked up in amazement.

"I discovered this girl in a tender interview with a young man," announced Colonel Norman, "and she refuses to tell who he is, or to explain in any way. Nell, do you know anything of this?"

"Nothing," returned Nellie, looking horrified.

"Gladys, *you* know nothing, I am sure," said the Colonel, in a gentler voice. Gladys was as white as her dress, and made a vain effort to speak. "No, no, of course you don't," her father went on. "It's entirely Baby's wickedness, I can see. Now, Baby, you are very young, and I am willing to believe that you have only been giddy and silly, and did not know how wrongly you have acted. Give me the name of the man you met this evening, and tell me how it came about, and how you made his acquaintance unknown to your sisters."

Baby wrung her hands, in mortal anguish, but she never spoke.

"You will not speak," continued her father, in a tone of quiet determination. "You will not confess. Well, then, I will not keep you in my house. You shall go to a strict boarding-school, where your folly will be checked, and you will not re-enter my house till you are ready with a full confession."

Gladys started up.

"Father," she began, but Baby threw herself on her sister's neck, and clasped her close.

"No, Gladys, no," she said, in a hoarse whisper, "don't speak; let me go to school. If you speak, if you say he came to meet you, I shall die." And Gladys kept silence.

Digitized by Google

"Letters from home, Gladys," said Rex, stopping out on the balcony where his wife sat, looking down on the foreign scenes below with interest quite unabated although they had now been many months abroad. "Only one for you, though." He handed her a letter, and began to read his own, leaning carelessly against the railing, and softly whistling to himself.

Gladys let the letter lie unopened on her lap. She seldom heard from home. Her father never wrote; Nell, now Mrs. Harvey, had little time for correspondence; and the rules of the boarding-school to which poor Baby had been consigned permitted no letter-writing.

"Any news, Rex?" she asked, after a pause.

"Well, my father thinks we have been long enough away. So, if you like, we might turn homewards now."

"Yes, I think we might."

"Any news from home?" asked Rex, in his turn. "Why you haven't opened your letter yet."

"It's from Nell, and there can't be any news," replied Gladys, breaking open the letter as she spoke. "Nell never has anything to write about."

But as she read her face grew very pale, and she uttered an exclamation of dismay. "Baby, poor darling Baby," she gasped.

"Baby? What of her?" exclaimed Rex. "Poor little woman; is she ill?"

"Very ill. The principal of the school wrote to Nellie, as father is abroad, and Nell had her sent to the Rectory. She has broken a blood-vessel, and is in great danger. Oh, Rex, let me go to her."

"Of course, darling," replied her husband. "We'll be off at once. Poor Baby! poor little thing! her father was too hard on her for a piece of childish folly."

Two days later they reached the Rectory.

"How is she?" cried Gladys, as Nellie met them at the door.

"Just alive," was the answer. "Come and get your things off, and have dinner, and then you shall see her. She's asleep just now."

"You don't mean there's no hope," said Rex. "I can't believe it. Such a bright merry little thing as she was, so full of life and strength."

"She hasn't much strength left now, poor darling," answered Nell, sighing heavily.

"If she dies," said Gladys, in a low, unnatural voice, "she's been murdered. She was always used to such freedom, such love, such indulgence, and that horrid school with its restrictions and confinement has killed her."

As if the knowledge that her beloved sister was near had reached the sick girl in some mysterious way even in her sleep, the nurse came at this moment to tell Gladys that Baby was awake and wanted her.

Gladys was awe-struck at the change in her young sister. The dimpled, rosy face was white and drawn, the blue eyes looked twice as large as before, and the light and laughter had died out of them. Baby languidly held out a skeleton little hand, and a momentary smile parted her pale lips.

"I'm glad to see you, Gladys," she said, simply.

Gladys kissed her with quivering lips, but could not speak.

"Sit down beside me. Let me look at you! Gladys! Gladys!"

The fond utterance of her name overcame Gladys. She laid her head on the pillow and sobbed as if her heart would break. Baby touched the fair hair lovingly.

"Don't cry, dear. You must be happy always, my Gladys. Gladys Thorncliffe."

Something in her tone struck Gladys. She raised her head quickly, and looked at her sister.

"Baby, you loved him. You loved Rex." The words escaped her involuntarily, and no sooner had she uttered them than she would have given worlds to recall them, but they did not agitate Baby. The faintest pink flush came in her cheeks, and died away, but the blue eyes looked calmly back at Gladys.

"I don't know," she said quietly. "Yes, I think I did. But I love *you*, Gladys, and it was for your sake I would not speak last summer. For Gladys' sake; for Gladys' sake."

"And it has killed you. My cowardice has killed you. Oh, why did I not speak out?"

"You mustn't say that," whispered Baby. "I'm glad it is all as it is."

"You were only a child," went on Gladys, "and I was responsible for what wrong-doing there was. It was all harmless enough, but I was frightened, and left you to be the scapegoat. Baby, I will take my share of the blame now. I will tell Rex, and——"

"No, you must not," broke in Baby. "If you love me, you will not. I am quite happy now, but if you tell, I can't die in peace. Promise you won't tell, Gladys, now or at any other time." She raised herself, her cheeks burning with excitement, her eyes wild. "Promise me. Don't you see you are killing me? Promise; promise."

Terrified by her sister's appearance, Gladys gave the required promise, and Baby sank back exhausted. There was a short silence, only broken by the sick girl's hurried breathing.

"Thank you," said Baby, at last. "I'm rather tired now, Gladys, but I'd like to see Rex just for a minute, and then I'll rest."

Gladys fondly kissed her, and went to find Rex, and send him to the sick room with a warning not to stay longer than five minutes. Baby welcomed him with a pretty smile, and a flush on the hollow cheeks.

"You don't look as ill as I expected," began Rex, cheerily, taking the little hand in his, and looking kindly down at her. "You're thin and pale, of course, but that's the confinement of school life. Poor Baby! but you were a naughty little girl to be so obstinate, weren't you, now."

The flush had faded, and her pallor and exhaustion would have alarmed anyone as densely ignorant about illness as Rex.

"It was a childish freak, wasn't it?" he went on, changing his tone. "I mean, your meeting that fellow last summer. You don't know how it has worried me. I know it was nothing but a child's innocent folly, still—it has worried me."

She murmured something of which he could only distinguish two words. "No harm."

"I believe that, little one," he faltered, "but why not have spoken out to your father? Why not explain it to your sisters, or—or—to me, Baby?"

The wide blue eyes looked calmly into his.

"I won't torment you now," he continued. "I am tiring you, and I promised not to stay long. I'll send nurse to you. But when you are well, you'll tell me all about it, won't you?"

She did not answer, but a look of anguish came into her face.

"You're in pain," he said. "I'll send nurse at once. But promise me, dear, that you'll tell me all about that fellow."

She suddenly raised herself in bed.

"Never," she answered solemnly, clasping her hands and looking upwards.

She sank back; the light in the blue eyes went out, and Baby lay dead, her secret untold for ever. But the angels know it.

V. Serkoff.

Digitized by Google

LOVE PROBLEM No. 4.

A Little Thing.

Should an Engaged Couple be Completely in Each Other's Confidence?

IT was only a little thing, but it was big enough to make two people very miserable.

The two people were Tom Halkett and Marjorie Page, and it began in this way:

Tom had come into the room quite unexpectedly and had found Marjorie with an open letter in her lap.

She had not heard him come in, and, just for fun, he had stolen up behind her and had looked over her shoulder, pretending to read her letter.

Now the moment Marjorie discovered Tom's presence, she pounced upon the letter, crumpled it hastily, and threw it into the fire.

"That wasn't nice of you," said Tom.

Marjorie turned very red.

"I didn't want you to see what was in the letter." Marjorie never prevaricated.

"So it would seem," returned Tom.

"Don't be angry," she pleaded.

"I'm not angry in the least," he replied, "only—sorry."

"Tom, I've hurt you!" cried Marjorie penitently. "Forgive me, dear; I didn't mean to."

"There's nothing to forgive," said Tom in a cold voice.

"Tom, I know what you're thinking," Marjorie went on hurriedly. "You think I don't trust you."

"What else am I to think?"

"Dear, you are wrong, quite wrong. That letter——"

"Please don't trouble to explain," interrupted Tom proudly. "I've no wish to force your confidence."

"Tom, dear, do let me speak."

"Your action just now spoke volumes. And, really, Madge, I've no curiosity whatever on the subject of that letter. Suppose we talk of something more interesting?"

"If you're going to look at me like that, Tom, I don't want to talk to you at all. One would think I'd committed a crime!"

Marjorie had her share of spirit.

"I'm sorry my looks annoy you so much," retorted Tom. "Perhaps you would like me to go away."

"Go, by all means!" cried Marjorie angrily, and Tom, hurt and puzzled, waited for no second bidding.

On second thoughts, perhaps it was not such a little thing after all.

It involved a lovers' principle hitherto cherished by both Tom and Marjorie—the principle that without perfect confidence there can be no true love.

Marjorie that day had shown, only too clearly, that there was something she wished to conceal from Tom.

It mattered little to Tom whether that something were great or small. It was the principle, he told himself, that mattered.

"The woman who doesn't trust the man she has promised to marry ought never to have given her promise."

They were Marjorie's own words.

Tom smiled bitterly as he recalled them now.

"By her own showing she doesn't really care for me," he thought, with a sinking heart.

For a whole week Tom brooded in solitude over the wretched little incident. He made no attempt to see Marjorie, and the seven days seemed like seven years.

By the end of the week his mind was made up. Marjorie had given no sign. He was persuaded she no longer loved him, and his duty lay clear before him. He would go to her and offer to release her from a bondage which must be intolerable to her.

Circumstances favoured his resolution. Marjorie was at home—and alone.

She came forward to meet him, eagerly, with outstretched hands and a happy smile on her face.

At the sight of his look she hesitated, then her hands fell to her side.

"I was just sitting down to write to you, Tom," she said timidly.

"Then I can save you the trouble," he returned, "unless you prefer to write what you have to say."

His tone chilled her, and for a moment pride struggled with the tenderer feelings in her heart.

Then, with a sudden impulsive movement, she placed her hands on his shoulder.

"Dick, you dear old boy, I want to explain," she whispered. "I can explain everything now. It's a secret no longer. That letter," she went on so hurriedly in her eagerness to be rid of her troublesome secret that the words almost tumbled over one another, "that letter was from Nellie Hastings—you remember Nellie, don't you—and in it she asked my advice about an awful thing she thought of doing, and she said she trusted to me not to breathe a syllable to anyone, and that I was the only living creature she had dared to tell. After that I couldn't let you see the letter, could I? You see, the secret wasn't mine, and it would have been a breach of confidence, wouldn't it?"

And Marjorie looked appealingly at Tom.

"Yes, darling, of course," he murmured contritely.

"Of course I wrote off at once to Nellie imploring her not to do it; I was bound to try to dissuade her, wasn't I? I couldn't bear the thought of her doing it."

"Doing what, dearest?"

"Why, running off with that dreadful Bob Harding. Didn't I tell you? That's what she's done."

"I'm beginning to understand," said Tom.

"She begged for my advice," Marjorie continued, "and then, when I gave it her, she didn't take the slightest notice, but married Bob all the same. I've just had another letter from her. They've run away together, and now they haven't got a farthing, and her father will never forgive her. Poor Nellie! Isn't it horrible? She says she's perfectly happy in spite of everything. Everybody knows about it now, but I couldn't tell you before because it wasn't my secret, was it?"

"No, sweetheart, you were quite right, and I was a fool. I ought to have remembered that some secrets have to be kept even from the people we love, because they don't belong to us."

"But I was to blame too. When I snatched away that letter—Tom, no wonder you felt hurt—I ought to have explained, but you were so proud and angry, and—and——"

"And then you began to feel proud and angry too," concluded Tom, and they both laughed at the recollection—which was a sure sign that they understood each other perfectly once more.

Grete Hahn.

Digitized by Google

THE LAST EVENING.

A Tragic Little Story of Two Hopeless Loves.

THE light was growing dim in the studio, but still the artist plied his brush with an appearance of absolute absorption and his model sat listlessly in the old oak chair, seemingly forgetful of her surroundings or occupation.

Then a faint tremor seemed to pass through the room, as if some tension had reached breaking point, and then the artist threw down his brush.

"It's no use," he said, "I can't go on."

She waited silently, and he added with abruptness, giving the key at once to his thoughts—

"You really are going to marry Peterson?"

"I really am," she replied, a little mockingly.

He strode to the fireplace, and stood a moment with his back half turned to her. The model did not stir, but there was a strained expression upon her mouth, and she kept her eyes fixed on the floor.

"I wish you would at least swear to me that you do not loathe him," he said, in a low, passionate voice.

"Swearing is inelegant," she replied, with that same tinge of mockery, "and it is ridiculous to discuss the subject any more."

"I want to save you from a loveless marriage," he answered, and his voice was a prayer.

"To plunge me into a penniless one?"

"Nita, you have no right to say that to me."

The girl bit her lip as if some inward strain were becoming too much for her, while the fire-light flickering into a fresh blaze lit up her loveliness; and the artist held his breath with passionate appreciation.

He came over and leant against the old chair, resting one hand on her shoulder.

"Nita, dear," he said tenderly, "you know that I am not trying to save you for myself. I have seen that that is useless. It is only you I am thinking about. You have had admiration always; but you know that no one has ever loved you as I have, or would do more to serve you."

Her lips contracted sharply, but she did not speak.

"You are so beautiful, Nita," he went on, "and there does not seem to be anyone to look after you properly; and now it appears that you have let yourself be persuaded that you will be happy with this man Peterson, just because he can give you everything that money can buy. It's such a pitiful tale. As if a girl like you could ever be happy without love."

"Who said I was doing it for happiness?"

There was an unusual tremor in her voice, for she had lost her composure a moment in the stress of feeling. Then she drew herself up sharply, as if with an effort regaining her self control.

"What is happiness?" she asked in a hard voice. "Something that one in a million finds. Why should I look to be that one? If I find a way to throttle the miserable, grinding cares of poverty, and have a little peace, isn't that something to be thankful for?"

"Not for you, Nita. It might be for some, but not for you."

She sank back in her chair, and forced the mocking light back to her eyes. "Of course if you will persist in making a goddess of me I can't help it, but in reality I am the most commonplace lump of clay imaginable. I even care about daily bread."

The artist watched her silently. He had known her long enough to see through the mask, if he could not make her take it off.

"I don't quite know why you persist in remaining the lump, as you call it, when you have every capability of becoming one of the Potter's noblest vessels."

"Oh, they often break so easily, and then it is such a pity. What happens to the lump does not matter, and it makes life so much simpler."

"And you think that is the best aim—to make life simple? Why not make it grand?"

"I leave that for those better constituted by Fate, or whatever power it is that tries to make something of the prevailing chaos. When you want a balloon to rise you don't tie it to a dead weight that will drag at it perpetually; if you did the balloon would only become a wreck in the end. I prefer to stay on the ground and not risk it."

"No, you don't," he said almost fiercely. "You know you would give anything to break your bonds and soar—soar—ah, to what heights you might reach!"

"Oh, no," lowering the mask again, "it's a great deal too much trouble for one thing, and such a long way to fall if you should slip afterwards. I'm going to remain an earthworm, and burrow down here for a good home, and all the other creature comforts, which is really being wise in my day and generation, if you could but see it." She strolled across the studio, and rested the tips of her fingers against the mantelpiece, and the toe of one small foot on the fender. "Edward John Peterson, Esq. is a most estimable man," she remarked, with veiled sarcasm, "and he is going to take entire charge of his mother-in-law."

"I suppose that is why you are doing it?" he said miserably.

She shrugged her shoulders and lifted her eye-brows carelessly.

"Have I not said he is a most estimable man?"

Walter Rosney did not reply, but leant his white face wearily against the chair's high back, gazing fixedly at the floor.

Nita turned to him, and a wave of tender compassion stole over her face. He looked so white and ill, the impulse to go to him and tend him as a sick child was almost too strong for her. But when he looked up every trace of it was gone, for she had remembered that she had to help him fight his battle, if she could, as well as fighting her own.

"Listen to me, Walter," she said, steadying her voice with a courage and determination that were heroic. "I suppose it often happens to people that they come to cross-roads in life, when they are obliged to take a new way, and turn their backs on what is gone, however much they wish to continue the same. That time has come for us, and we shall have to say 'Good-bye.' It is as hard for me as for you," her voice faltered, but she pressed on bravely, "but we may not stop to think about its hardness. Marriage is out of the question; you are very poor and very delicate, and I have an invalid mother to keep. It is simple enough; only too pitifully

Digitized by Google

simple. I must marry a rich man, and we must say 'Good-bye,' that is all."

His face had grown ashen, she could not bear to look at it, conscious that a momentary weakness on her part might undo the little she had already achieved.

"Couldn't you have waited a little longer?" he asked at last; "perhaps something might turn up."

"Or Mr. Peterson might go!"—lightly; and then with a leisurely step she walked across to his canvas and looked critically at her own nearly finished picture, seeking to lessen a strain that was becoming too much for her by changing the subject and remarking, "It is your best."

"Yes," he answered simply, "I have felt as if I were painting it with my heart's blood."

She stood silent a moment with contracted brows, then turned to him with a gleam of passion in her eyes she could not control.

"Don't let *him* have it," she said, "not even if he offers you a thousand pounds."

A sudden mocking fiend seemed to possess the artist.

"Why not?" he asked. "Think how he would value it—his own beautiful wife!"

She turned very white, but with a great effort mastered herself, though a deep longing seized her to go to him and rest her head against his shoulder as she had done when she was happy a few months ago. She knew he must be suffering terribly to speak to her like that.

"I must be going," was what she said however. "Will you get my cloak?"

He fetched it silently, but as he helped her on with it, he again rested his hand on her shoulder.

"Is the wedding day fixed?" he asked.

"Not quite."

"Then will you come out to dinner just once more? I can get George and Alice to come with us."

She seemed to hesitate.

"Do," he pleaded. "Just once for the old times' sake." And she yielded. When he was alone he went and stood by his canvas and looked at it for a long time. "No, I will not sell you," he said gently. "I would rather starve, for you are all I shall have left soon of my life-dream."

In the murky streets Nita hurried along to the little dingy flat where she and her mother lived. She pulled her collar high about her face, and kept her eyes lowered, for her beauty was too striking to pass unobserved even in a dim light, and she was a girl who shrank from the rude stare of the men in the street. Her mother was waiting for her impatiently.

"Well, is the picture finished?" she asked.

"Practically," and Nita's voice was a little hard.

"Because," continued her mother, "I don't think it is right to Mr. Peterson for you to go and sit for that young man as you do. If I were well enough to come with you it would be different."

"There is nothing to be anxious about," and Nita sat down listlessly to their meagre repast.

"I'm not so sure," her mother replied. "He's only like all other young men, and he's sure to be in love with you, or else fancy he is. I'll be bound he's been talking nonsense to you this afternoon."

Nita bit her lip and looked a little dangerous, but her mother had never learnt tact in dealing with her, and probably never would.

"Has he been making love to you?" she asked, a little coarsely; "because if so I shall tell Mr. Peterson to forbid your going."

"You can tell Mr. Peterson what you like," haughtily; "but if he dares to say a word against any friend of mine there will be a scene, so I warn you. As for forbidding me to go to Walter Rosney's studio, let him try it!"

"Don't go in for heroics," retaliated her mother, in the peevish accent of the confirmed invalid, "even if you are in love with the boy."

Nita's eyes flashed then.

"How dare you!" she cried, "isn't it enough that I am marrying this—this—Peterson, to give you a good home and the things the doctor orders, without your taunting me with what it costs. I insist that you never mention Walter Rosney to me again. You never did him justice. You couldn't—he is out of your sphere altogether."

"That's right! run down your own mother. Oh, I know well enough what you mean; of course I am in the way, and everything is my fault. If it were not for me you would have me believe that you would marry this beggarly artist with one foot in the grave, and go in want all your life. If it were true I should have been thankful that I lived to prevent such folly but I don't believe it—I don't believe a word of it, so there. As if any girl would refuse such a chance for happiness as yours. The man is rich and kind and he dotes on you. In Heaven's name what more do you want?"

Nita's lips curled scornfully but she did not reply; she had long known the folly of attempting to reason with her mother.

"Anyhow, I hope you won't see this Rosney again now the picture is finished," the latter went on, "you have seen too much of him already."

"I went to save you from a loveless marriage," he answered.

Digitized by Google

"I am going out to dinner with him to-morrow evening."

"Nonsense," and Mrs. Crossley spoke angrily, "you could not be so foolish."

"Couldn't I?" in that low, mocking voice of hers, "wait till to-morrow and see."

* * * * *

Alice Turner demurred very much when her brother asked her to arrange the little dinner the following evening, but her husband took the artist's part and she was overruled.

"It is only needless pain for both of you," she said, "and as it is impossible for you to marry, it would be far wiser never to meet again."

"We never shall," Walter answered quietly, "after to-night."

Something in his face made his sister cross over to him and rest her hand affectionately on his shoulder. "They tell me Peterson is a good fellow," she said gently, "he will make a kind husband."

"He will not make her happy," the artist replied a little hoarsely, and left the room.

In the evening he met Nita as appointed and persuaded her to go round to his studio to see the completed picture.

"Is this to be our last meeting?" he asked quietly, as he stood before it in silence.

"Yes," she answered, and did not look up. Then —"Are you going to sell it?" she asked suddenly, and he replied, "I would rather die first."

She smiled a little crooked smile at that, and leaning forward pressed her lips impulsively against the wistful drooping mouth of the girl in the picture.

"Good-bye, Nita," she said softly, "you and I must never meet again either. You may love him always and be with him always, but I must forget." A momentary weakness seized her. "How I envy you," she breathed brokenly. "How I envy you, Nita, his friend."

The artist dropped heavily into a chair and hid his face with a groan.

"Good-bye, Nita," she said softly, kissing the picture, "you and I must never meet again. You may love him always, and be with him always, but I must forget."

There were a few moments' painful silence, then she said resolutely: "It is time we were going," and he could only rise and follow.

They had their little dinner-party at a quiet private hotel where they had been several times before, but London was very full just then, and many curious eyes gazed at the two beautiful women as they passed up the room.

At first they were very quiet, but presently, as if thought were unwelcome to all alike, a wave of gaiety broke over them, and lightness became the order of the hour. No one alluded to the occasion, they only talked on gaily, each vying with the other in brilliancy of conversation. It was like some fateful orgy, in which the partakers heralded with mocking delight, some terrible event of the morrow. A bright spot of colour burnt in the artist's thin cheeks, and his eyes shone unnaturally. "That young man will soon be a patient for some one," said a doctor to his companion, eyeing him professionally.

"Ah! don't say so," she cried. "Can't you see he worships the lovely girl beside him."

"He has no right to marry her if he does," was the seemingly heartless reply, but the doctor's eyes belied his tongue.

Long after the majority of diners had left the four lingered on, and still Walter Rosney talked and laughed, and Nita answered him mood for mood. Had they ever been so merry before? Surely not—and must it end?

No, no—the artist was still holding them all enthralled, pouring out his scant vitality recklessly, as he pitted himself against Time, in a mad effort to make it stand still for that one evening.

At last his sister rose with determination. She was getting a little frightened—there was something so unnatural about it all, and he was beginning to catch his breath as if from a sharp physical pain.

"We will go home for the rest of the evening," she said, "it is too late for a theatre now."

Her husband followed her lead, and called for two hansoms at once, in spite of his wife's unspoken protest.

"It is their last evening," he said as they followed together. "My God! it's making me feel I could cry like a child. How do they do it? It's awful! I'd rather see them looking broken-hearted —it wouldn't seem so horribly unreal."

The lovers reached the house a few minutes first, and stood waiting in the dimly lit library.

"You are glad you came to-night?" the artist asked, catching Nita's hand in both his with a passionate movement.

"Ah! it has been splendid!" he hurried on, without giving her time to speak, "if only it hadn't felt that we were fiddling, like Nero, while Christians burned, or hearts-broke, or something.

"But I have had the best of you, so I am more to be envied than he after all. You will never talk and look like that for him—my queen—my beautiful queen" —his voice broke a little—"and I have seen the lovelight too—my God! he will never see that—Nita, Nita swear he will never see that——"

He was getting over-excited, and seeing it, she sought hastily to calm him, speaking to him in a gentle soothing voice. Then the others joined them, and they all went upstairs to the drawing-room.

"What shall we do?" his sister said. "Shall we have a little music? What shall I sing, Walter?"

She turned to him, and almost immediately uttered a frightened exclamation: "What is it, dear?" she cried; "Aren't you well?"

He tried to smile, but his pallid face only grew distorted with pain, and he swayed a little.

"I—I—it's all over," he finished with a groan, "but thank God, we had to-night"—and as Nita rushed towards him, he fell heavily in her arms.

* * * * *

"Angina pectoris," was the doctor's verdict, "and he must have been suffering from it for some time." Nita wondered if he had known—only it mattered so little now—nothing mattered. All night she had sat by his bedside with his weep-

Digitized by Google

ing sister, only no tears had come to help her anguish, and when all was over she was still tearless.

There had been no touching farewell—no improving death bed scene—these things are rare enough in real life. The night had been passed in a sharp succession of heart spasms, which wrung the hearts of the anxious watchers almost past endurance, by their cruel pain. Once or twice he had seemed to watch Nita with conscious eyes, but almost immediately a spasm had blotted out all recollection of aught but the pain.

But as he grew worse she at last gathered him in her arms, and supported his head on her breast to ease his laboured breathing, and then once the faintest semblance of a smile, and a little sigh of content told her that he understood.

But when the grey morning looked into the darkened chamber, the artist was dead.

Later on a woman came alone and stood beside the silent form for a long time—and even in her pallor she was as beautiful as the sunlight.

"Good-bye," she said softly at last. "Good-bye my One Love. It is better that you should lie peacefully there, than have lived to bear the inevitable suffering. For me!—I am strong—and a woman has a heart better tuned to suffering than a man.

"Yet I feel that I too am dead, and, indeed, I think *your* Nita truly died last night with you. To-day she is someone else with a burden of years that must be lived through with another—but *your* Nita is yours for ever. Thank God the last evening of our lives was spent together—it matters so little what comes now."

Gertrude Page.

Robin: "I always kiss my wife when I leave the house in the morning." Dobbin: "I've heard that some men will do almost anything as an excuse to get away from home."

Mr. Hornbill: "Do you know, darling, I could pick you out of a crowd of women just by your style." Mrs. Hornbill: "I don't wonder, and me with this same old dress for the last two years."

He: "What proof have I that you really love me?" She: "Proof! Did I not dance with you at the county ball?" "Yes, but I don't consider that any proof of affection." "You would if you knew how badly you dance."

Mrs. Neurich: "How's my son gettin' along with his lessons?" Private Tutor: "Very nicely, madam, although it is rather difficult for him to catch an idea at times." Mrs. Neurich: "Well, I'll have you to know he don't have to catch 'em. We can afford to buy him all the ideas he needs."

Mrs. Peterby was busy cutting her husband's hair. Their little son Johnny picked up some that was scattered over the floor. "Please, ma, mayn't I have a lock of papa's hair? I want it so badly." "Yes, my child. Just see, George, what an affectionate little fellow he is. That child has more heart than any child of his age I ever saw. He wants to have a lock of your hair as a keepsake." "What do you want it for?" asked Mr. Peterby. "I want to tie it to the tail of my horse; his hair is too thin," replied the affectionate little creature.

£50 FROM ONE READER TO THE REST.

A reader of Short Stories won a prize of £10 in 1894 and with the help of this money emigrated to America making a fortune out of the cycle boom of 1897 and 1898. He recently wrote a letter, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Dayton," to the Editor of Short Stories, inclosing dollar bills to the value of £50, and asking that this money may be offered as prizes in five sums of £10 each.

The Editor has given the matter very careful consideration, and has arrived at the conclusion that, as his anonymous correspondent was in great want when he won his prize, the most satisfactory manner of distributing his gifts of £50 would be to offer them to those who can give the best reasons for receiving them.

You may be wanting to emigrate to one of our Colonies. You may want £10 to buy something you have needed for a long time. You may want to clear off some small debts that have been worrying you. Or you may want to trade with the £10 and, like "Dayton," turn it into a fortune.

Whatever your reason for wanting it may be, write it down in the space below, and send it to "The Competition Editor of Short Stories," Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "Dayton 3," by Tuesday, January 13th.

Readers may send as many reasons as they like, provided each is written on a separate coupon. Another coupon will appear next week. The Editor's decision is final, and competitors may enter only on this understanding.

CUT OFF THE COUPON HERE.

THIRD COUPON.

My reason for wanting £10 is.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name..... **Address**.....

Digitized by Google

A GIRL WHO LOVED AND SAID SO.

Which Brought Both Her and Him Happiness.

THE girl stood in the centre of the room, a scintillating figure in the midst of a blaze of light. Her dress glistened and clung, half-hiding, half-revealing the lines of her graceful figure, and trailed in billowy masses about her feet. Her dark hair with its copper and golden glints fell in a loose wave over her forehead, and was gathered into a seemingly careless knot at the nape of her neck.

In reality, there was nothing careless about that or any other part of Beth's costume. She had dressed with great care that night; in fact, she always did if she expected to see Bob, though her heart cried out bitterly at the uselessness of it.

"Why do I try to please him?" she asked herself again and again. "He will never care for me, never. I have cut myself off from any chance I may have had of making him care by my own act."

For Beth had done a thing which, aside from all ethical considerations, is extremely foolish in any girl who wishes to gain a man's highest regard. She had allowed Bob to kiss her. How it came about she never quite understood herself. Other men who had presumed to attempt to gain a like favour had met with crushing defeat—had inspired in her nothing but the utmost disgust and dislike.

If an unprejudiced observer had witnessed the incident he would doubtless have pronounced it the result of strong mutual physical attraction, stimulated by propitious time and place. One night, after they had been dancing together, they strolled out into the garden, where streaks of moonlight and gloom alternated. When Bob spoke there was a tremor in his voice; Beth's pulses pounded in unruly fashion. The spark to kindle the smouldering fire was not long in coming. As they neared the border of a shadowed spot Beth's wrap slipped from her shoulders.

They both reached to replace it and their hands met as they entered the shadow. The next instant she was clasped in his arms, his lips were upon hers.

When Beth wrenched herself free she started quickly away from him, only to pause when she gained the moonlight's brilliant protection and turn upon him wide, serious eyes.

"I ought to be very angry," she declared unsteadily; "and, of course, you think that I am. But I'm not so, I have no right to let you believe that I am." Beth had a way of being brutally frank with herself, and possessed a fanatical sense of justice.

"It's my fault as much as yours, anyway," she continued. "I should have known better than to come out here with you; signs and tokens should have warned me that it was playing with fire. Perhaps, to a certain extent, they did, but I——"

"Beth, I'm a brute—I'm so sorry. Forgive me," he pleaded.

"The 'brute' gets the whip hand of most of us sometimes, I think," she replied quickly; "but this must not happen again, Bob. We're such awfully good friends, you know"—and her voice faltered as she gulped back the sob which was rising in her throat.

For poor Beth had assumed some of this frankness to hide her hurt. Bob must not know how she had been dreaming dreams, how she wrongly interpreted the "signs and tokens," believing that they indicated his love for her, how his sudden passionate kiss had opened her eyes to her mistake. Bob was only her friend, though he did not regard her dispassionately.

"You're a little brick, Beth," Bob assured her; "the idea of you blaming yourself. It's every bit of it my fault, and it's awfully good of you to give me another chance. You can count me more your friend than ever."

They both honestly meant to maintain the standard, but, the boundary once crossed, it is difficult to return to a platonic basis, so it occasionally happened that they strayed from the beaten track.

Sometimes Beth reproached herself bitterly, and vowed that he should never touch her again. At other times she was defiant with herself.

"Somebody will take him from me entirely some day," she argued, "I might as well take my poor little half a loaf while it's within my reach. I'm not hurting anyone except myself—he'd kiss someone else if he didn't kiss me. I shall never marry, so, after all, my kisses are my own to do with as I please."

This evening when Bob arrived she greeted him with the frank familiarity which generally characterised her manner towards him. He looked very, very handsome, so tall and strong, and straight, and her ache tugged so persistently at her heart-strings that she knew she must stay away from him, so, when they arrived at their destination, she flirted desperately with his chum.

It was a weary task at best, and when, towards the end of the evening, Bob led her away to a quiet room where they were quite alone, she was glad enough to rest upon a friendly cushioned couch, even though she felt instinctively that Bob was in what she mentally termed "one of his sentimental moods."

It came, just as she knew that it would. He put his arm around her and she made no effort to resist him.

"What makes you such a witch, Beth?" he questioned as he drew her towards him. "Now you've gone and got poor old Fred in the toils. I was sure you two——"

"Can't you *ever* talk of anything but 'Fred'?" Beth broke in impatiently. "Before I met him you were always saying 'how much I should like him,' and 'how nice he was,' and now, because he is passably civil——"

"'Passably civil,'" echoed Bob, "why he simply monopolises you—cuts me out entirely."

"That's your own look-out," Beth answered with an attempt at flippancy. Somehow his talk of Fred had got on her nerves to-night, and, as he kissed her, he felt that she was trembling.

"What's the matter, Beth?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all," she said hastily, trying to draw away from him. He held her close. "Let's go back to the others," she added; then, with a dreary little laugh: "Fred can cut you out some more." Suddenly she turned and flung her arms round Bob's neck.

"Only he can't!" she said fiercely; "no one ever could and you can't see—you don't know—you never will," she confided to the shoulder of his coat.

"Beth, darling——"

"Don't you dare say that to me—you don't mean it and I *hate* you," she flashed at him hysterically, jumping to her feet. "What a fool I am—what *am* I talking about—no, no—

Digitized by Google

don't speak to me," and she pressed her fingers over his mouth. Her other hand he had caught again and now she raised his and laid her cheek against it. "I love you, I love you," she wailed; "oh, Bob, I know it's dreadful, but I *had* to say it just once"—and before he could recover from his astonishment she fled wildly across the room.

"Don't ever speak to me again!" she flung at him from the threshold.

"Beth!" he cried, but she was gone.

In the hall she met Fred.

"I'm so tired," she said, "please take me home."

"But where's Bob?" he questioned wonderingly.

"Oh, never mind Bob," she said miserably. "Please take me—and hurry, do."

Seeing that something was wrong with her he obeyed, marvelling greatly.

Beth sank limply into the corner of the carriage with closed eyes and utterly oblivious of the silent man in the opposite corner. She was quite unstrung, her brain was in a whirl. Why had she lost her self-control in that utterly dreadful way? Why had she that night spoken the words that had fought so often for utterance only to be resolutely choked back? Bob despised her, of course. She would never see him again—but suppose she should meet him. She must not; she would go away—she—— She formed a sudden resolution.

"Fred," she said, in a hard, level voice, "I will marry you if you still want me."

A moment's silence, then a man's hand sought hers.

"That's very nice for Fred," spoke a voice from the gloomy corner, "but what about me, Beth?"

"Bob!" she gasped, "oh, Bob, how could you?"

"How could I do anything else?" he questioned very tenderly. "When I saw that Fred was coming with you I threatened all things terrible if he would not let me take his place."

"I wanted never to see you again," she said gravely.

"As we are going to spend the rest of our lives together you're not likely to get that wish, sweetheart. But anything else——"

"Oh, don't, don't," she cried. She was sobbing in his arms now. "Just because you are sorry for me—that is worse than anything."

"I'm sorry that the man you love, and who loves you, oh, so much, is not a better fellow; sorry that you have hidden your love so successfully under the guise of friendship that I was sure I did not have any show at all. Didn't you know that I loved you, dear?"

"There was a time when I thought you did—before that night. But after that——"

"That night, I meant to tell you—to ask you to be my wife. And when you were in my arms I was too happy to speak—I thought you understood and that just then there was no need for words between us. But when you spoke you pulled down all my beautiful castles for you said 'we were such good friends.' You were so gentle with me, I thought, because you did understand that I cared and wanted to show me that you did not."

"I did not want my 'friend' to guess that I had ever thought he might be——"

"Your sweetheart," Bob said. "Always your sweetheart."

And within the carriage, as it rolled quietly through the streets there was the silence of a perfect understanding.

Winifred Alan.

Result of the "Albert Gate Acrostic" Competition.

The Gramophone prizes in the above competition have been awarded as follows:

R. Murdoch, 24a St. Vincent Crescent, Glasgow; W. J. Block, 5 Halidou Street. Erswick Road, Hackney, N.; G. Stevens, 1 Eton Villas, Queen's Road, Cheltenham; F. W. Child, 16 Spilman Street, Carmarthen; F. W. Hook, Commercial Street, Cinderford, Glos.; W. Hastings, 1 Dufferin Terrace, Deal; C. W. Conolly, 43 Nicholas Street, Chester; E. Wilson, 2 Orchard Villas, London Road, Ashford, Middlesex; J. Sewell, The Lund, Lamplugh, Cockermouth; Miss Rita Louise MacLean, 32 South Street, Greenock.

Your Editor Chats.

I would like to call your attention particularly this week to one little story which you will find on page 48 of this number.

It is called "The Last Evening," and is one of those little gems, which when discovered amongst the hundreds of stories, good, bad, and indifferent, which pour into the editorial office of this little paper week by week, make your Editor go home with a happy smile and a contented mind. I really think it is the most powerful little love story of its kind which I ever had the pleasure of presenting to my readers.

The almost endless toil of reading through score after score of tales is amply recompensed by such a reward of labour.

It is with great gratification that I notice the readiness with which readers are hastening to place their confidence in the powers of Miss Cynthia Hamilton for the solution of their love troubles.

All of you who have been readers for the past few months are acquainted with Miss Hamilton's life story, particularly the latter chapters, and I can assure you that she is extremely pleased at the eagerness with which her services are being accepted, and takes a genuine interest in the love tangles brought under her notice.

Next week's cover, I may mention, is a particularly striking one. It illustrates an extremely powerful story in which a wife finds herself forced to leave her happy home and devoted husband, at a moment's notice, without giving those she loves most and best the slightest explanation of her flight or the faintest clue to her whereabouts. I am sure you will like it.

A PRIZE OF £5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.

The Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* is offering the above prize in a simple competition that starts in his paper, published on Friday, January 23rd. The following extract from his Editorial Notice will be interesting to readers:

"It is difficult for one to realise at once exactly what so magnificent an income really means. Men and women have toiled from youth to old age and have never made an income so big as £5 a week. Hundreds of thousands of men and women are to-day earning little more than a fifth of this sum. Their life is one long struggle, without pleasure, without hope.

"It is impossible for us to give a helping hand to every one of these people. It is impossible for us to place them in a position of independence and happiness for the rest of their lives, and we don't contemplate attempting so enormous a task. But it is happily within our reach to benefit at least one such person, and, with this end in view, we make this offer of £5 a Week for Life to the person who shall justify his claim to it under the conditions of the competition which will be announced shortly."

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Saved by the Cheque Book.

He: "My dear, the bank in which my money is deposited has failed." She: "What a mercy you've got your cheque book at home, love!"

Her One Error in Speech.

Mrs. Chatterbox: "Did you ever make any errors in speech?" Mrs. Wordsworth: "Yes; I made one a few years ago." Mrs. Chatterbox: "What was it?" Mrs. Wordsworth: "I said, 'Yes!'"

How She was Pacified.

Mistress: "Did anyone call while I was out?" New Girl: "Yes, mum; Mrs. Wayup called." "Did she seem disappointed when you said I was not at home?" "Well, she did look a bit queer, but I told her she needn't get in a temper about it, 'cause it was really true this time."

Probably!

Young Wife: "I want to buy a hat for my husband." Hatter: "What size does he wear?" Young Wife: "I declare I forgot to find out! I know the size of the collars he wears, though. It's fifteen. He'd want about size eighteen or twenty for a hat, wouldn't he?"

A Gentle Hint.

Mrs. Hyflye: "George, dear, while you are having money troubles, I ought to tell you that I learnt to-day why your rival Soapem's credit has suddenly become so good." Mr. Hyflye: "Why?" Mrs. Hyflye: "I overheard someone remark that Soapem's finances must be all right because his wife was wearing such elegant new hats and dresses."

John's Fatal Mistake.

She never knew he was only a waiter, for he had basely told her that he was a gentleman of independent means. One hot day they were sitting in Hyde Park. He felt very drowsy; she felt very loving. "John," she whispered, "do you love me?" "Eh? What?" opening his eyes; "love you, of course I do, darling," and again his eyes closed. "How much?" she asked, and he dreamily said: "Roas' beef, shilling, sir; taters, tuppence; cabbage, penny, sir; bread, penny; half-stout, tuppence; one an' six, please, sir."

Mighty Improvin'.

Parson: "Well, Molly, did you like my sermon this morning?" Molly: "Oh, yis, your rivrence, 'twas mighty improvin'." Parson: "And what part of it did you like best, Molly?" Molly: "In troth, plaze your rivrence, I don't remember any part exactly, but altogether it was mighty improvin'." Parson: "Now, Molly, if you don't remember it, how could it be improving?" Molly: "Now, does your rivrence see that linin I have been washin' and dhryin' on that hedge there?" Parson: "Certainly, Molly." Molly: "And isn't the linin all the better for the clanin'?" Parson: "No doubt, Molly." Molly: "But not a dhrop of the soap and wather stays in it. Well, sir, it's the same thing wid me. Not a word of the sarmint stays in me. But I am all the better and claner for it, for all that."

Quite Impossible.

Papa: "Young man, you want to marry my daughter, and yet you will not give me a list of your friends for reference." Dunstan: "Not much. They were all after the same girl."

Heard at the Holborn.

Guest: "What have you got?" Waiter: "I've got liver, calf's brains, pig's feet——" Guest: "I don't want a description of your physical peculiarities. What you have got to eat is what I want to know."

Preferred Variety in Kisses.

Mr. Bronston: "Where are the sweets, my dear?" Mrs. Bronston: "The pastrycook has left. You'll have to be satisfied with kisses for sweets to-day." Mr. Bronston: "All right. Bring in your French maid."

Looking for a Peer.

There is a charming story being told of a proud American mamma in London. She was speaking of her daughter, and said she was a "peerless beauty." "But she won't be long," she added, after a moment's pause, "if I can help it."

Willing to Oblige.

Master: "What! both want a holiday to-morrow? I can't spare you Both at once; Mary, you can have to-morrow, and John the next day." John: "Thank you, sir, but we wanted to get married, and I'm afraid, sir, it can't be done that way, but I'll inquire."

Wasted Violence.

Mrs. Spratt (vigorously shaking her sleeping spouse): "John, John! There's a burglar in the house!" Mr. Spratt (protesting): "Look here, Jane, if, instead of shaking the life out of me, you'd go and shake that burglar, you'd be doing some good."

She Knew Her Husband.

Mother: "Is your letter to your husband ready to post?" Married Daughter: "It's all done excepting the postcript telling him to send me some more money. I'm looking for another sheet of paper." Mother: "Write it across the lines. Married Daughter (promptly): "No, indeed. He'll pretend he couldn't read it."

Extremely Awkward.

Mrs. Wearie: "This is the last time I'll have a girl who can't speak English." Husband: "Why don't you send her off?" Mrs. Wearie: "I've been trying to for six weeks, but I can't make her understand what the word 'discharge' means. She thinks it means a day off, and when I tell her she's discharged, she goes out and has a good time."

That Naughty Little Girl.

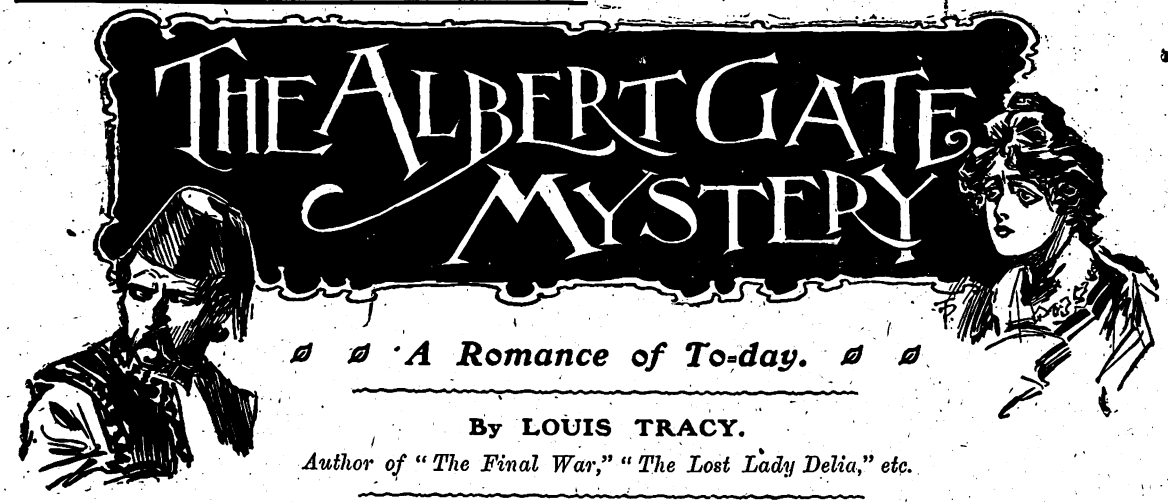
She is homely, she is tricky; And, I am greatly grieved to tell, Her hands are always sticky With a chocolate caramel. Her dolly's battered features Speak of many a frantic hurl. She's the terror of her teachers—That naughty little girl. She dotes upon bananas, And she smears them on my knees; She peppers my havannas; And delights to hear me sneeze. Yet—why I can't discover—Spite of every tangled curl, She's a darling, and I love her, That naughty little girl!

Times Have Altered.

"Yes, indeed," said the old man, thoughtfully, after his wife had delivered a dissertation upon the progress of the sex, "the up-to-date woman is vastly different from the old." "I thought you would realise that in time," she returned, rather sharply. "I have just been reading," he went on, "how girls used to be sold by their parents, and some of them brought fancy prices." "But there is none of that now," exclaimed the up-to-date woman, proudly. "Woman has asserted herself, and——" "No, there's none of that now," interrupted the old man. "That's all passed. A man does not buy a wife in these days." "I should think not." "Certainly not. It's all changed, all changed. Now he has to be paid to take her, and her poor old father has to wreck his bank account to provide the dowry. Yes, I admit that the new woman, Maria——" Then the door was slammed and she was gone.

Digitized by Google

OUR NEW SERIAL STORY.



A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Mr. Brett's Quest.

A NUMBER of priceless diamonds having been most mysteriously stolen from an Albert Gate Mansion, and four of the custodians of the jewels murdered, Mr. Brett, barrister and detective, in conjunction with the police, is called upon to help clear up the mystery.

The diamonds, it appears, were sent over by the Sultan of Turkey in charge of a number of Turkish officials, and, being of political importance, the mission was placed by the British Government in the care of Mr. Jack Talbot, of the Foreign Office. Upon the night of the robbery and murder, Mr. Talbot disappears.

The Earl of Fairholme, being engaged to be married to Talbot's sister, intrusts Brett with the finding of Talbot.

Brett's first clue is the statement of Mr. Winter, a Scotland Yard detective, that Mr. Talbot and a lady have been seen in Paris, Talbot having signed his name in a hotel register. Brett goes to Paris to see if the signature is genuine.

On his way he falls in with Captain Gaultier, a King's messenger, from whom he learns that Hussein ul Mulk, the Sultan of Turkey's nephew, who had fled from Turkey, is in Paris. Gaultier promises Brett an introduction. Meanwhile Brett has discovered that the signature in the hotel register is not in Talbot's handwriting.

He suspects Hussein of having caused the diamonds to be stolen, and with a view to eliciting information regarding Talbot's whereabouts, in company of Gaultier, pays a visit to the Turk.

This Week's Instalment.

"AH!" he said, "my dear Gaultier, I am so pleased to see you. I did not know you were in Paris. I have been spending an idle moment over cigars and scandal." He spoke excellent French, and appeared to be quite at his ease, but Brett noticed that Hussein ul Mulk had held the discarded newspaper upside down. He was smoking a cigarette, lighted the instant before their appearance, and notwithstanding his Oriental phlegm he seemed to be labouring under intense excitement.

But Hussein ul Mulk could evidently control his nerves.

"Have you had *déjeuner*, or have you time to join me in a cigarette?" he went on.

"We will be delighted," said Gaultier, taking the proffered case. "The fact is, I only heard of your presence in Paris by accident, and I mentioned the fact to my friend here, who has interested himself in the Armenian cause in London. He at once expressed a keen desire to make your acquaintance, so I ventured to bring him round and introduce him to you. This is Mr. Reginald Brett, an English barrister, and one who keenly sympathises with the reform movement in Turkey."

"I am delighted to know you, Mr. Brett," said the suave Oriental. "It is naturally a great pleasure to me to make the acquaintance of any influential Englishman who has given sufficient thought to Eastern affairs to understand the way in which my country suffers from a barbarous and unenlightened rule."

He delivered himself of the foregoing with the glibness of a born agitator, yet all the while he was inwardly wondering what could be the true motive of the visit paid him by this distinguished-looking stranger, and Brett was silently resolving to startle Hussein ul Mulk out of his complacency at the earliest possible moment.

"It is an even greater pleasure to me," he said, "to find myself talking to a reformer so distinguished as you. Your name is well known in Europe. Indeed, in some quarters it has come to be feared, which in this world is one of the signs of success."

Hussein ul Mulk was puzzled, but he remained outwardly unperturbed.

"I was not aware," he said, "that my poor services to my country were so appreciated by my English friends."

"Ah," said Brett, with a smile that conveyed much, "the achievements of a man like you cannot long remain hidden. I have good reason to know that at the present moment they are earnestly attracting the attention of the Foreign Office."

Hussein ul Mulk became even more puzzled, and, indeed, exhibited some slight tokens of alarm lest Brett's vehement admiration should reach the ears of others in the adjoining room.

"Really," he said, "you flatter me. Will you not try these cigarettes? They are the best; they are made from tobacco grown specially for the Sultan's household, and it is death to export them. I understand that the cigarette habit has grown very much of recent years in England?"

"Yes," said Brett, "it certainly has developed with amazing rapidity. In trade as in politics this is an age of astounding achievements."

Gaultier knew that there was more behind the apparent exchange of compliments than appeared on the surface. Having fulfilled his pledge, he said hurriedly, "Both of you gentlemen will understand that I cannot very well take part in a political discussion. With your permission, Hussein, I will now leave my friend with you for a half-hour's chat, as I have an appointment at the Café Riche."

Digitized by Google

Although Hussein was profoundly disconcerted by Brett's manner no less than his utterances, he could not well refuse to accord him a further audience, so Gaultier quitted the apartment and the Englishman and Mussulman were left face to face.

A Telegram from Paris.

BRETT felt that he was called upon to play a bold game. Under some circumstances he knew that to throw away the scabbard, and dash with naked sword into the fray, was the right policy.

"I came to see you, Hussein ul Mulk," he said, speaking deliberately, "not only because I have an interest in the progressive policy voiced by the young Turkish party, but on account of matters which are of a personal interest to you, and to friends of mine in England."

The Turk bowed silent recognition of the barrister's motives.

"You are aware," said Brett, "that a large number of valuable diamonds were stolen from the special envoy of His Majesty the Sultan, in London, last Tuesday night, and that the theft was accompanied by the murder of four of the Sultan's subjects and the abduction of a prominent official in the British Foreign Office?"

It is difficult for an olive-skinned man to turn pale, but Hussein ul Mulk did the next most effective thing for one of his race. His face assumed a dirty green shade, and his full red lips whitened.

For some few seconds he strove hard to regain his composure and frame a reply, but Brett, nonchalantly puffing a cloud of smoke into the intervening space, and thus helping his hearer to control his emotions, went on:

"Pray do not trouble to deny full knowledge of the fact. It is far better for men of the world like you and me to discard subterfuge when engaged in grave and difficult negotiations. I do not propose wasting time by describing to you the details of a crime with which you are thoroughly acquainted. Let me say, in a sentence, that my chief, perhaps my only, motive in coming here to-day is to secure the release of my friend, Mr. Talbot, from the place where he is at present confined, and at the same time to obtain from you a statement which will satisfactorily clear Mr. Talbot in the eyes of his superiors of all personal complicity in the Albert Gate incident."

Again there was a breathless silence.

Hussein ul Mulk had regained his nerve. He was now considering how best he could dispose of this Englishman who knew so much. To purchase his silence was too hopeless. He must die as speedily and unostentatiously as possible. So he answered not, but thought hard as to ways and means.

Brett, in imminent danger of his life, disregarded all semblance of danger. He leant back in his chair, closed his eyes in complete enjoyment of Hussein's cigarettes, which were really excellent, and said, in the even, matter-of-fact tones of one who discusses an abstract problem:

"Of course, my dear friend, you are thinking that the best answer you can give me is to strangle me or to shoot me, or to adopt any other part of the drastic policy which finds favour in Constantinople. But let me point out to you that this will be a serious error of judgment. I have not come here without safeguarding my movements. You are aware that Captain Gaultier, a trusted Foreign Office Messenger, brought me here in person. Some members of the British Government, and several important officials of Scotland Yard, know that I am in your house and discussing this matter with you. If any accident were to interfere with my future movements, you would simply precipitate a crisis quite lamentable in its results to yourself, to your association, and to your cause. You will see, therefore, Hussein, that to kill me cannot really be thought of. A man of your penetration and undoubted sagacity must surely admit this at once, and we can then proceed to discuss matters in a friendly and pleasant manner."

At last Hussein found his tongue. "I have never met you before, Mr. Brett," he said, "but you interest me."

Brett smiled and bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"Of course I admit nothing," went on the Mohammedan.

"Of course."

"Least of all do I admit that I contemplated any breach of hospitality towards yourself."

Brett waved his hand in deprecation of such a pernicious thought.

"But you will understand," went on Hussein ul Mulk, "that it is quite impossible for me to even attempt to discuss fully the interesting facts you have brought to my notice without some inquiry on my part, and on yours some proof that the events concerning which you have informed me have really happened. You see one cannot trust a newspaper They get such garbled accounts of occurrences, particularly of State affairs; they are misleading——"

"Excuse me, I am sure you will admit that although I dispensed with details in my brief statement, the facts were undeniable. I can tell you exactly how and why Mehemet Ali and his two secretaries, together with Hussein, his confidential servant, were murdered. But the circumstances were revolting, and need not be unduly discussed between gentlemen. I can tell you how the diamonds were obtained from the Albert Gate mansion, and how they were conveyed to Paris. But as they are probably in your possession, and the main object of your enterprise has thus been accomplished, it seems to me that all these otherwise dramatic effects are needless. I have told you exactly the object of my visit, and I still await an answer."

Hussein ul Mulk laughed a trifle uneasily.

"On my part, monsieur, I might attempt to question the extent of your knowledge, but as you are mistaken in one part of your summing-up of evidence, you may be wrong in others."

"To what do you allude?"

The Mohammedan reflected for a moment, and then answered:

"I can see no harm in telling you that I am not aware of any diamonds in which I am personally interested having arrived in Paris."

"Indeed," said Brett, leaning forward in his chair, and instantly dropping the listless air which had hitherto characterised his utterances. "That is a very curious thing, because the diamonds have been in Paris at least two days, and if they have been withheld from the possession of those who employed certain agents to secure them, there must be a powerful reason to account for the delay. Speaking quite disinterestedly, monsieur, I would advise you to inquire into the matter at once."

His words evidently perturbed the Turk.

"Do you mind," he said, "if I leave you alone a few minutes? I wish to consult with a friend of mine who happens to be staying here."

"Assuredly," said Brett, "but let me beg you to leave your cigarettes behind. They are exquisite."

Hussein ul Mulk had never before encountered such a personality as Reginald Brett. His eyebrows became perfectly oval with surprise and admiration for the man who could thus juggle with a dangerous situation.

"Here is my case," he said, "and when we have concluded this most interesting conversation I hope you will leave me your address, so that I may have the extreme pleasure of sending you a few hundreds."

Digitized by Google

Then he quitted the room. He was absent fully five minutes.

On his return he said:

"In the opinion of my friend, Mr. Brett, it is impossible for us to do anything at the present moment. We must inquire; we must verify; we must consult others. You will see that the negotiations you have undertaken require on your part some display of the extreme delicacy and tact in which you have given us so admirable a lesson. Suppose now we agree to meet here again to-morrow at the same hour. Am I to understand that what has transpired this morning remains, we will not say a secret, but a myth, a mere idle phantasy as between you and me?"

"That is precisely my idea," said Brett. "One hates to mention such a brutal word as 'police' in an affair demanding finesse. Personally I hate the blunderers. They rob life of its charm. They have absolutely no conception of art. Romance with them can end only in penal servitude or on the gallows. Believe me, Hussein, I am very discreet."

In another minute he was standing in the street, and inhaling generous draughts of the keen fresh air of Paris.

"I wonder how much my life was worth during the first five minutes?" said he to himself, and then he made his way to a telegraph office, where he dispatched the following message:—

"To the Earl of Fairholme, Stanhope Gate, London—Have received definite intelligence which confirms my views. Expect our friend will be discovered within forty-eight hours. If possible, join me at Grand Hotel, Paris, to-night, eleven o'clock. BRETT."

What Happened in the Rue Barbette.

PENDING Fairholme's arrival Brett was not idle. He visited a prominent jeweller in the Rue de la Paix, and after making some trivial purchases led the conversation round to the question of diamonds. By skilful inquiry he ascertained a good deal about precious stones, both in their crude and their finished states. The accommodating Frenchman showed him a good many samples of South African, Brazilian, and Indian stones, and explained to him the various tests which were used to determine their value.

Brett had no special object in seeking this information, but when engaged in elucidating any mystery he made it an invariable rule to post himself as accurately as possible concerning all minor details which might by any stretch of circumstances become useful.

When he returned to his hotel he jotted down some notes of this conversation, and whilst engaged in the task a telegram arrived from the Earl of Fairholme announcing that nobleman's departure from London by the afternoon train service *viâ* Boulogne.

Punctually at the time appointed the Earl reached the hotel. He was all eagerness to learn what had happened since they had last met in London, and why Brett had so suddenly summoned him to Paris.

"I really have not much definite information," said the barrister. "Thus far I am building chiefly upon surmise, but I have undoubtedly come into contact with the persons who organised and planned, if they did not carry out actually, the raid on the Albert Gate mansion."

"Then you have news of Jack?" asked Fairholme.

"Not exactly. All I can do at present is to assure you that the scent is hot, and we may run our quarry to earth some few minutes after eleven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I am jolly glad that there is a chance of my being useful in this matter," said the Earl gleefully. "If only I am a little bit instrumental in recovering her brother, Edith hasn't got a leg to stand upon in the matter of getting married. That's awkwardly put, isn't it? What I mean is that when Talbot is restored to his family and everything is satisfactorily cleared up, Edith and I can get spliced immediately, can't we?"

"I think that is the most assured fact we have yet encountered," said Brett, pleasantly.

(*Continued on next page.*)

COLD WEATHER!

HOT BOVRIL!!

Digitized by Google

"But you haven't told me yet the exact manner in which I can be useful."

"No," said the barrister, "I have been revolving in my mind the possibilities of to-morrow morning, and you must play an important part in what, by chance, may turn out to be a melodrama. Now, listen to me carefully. In the neighbourhood of the Porte St. Martin there is a street known as the Rue Barbette. At eleven o'clock to-morrow I go to the house No. 11 in that street, and you will accompany me as far as the door. It will be your duty to stand outside and take note of all persons who enter or leave the house once I have disappeared from view in the interior. You must exercise your powers of observation most minutely, paying heed to the height, build, complexion, and clothing, of any one, male or female, who enters or leaves No. 11 Rue Barbette, after you have taken your stand in the street. It is more than probable that no person will call for scrutiny, unless it be some chance tradesman's assistant visiting the building in pursuance of his ordinary work. However that may be, do you feel capable of attending to this part of the programme?"

"Perfectly," said Fairholme.

"You will maintain watch until 11.30. If at that hour I have not rejoined you, make your way to the nearest policeman, and tell him that you have good reason to believe that a friend of yours has either been murdered or suffered serious personal injury, in a room on the second storey of the house in question. You will then, in company with the policeman, come rapidly to the apartment I have indicated and demand an immediate entrance; if necessary bursting the door open."

"And what then?" gasped the amazed Earl.

"I really don't know," said Brett imperturbably. "It is possible that you may find my mangled remains in one of the inner rooms. The best I can hope for is that I shall be simply a prisoner, but I fully expect to be seriously injured at the very least."

"But look here, Brett; are you doing the right thing in this matter? Why on earth should you run such an awful risk, and take it alone, too? Isn't it possible to obtain some trustworthy detective to keep watch on the street, and let me go into the place with you? Don't you see, old chap, that two of us might make a reasonable show if violence is attempted? One man hasn't much chance."

The barrister cut short his friend's protestations.

"I sent for you, Lord Fairholme," he said, "because I felt that I could trust you to obey my instructions implicitly. This is a matter in which I do not want the police to interfere. My visit to the Rue Barbette to-morrow morning may end quite satisfactorily. If it does, we shall be in possession of important information which should lead to the prompt release of Mr. Talbot. If it fails, there will certainly be some shooting or stabbing, or perhaps an attempt may be made to keep me a prisoner. This latter eventuality renders the presence of the police essential. No matter what has happened to me, they will, with your assistance, be able to take up the inquiry exactly where I leave it off. In this notebook here, which I am placing in a locked drawer"—and he suited his action to the words—"you will find details of all that I have done up to the present moment, together with the lines along which future inquiries should proceed. In particular you will find an elaboration of the theory which I expect to-morrow's visit to confirm. You fully understand me? All this anticipates that after 11.30 to-morrow I shall be personally unable to conduct the investigation further."

"Yes," said the Earl, with rueful emphasis. "I fully understand the proposition, and I tell you what, Brett, I don't like it. There has been enough blood spilt in this beastly business already, and I feel a sort of personal responsibility for you, you know, because I brought you into it."

"Then," said the barrister, with a laugh, "I solemnly acquit you of any such responsibility. I am going into the business with my eyes open. It interests me strangely, and I would not abandon the quest now upon any account."

"But can't you explain matters a little more clearly? Is it necessary that I should be kept in the dark as to the circumstances which have led up to this critical movement to-morrow?"

"Not in the least," said Brett. "It is indeed very important that you should comprehend all that has gone before; I only started at the end, so to speak, so as to fix accurately in your mind your part of the business, which now stands separate and distinctly outlined in your memory. What I am going to tell you simply leads up to the expected denouement."

He then recited to the wondering Earl the whole of the curious events which had happened during the preceding twenty-four hours.

It was late when they got to bed, but they rested well, and, after the manner of their race, fortified themselves with a good breakfast against the trials of the day, whatever these might prove to be.

A few minutes before the appointed hour they quitted a fiacre in the vicinity of the Rue Barbette, and at eleven o'clock Brett passed the concierge, whilst Fairholme took up his stand outside.

The barrister was received with smiling complacence by Hussein ul Mulk. On this occasion he was conducted to another room of the apartment, and he of course promptly noted that this time the windows looked out upon the rear of the building, whereas during his previous visit he could survey the street.

"This looks badly," said Brett to himself, but he betrayed not the slightest unwillingness to fall in with the arrangements made for his reception, and lounged back in a comfortable chair so easily that not even the quick-witted Turk suspected that the barrister's hip pocket contained a very serviceable revolver.

Hussein ul Mulk commenced the conversation. "I have," he said, "a couple of friends here who are interested in the matter you were good enough to mention to me yesterday. With your permission I will introduce them, and he threw open another door with a single Turkish word which Brett imagined was an invitation to enter.

Two men came from an adjoining room. They were Turks—swarthy, evil-looking customers, but well-dressed, and evidently persons of consequence in their own country. The new-comers eyed the barrister curiously, and with no very friendly intent so far as he could judge.

A brief conversation in Turkish resulted in Hussein ul Mulk addressing Brett.

"I must apologise for the fact that my friends here only speak their native tongue. Before we proceed to business I wish to ask you a few questions."

"Certainly," said Brett, "go ahead."

"You mentioned to me yesterday that you had no desire to invoke the aid of the police in prosecuting the inquiry which interests you."

"Quite right," said Brett.

"May I ask if you have adhered to that intention?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, Mr.—Mr."—Hussein ul Mulk consulted a visiting card—"Mr. Reginald Brett, I think, is your name? It would be idle on my part to compliment you on your bravery, but it would be still more futile to attempt to conceal from you the danger of the position in which you now stand."

"Sit," corrected Brett, still smiling.

"Well," said the Turk, "we will not quibble about words. The fact remains, Mr. Brett, that you have heedlessly thrust yourself into an enterprise of such a

Digitized by Google

desperate character that all interlopers can be dealt with only in one way."

"You kill them," said Brett airily.

"Yes," said the Turk, "I deeply regret to inform you that you have guessed the object of my remarks with the singular skill you have already betrayed in reaching the existing position. I can only add that I am surprised the same skill did not influence you to avoid forcing upon us the only alternative left."

"Am I to be killed at once?" said Brett, speaking with a slight affectation of boredom.

Even the self-possessed Turk could not conceal his amazement at the manner in which this strange visitor conducted himself. "This is a point we have not yet decided," he said. "We are strangely unwilling to take the life of such a brave man as yourself. If we were assured of your silence, we would even be disposed to permit you to escape this time, with a solemn warning not to cross our path again. But we feel that clemency is out of the question. There is one hope—a slight one, it is true—which may permit us to gag you and tie you securely in this room, where you will be left in peace for at least forty-eight hours, after which time a telegram could be dispatched to any address that you choose to supply us with. But really, owing to unforeseen circumstances, this chance of a reprieve is remote. It all depends upon the arrival, or otherwise, at this house, of a gentleman whom we expect at 11.15."

Brett leant forward in his chair, and took out his watch. The others misunderstood his movement, and each of the three men promptly produced a revolver.

Brett laughed quite heartily as he said: "Really, gentlemen, your nervousness is ludicrous."

He saw that he yet had five minutes' grace before his self-constituted judges would proceed to execute their sentence upon him. As for the Turks, they were manifestly ashamed of having betrayed such trepidation, and they each of them replaced the weapons so readily produced.

"That is a point in my favour," thought Brett. "Next time, if I do wish to reach my revolver, I may be able to get a draw upon them first."

A Revelation.

"DURING the interval," said Hussein ul Mulk suavely, "is there anything you wish to do—any letters to write, or that sort of thing?"

"No," said Brett, "I do not think so; it seems to me that you have thoroughly misunderstood the purpose of this meeting. I came here in order to obtain from you particulars which will lead to the release of Mr. Talbot and redeem his character in the eyes of his superiors. I did not come here to be killed, Hussein ul Mulk. I am not going to be killed. If you touch a hair of my head you will only leave this house for a prison, and subsequently for the gallows. And so, you see, you are talking childishly when you dangle these threats and preliminaries to immediate execution before my eyes. It is not you, but I who have been called upon to dictate the terms on which we will part. It may perhaps interest you to explain this new phase of the situation to your fellow countrymen, and the matter will also serve to kill the few minutes which yet have to elapse before 11.15."

Hussein ul Mulk made no direct reply to this remarkable speech. That it impressed him was quite evident from his manner. Forthwith an animated but subdued conversation took place between the triumvirate.

While it was yet in progress a peculiar knock was heard upon the outside door of the apartment.

"Ah, he comes," said Hussein ul Mulk in French. He left the room in order to meet the new arrival. Then he returned, bringing with him a man very different from those whom Brett had thus far encountered in connection with the crime. This was a dapper little Frenchman, wizened, black-haired, and dressed almost in the extreme of fashion. He at once addressed himself to the barrister.

(*Continued on next page.*)

A Cabman's Story.

A reporter of our contemporary, the *Weekly Budget*, has elicited in the course of an interview a very interesting story. The narrator was a London cabman, and he was describing the wonderful manner in which bile beans for biliousness restored his health, which had been broken up by the effects of a cold.

"You will hardly believe it," he said, "but I can assure you that I was often so dizzy and upset that I could not, for the life of me, think of, or utter the name of the street to which I was driving, although, mind you, I knew it perfectly well. But, let me tell you exactly how this state of affairs arose. "About last Christmas I caught cold. I thought I had got over that, but by-and-bye, I 'went off my food,' and got very low and depressed. All the energy seemed to go from me, and my eyesight became very blurred. I had terrible headaches and experienced a general feeling of heaviness. All the food I took seemed to turn sour. I got so bad that I really could not eat, and rapidly began to lose flesh. I went to a doctor for advice, and he said my liver was the cause of the trouble. He gave me some medicine, but this only afforded me temporary relief, and I became worse than I was at first. One day my niece advised me to try bile beans for biliousness. I followed her advice and sent to the chemist's for a box. They did me so much good that I procured another box and determined to give the beans a thorough trial. The result of this course of action has been that they have now completely restored me to health, and I shall ever be grateful to them."

"By-the-bye," continued the cabby, "I shall be very pleased to tell any other sufferers what benefits I received from the beans, and if you like you can have my name and address. It is G. Mansfield, 17a, Williams' Mews, Lowndes Square, S.W. I shall always swear by bile beans in cases of liver disorder, indigestion, and headache." Bile beans are a certain cure for these ailments, also for biliousness, constipation, piles, anæmia, and all female ailments, colds, chills, lumbago, rheumatism, and influenza's after effects. They cost one and three halfpence, or two and nine a box, at all chemists, or from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, E.C. They are sold in sealed boxes only; never loose; and they form an excellent prevenative as well as a curative medicine, for workers, who, like cabmen, are exposed to all weathers.

GIVEN AWAY

WITH THIS WEEK'S

Home Notes

(No. 469),

PAPER PATTERN

OF THIS

SLEEPING SUIT.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

Price ONE PENNY.

Digitized by Google

"They tell me, my friend," he said, "that you have thrust your nose into this little pie which the friends of his Majesty the Sultan are preparing for him. It is a bad business. You are too soon for the banquet. The result is that your poor little nose may get burnt, as the pie is still being cooked."

The man smiled maliciously at his feeble witticism, and Brett instantly took his measure as a member of the gang of flash thieves which infests Paris. He knew that such a ruffian was both pitiless and cowardly. Whatever the outcome of the situation which faced him he would not stoop to conciliatory methods with this despicable ruffian.

"I suppose," he said, "that the only part of the affair which concerns you is the robbery."

"Well, and what if it is?" said the other.

"I can only say," replied the barrister, "that your political friends will be well advised to keep a close eye upon you, for you would rob them just as soon as the persons against whom they have employed you."

The little thief laughed cynically. "You are right, *mon vieux*. I would be delighted to have the chance. But this time it is impossible. The stones are too big. They are worth—pouf!—millions of francs, so I must be content to receive my pay, which is good."

"Have you intrusted the Sultan's diamonds to the care of a scamp like this?" said Brett, addressing himself to Hussein, and inwardly resolving that unless the conversation by chance took a turn favourable to himself, he would forthwith open fire upon the gang and endeavour to escape.

"Yes," said the conspirator with a triumphant smile. "You have never seen them, Mr. Brett? Here they are. To many men the sight would be a pleasant one. To you it should be terrible, for the arrival of these diamonds at this moment means that you must die."

So saying he produced from an inner pocket of the frock-coat which he wore a large, plain morocco case. The pressure of a spring caused the lid to fly back, revealing to the eyes of those in the room a collection of stones which were marvellous by reason of the size and magnificence of each of the diamonds on exhibition.

In the centre reposed the Imperial diamond itself, and for an instant Brett thought that whilst the senses of the other men were fascinated by the spectacle, he would have a good opportunity to shoot some of them down without mercy and make a dash for liberty.

But at the same moment there came to him an odd thought. His friend, the jeweller of the Rue de la Paix, had not given him in vain a lesson during the previous afternoon.

The barrister suspected—in fact, he was almost sure—that the gems now flaunting their half-revealed glories in the light of the day—for not one of them had undergone the final process peculiar to the diamond cutter's trade—were not the real stones stolen from Albert Gate, but well-fabricated substitutes.

To his acute brain there came an immediate confirmation of his theory. Evidently the diamonds had not been previously in the Turk's possession. The little Frenchman had just delivered them, and this in itself was a strange circumstance in view of the fact that the genuine stones must have been in Paris at least three days.

Brett concentrated all his dramatic faculties in look, voice, and gesture, when he cried:

"You fools, to be taken in by a device which a child might have suspected. These are not the Sultan's diamonds. These are frauds, cleverly concocted bits of crystal and alum, intended to keep you happy until you got back to Constantinople and discovered how thoroughly you had been deceived."

"You lie!" roared the little Frenchman. "They are genuine."

Brett wanted to punch the diminutive scoundrel heavily in the face, but he restrained himself. Turning with a magnificent assumption of courteousness to Hussein ul Mulk, he said:

"Come, I told you were acting childishly; this proved it. A most outrageous attempt has been made to swindle you, if I may use such a term to persons who confessedly are plotting to rob another. Surely this will convince you that you have nothing to fear from me. I am not here as the agent of the Sultan or the police. It is a simple matter for you to verify my statement. All that is necessary is for one of your party to take any of those alleged diamonds—I would suggest the smallest one so as not to create suspicion—to any jeweller in the district, and he will test it for you immediately, thus proving the truth of my statement. Look here; I will convince you myself."

He took the monster diamond irreverently in his hand before Hussein ul Mulk could prevent him and turned to the window. He pressed the stone against the glass and tried to make it cut, but it failed. He placed it against his cheek. It was warm. A pure diamond would be icy cold. More than this, a small portion of the composition of which the imitation had been hastily concocted, broke off in his fingers.

"You see," he laughed. "Do you require further proof?" Even whilst he spoke the diminutive little Frenchman turned and bolted.

One of the Turks drew a revolver and rushed after him, but Hussein ul Mulk uttered some authoritative words which prevented the man from firing. The Frenchman was evidently an adept in the art of dodging pursuit. In the passage he ducked suddenly, and threw the Turk heavily to the ground. Then without further interference he slipped the latch of the door and slammed it hastily behind him, leaving Brett silently laughing at Hussein ul Mulk and his remaining confederate, whilst the gentleman who had been upset was slowly regaining his disturbed gravity.

"Can it be possible that what you say is true?" said Hussein ul Mulk, in such piteous accents that Brett was moved to further mirth.

"Surely you do not doubt the evidence?" he said; "take any of these stones; they will crumble to pieces on the hearth if struck the slightest blow. See, I will pulverise one with my heel."

And he did so, though the amazed and despairing men whom he addressed would have restrained him, for they still could not bring themselves to believe that what he said was true.

"Come now," said Brett, "rouse yourselves and give me the information I want. I promise that that is the only way in which you may attain your ends. Of course I cannot help you. It may be that as you have bungled matters thus far the authorities will stop you and land you all in prison, but that is no concern of mine. And this moment I simply wish to release my friend and proclaim his innocence. For the rest you must take care of yourselves."

Hussein ul Mulk was the first to recover his scattered senses

"We cannot choose but believe you, Mr. Brett," he said. "We are even indebted to you for making this disastrous discovery at such an early date. We paid our agents so highly that we thought their honesty was assured. We find we are mistaken, and consequently we apologise to you for using threats which were unnecessary. We rely upon your honour not to incriminate us with the police at this moment. All we can tell you is that your friend is not dead, but we do not know his whereabouts."

"Nonsense," cried Brett angrily. "Why, do you seek to mislead me in this fashion?"

"Sir," said the Turk, "I am telling you the truth. We believe that Mr. Talbot has been held a prisoner in London, but we do not know in what locality. My friends here and myself, as you have already surmised, are merely members

(*Continued on page* 62.)

Digitized by Google

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write.

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 1518. 11/6.

Chesterfield Coat and Skirt, direct from the "Alfosco" factories. Splendid value for **11/6**; carriage paid, 6d. extra. Made in a good, hard-wearing Serge, or in ALLEN FOSTER & Co's celebrated **Venetian Cloth.** Light and Dark Grey, Navy, Royal, Brown, Green, Black, etc. The Jacket is single-breasted, and measures 28in. long, trimmed tailor stitching, full bell-shaped Skirt, well made and finished. Costume complete, **11/6.** Carriage paid 6d. extra.

Design No. 1433. 10/6.

Stylish **Costume Skirt.** Marvellous value for **10/6.** Made in fine Frieze material, or good strong Serge. **Colours:** Grey, Black, or Brown Mixtures, etc., with strappings and tailor stitching. This Skirt is cut in the full bell shape. Great bargain for **10/6.** Carr. 5d. ex. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED FACTORY PRICES.

Design No. 435. 10/6.

Special Value for Half-a-Guinea. Costume made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s world-renowned Specialite Serge or Venetian Cloth. All colours and sizes kept in stock. The bodice has pouched front, and is stylishly trimmed strappings of Taffeta Silk and small buttons. Well made skirt, bell shape, fasten at side, pocket, and trimmed silk and buttons to match bodice. Price only **10/6**; carriage 6d. Skirt alone, **6/6**; carriage 5d. BEST VALUE IN LONDON. Good fit guaranteed. This Costume made in the new **"Alfosco"** Tweed, all colours, will be **25/-**. Patterns sent post free.

10/6

Patterns Post Free.

Write for Our **WINTER SKETCH BOOK.** Patterns Post Free. Hundreds of illustrations of the latest Novelties for the present season in Costumes and Jackets sent post free.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 Golden Lane, Barbican, London, E.C.

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

DON'T COUGH *for* **KEATING'S LOZENGES EASILY CURE THE WORST COUGH.**

One gives relief. An increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 13½d. tins everywhere.

3/- THE WORLD'S WONDER. 3/-

OUR BEST CHEAPEST WATCH. With a guarantee to keep correct time for 3 years, will be sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value **3/-** and three stamps extra for postage. For accurate time-keeping equal to any Lady's or Gent's watch costing 5 gs. All we ask of you is to show the Watch to your friends, as by so doing you advertise our business. — **SWISS WATCH IMPORTERS, 12, Goswell Road, London, E.C.**

Mention "Short Stories."

EVERY LADY

should BUY AT ONCE for NEXT TO NOTHING from the stock of the latest fashionable COSTUMES and MILLINERY, worn only once or twice, placed for disposal by ladies in the HIGHEST LONDON SOCIETY with Miss Selwyn, **The Ladies' Mart,** 99 Regent Street, London, W. *(Or send 2d. in stamps for details.*

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

HAND-ORGANS from 20s

Made in 3 sizes, ebony and gold case. With 6 metal tunes. Full organ tone. Plays songs, hymns, dance music. Sent on receipt of 4s. P.O., if desired, can be paid 4s. monthly. Write for terms, price list and tunes. **ATLAS CO.,** 184a High St., Camden Town, London; 63 Seven Sisters Rd.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

PHONOGRAPHS, **10/6**; MUSICAL ALBUMS, **10/6.**

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** **2½%**

repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

SONGS COPIED

Legible as print, 5d. page; transposed correctly, 6d. page.

Mrs. CONYERS,

Morchard Bishop, Devon.

Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Digitized by Google

of a political organisation. It was necessary for us to secure possession of the Imperial diamond and its companions. We spared no expense, nor hesitated at any means that would accomplish our purpose. We have been foiled for the moment, I can tell you nothing else, and I now advise you to leave us and forget that such persons exist, for I swear to you by the beard of the Prophet that had events turned out differently you would now be a lifeless corpse in this room, whilst your body would not be discovered for many weeks, as we intended to leave Paris this afternoon as soon as the diamonds came into our possession."

At this moment a thunderous knocking reverberated through the house.

The Turks gazed at each other in affright. None of them moved to open the door. But the knock was not repeated, for the door itself was thrown bodily from its hinges, and the stalwart form of Lord Fairholme, accompanied by two policemen, appeared in the passage.

"Ah," said Brett, jumping forward, "I had forgotten about you, Fairholme. I see you kept your appointment. These gentlemen are not required," he rattled on pleasantly, turning towards the stern-looking policemen; "I am quite alive and uninjured. My friends here and myself had a few earnesti words, but we have settled matters satisfactorily."

The suspicious policemen glanced from the smiling Englishman to the perturbed Turks. At the first sound of danger Hussein ul Mulk had closed the case in which lay the spurious diamonds, so these pretentious-looking gems could not excite the curiosity of the men of law.

The senior officer commenced to demand an explanation from Lord Fairholme of the exciting statements which induced them to accompany him, but Brett stepped into the breach to explain matters.

"It is quite true," he said, "that my friend was anxious on my account. It was even possible that these Turkish gentlemen here and myself might have proceeded to extremities, but now the affair has ended satisfactorily, and if you will allow me——" He put his hand into his pocket and a slight monetary transaction terminated the incident pleasantly for all parties.

Soon Brett and Fairholme found themselves in the street, and again did the barrister draw in deep and invigorating breaths of Paris air.

"Where now?" said Fairholme.

"Tell me," cried Brett eagerly, "did you notice in which direction the little man ran who left No. 11 about ten minutes ago?"

"Better than that," said Fairholme, "I heard where he was going to. He was in such a fiendish funk that he noticed no one nor anything, only flung himself into a passing cab and yelled, 'Take me to the Cabaret Noir, Boulevard Montmartre.'"

"Good," cried Brett, excitedly. "You are a splendid detective. You have saved me hours of search and perhaps days of failure. Come on; let us, too, go to the Cabaret Noir."

The exterior of the Cabaret Noir belied its name.

Originally no doubt, it was one of the vilest dens in a vile locality, but the fairy hand of the brewer had touched the familiar wine shop, and, behold it glistened forth in much mahogany, more brass, and a dazzling collection of mirrors.

Brett was surprised when the driver of their cab pulled up in front of such an ornate establishment. Somehow he expected the Cabaret Noir to be a different place. Not so Fairholme, accustomed only to the glaring exterior of London tied houses.

"Here we are," said his lordship cheerfully. "Let's take them by surprise and run over the whole show before any one can stop us."

"No," said Brett; "this is Paris, and the police here have ways even more mysterious than those of Scotland Yard. We will gain nothing by such drastic procedure. Indeed, had I known the sort of place we were coming to I would have visited it to-night and in disguise. As it is, we have been seen already by anyone interested in our movements, and it would be useless to adopt any pretence, so follow me."

He boldly entered through the main door, and found himself in a light, airy room, filled, in three-fourths of its area, with little marble-topped tables surrounded by diminutive chairs, whilst a bar counter was partitioned off in a corner.

The attendant in charge was a dreary-eyed waiter, who seemed to think that the presence of a couple of sight-seeing Englishmen at such an hour was another testimony to the lunatic propensities of the Anglo-Saxon race. He welcomed them volubly, assuring them that the establishment kept the best Scottish whisky in stock, and guaranteed that roast beef would be ready in ten minutes.

(To be continued.)

HE: "I'd go through fire and water for you, dear." She: "Never mind that. Would you go through the operation of making a fire for me?"

THE small boy had been warned by his nurse as to the awful results of biting his nails. "If you bite your nails," she said "you will swell out like an air balloon and burst." The small boy believed, took heed, and didn't bite his nails any more. The small boy went to a children's party, where he stood and gazed at the hostess for some minutes in silence. Then he spoke: "You bite your nails," he said.

EVERY WOMAN HER OWN DOCTOR.

By an M.D.

A complete book in plain English concerning the Ailments and Accidents to which Women and Children are liable, and their cure.

Crown 8vo.

Price **2/6.**

post free **2/9.**

THINGS A WOMAN WANTS TO KNOW.

With an Illustrated Section on

The Folding of Serviettes.

Edited by

ISOBEL of *Home Notes*

Crown 8vo. Cloth.

Price **1/-.**

Post Free **1/2.**

Order Form. S.S.

To the Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

Please send me a copy of
"Every Woman Her Own Doctor." I inclose 2s. 9d.
"Things a Woman Wants to Know" ,, 1s. 2d.

Name.....

Address .....

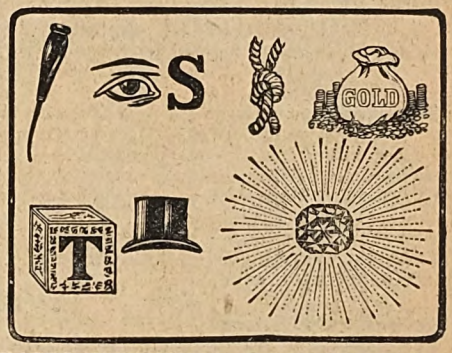
Digitized by Google

£400 GIVEN AWAY.

During the past two years we have arranged several great contests for advertising our business in which the cash and other prizes have amounted to over **£10,000.** These contests were instructive, amusing, and profitable to all concerned. Some of the public when we first advertised these contests believed they were all humbug, but when they found that the cash and other prizes were paid they were sorry they did not compete. Of course, we did not blame them, for almost everybody has been so duped in contests that when they see one, they immediately jump to conclusions. In arranging our contests we have met with immense favour, and can show **10,000 testimonials,** which speak for themselves. We assume that if you enter one of our contests, though you may not win a prize, you are satisfied if you know that it has been conducted fairly, that you have had the same opportunity as the winners, and that the money has been actually paid. This we will prove by making known the **full names and addresses of winners.**

Now, sometimes our contests seem very simple, and perhaps the one below may appear so, but on this point we wish to put you on your guard. Don't say "What a fool that man is. Does he take his readers for children?" No, we do not, but still you are apt to make a mistake and "jump at conclusions." What we want you to do is to solve this rebus correctly; take your time about it, even consult authorities, or consult your friends, and then if you think you are right post your answer. Probably very few will send in the right solution. Remember there is only one correct answer—the original quotation, but the prizes are worth the effort. Find the words and arrange them correctly, and remember that some of the most brilliant men of letters living have on examining this rebus given an incorrect answer.

We shall give **£75 in Cash** for the correct reading of this rebus which represents a learned saying. We wish you to understand that **there is no trick or catch** about this puzzle for it is a veritable quotation from a famous author who died in the second decade of the 17th Century, and one that has been often repeated. If you cannot find and arrange the six words in this rebus correctly, but only find five, you will participate in a Second Prize of **£50.** Now here are **£125** being given in two prizes alone, and someone is going to win the money. Is it not worth a trial? There is only one easy condition, which by the way does not involve your selling anything or putting your hand in your pocket for a penny. About this we will write you on receiving your solution.



An envelope containing the correct answer has been sealed and deposited with our bankers, and will not be opened until after the close of the contest. In the event of more than one correct solution, we shall appoint a committee of three from among the contestants to award the cash *pro rata*. The expenses of the committee will be paid to London, and **£1 per day** allowed to each while away from home. You may be asked but not compelled to act as one of the committee.

In connection with this contest we are going to give away other Cash prizes, namely **Ten Prizes of £10, Twenty of £5, and Seventy-five Prizes of £1,** the conditions with regard to which will be duly sent. You have the opportunity to secure any of the above-mentioned cash prizes without cost to yourself, and we shall send you when you answer this, the names of winners in past contests, a list too long for publication here! Every promise in this advertisement will be scrupulously carried out, and all will be treated with even-handed justice. Send your answer at once, **with two stamps** for postage, copy of one of our publications, testimonials, etc. If you are not satisfied with the contest you can demand and will receive the return of even this 2d., as well as the postage spent in answering this advertisement, for it is well known that we always follow the most straightforward methods. Do not delay, as the day of closing will soon be announced.

Address—NOVELTY PUBLISHING CO., Dept. 81, 8 BREAM'S BUILDINGS, LONDON, E.C.

JOHN NOBLE'S

Catalogues Post Free.

MONEY SAVING SALE

For This Month Only.

Hundreds of Bargains in Costumes, Wonderful Offers in Coats and Mantles, Special Reductions in Blouses, Corsets, Underwear, Dress Fabrics, Blankets, &c.

WRITE for CATALOGUE without delay and get your share of the Bargains and FREE GIFTS.

JOHN NOBLE, Ltd. 46, Brook St. Mills, Manchester

'Let's tell mother.'

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

Order E. & T. PINK'S JAM

Undoubtedly the Best.

PURE.

No Artificial Colouring or Chemical Preservative.

PIANO PLAYING BY EAR.

ARTHUR'S "HARMONIC INDICATOR"!!

This wonderful invention immediately enables anyone, even if ignorant of music, to play beautifully by ear and VAMP brilliantly on the Piano or organ to Songs, Waltzes, &c., in any key. No figures nor notes to learn! Fits any Piano. Thousands sold! Post paid, 2/-

C. E. ARTHUR, 18 Robert Street, London, N.W.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED).

Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil, invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/4; 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard-Bishop, Devon.**

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Doffing the Hat.

"F. W. H." writes: "Is it etiquette to doff one's hat to a lady with whom one has danced at a ball? My friend says 'yes'; I am in doubt, but think not."

* * * *

The rule of raising one's hat to a lady with whom one has only a slight acquaintance is: "Wait till the lady shows signs of recognising you, then raise your hat." The initiative in resuming a slight acquaintance rests with the lady. If she does not show a disposition to resume it, then you must take it that you are not advanced enough in her favour. However, if you should meet again, and enter on to a more intimate relationship, there could be no excuse for her in not recognising you in the street or elsewhere.

The Servant's Knock.

"SHOULD a servant always knock on entering a room?" asks "MARY," who is a housemaid. "I am in service in a fairly good family, and my mistress has not told me one way or the other about this."

* * * *

It is not usual in the better families for a servant to knock, that is, of course, in a sitting-room. It is different in the case of entering a bedroom, or, say, a study. I should advise you not to knock on entering except when you have reason to believe people are engaged in private conversation. Of course you will not enter suddenly without knocking when Miss Kitty or Miss Ada is receiving a gentleman friend. That would make you very, very unpopular.

Accepting an Invitation.

"SOPHIE" and her intimate girl friend have been invited to spend a day out with two gentlemen whom they met at a dance. The programme will include a day in the country, with a late dinner afterwards. Should they accept?

* * * *

Well, "SOPHIE," there are certain girls who would not think twice about accepting such an attractive invitation, but they belong to a different class of society from yourself—that is, they are girls of the Bohemian stamp, who don't try to be conventional. With them, it does not very much matter, as they do not care "what people say." But, in your case, where I should say you are living with your parents and have a lot of neighbours who are friends, I don't think you should do this kind of thing. If the men had been really inclined to treat you well, they would have asked your parents' permission, or have invited someone to chaperon you. But don't let me appear prudish. There is nothing at all terrible about their suggestion. It all depends on exactly what sort of girls you are, and how far people are likely to judge your conduct by ordinary standards. Lastly, your parents should know what you are doing, and, if they consent, I don't see that you need trouble yourselves.

The Older Girl.

"BILL," is eighteen, but looks twenty-one. He is fonder of girls older than younger than himself. Now he is enamoured to some extent of a girl of twenty-three, who seems to be mutually attracted by him. He does not know whether she takes him seriously enough to think he should become engaged to her, but thinks that if she knew his real age she might think him too absurdly young and not want his society.

* * * *

Now, a girl cannot be very fond of a man if she would object to him on account of his youth. I imagine she likes you for yourself, and the fact that you are five years younger could not alter that feeling. I should tell her your age, and leave her to act as she likes. She will almost certainly not expect any proposal from you, but I do not see why you and she should not be good friends. After all, she is old enough to know her own mind, and to look after herself, so I should leave the matter in her hands.

A Wrong and a Right.

"A. S. D." (Exeter) asks me the following: "The wife of a business friend of my husband called on me, but did not leave any cards. I did not like the woman at all, as her manner showed that she thought our social positions were not equal. Now, should I return her call, seeing that she made a technical offence in not leaving cards?"

* * * *

An excellent opportunity, "A. S. D.," for you to prove that you are not a social inferior by displaying better knowledge of the usages of society. Call on her and leave your cards—one for yourself, and two of your husband—and be as nice in your manner as she was otherwise. As she is the wife of a business friend of your husband, you may be serving his interests by showing courtesy to her. Certainly do not omit to return her call. That would be a social mistake.

Absent Versus Present.

"CONNIE" was a year ago very much impressed by a young man who has since gone to India for three years. He did not show in any way that he was similarly drawn towards her, but "CONNIE" thinks if they met again something would develop. However, another man has now appeared on the scene and is making definite overtures. "CONNIE" does not like him so much as the man in India. Do I advise her to listen to the second man's protestations, or to wait until the first one returns?

* * * *

You are not sure about the man in India. In fact, things suggest that he is not drawn towards you to any extent. If he were, he would certainly have shown it in some way when here, or by writing to you from abroad. Therefore, you had better not think of him. Decide whether you care for the second man sufficiently to think of him at all. That should be the deciding factor. If so, then allow him to continue his attentions, and see if in time you do not get to reciprocate them. If not, of course, and you still harbour thoughts of the man in India, better straightforwardly tell the man now paying you attentions that you do not feel that you could love him. It would be better to make the truth known before matters have gone too far.

Asking Parents.

"WILDFLOWER" is meeting a young lady of eighteen, but her parents do not know he is fond of her. Should he ask their permission to meet her? Yes, "WILDFLOWER," certainly. If your intentions are serious, and you are very fond of her, and think one day you will be able to offer her a proposal, let her parents know about it.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

HYPNOTISM

Its Increasing Use in Daily Life, by English People.

No Longer a Secret Art, But Now In the Hands of Thousands.

A London Publishing House Distributing Free Books on Hypnotism.

Some Strange Secrets of Personal Influence Laid Bare.

The London office of a well-known publishing house is creating a deal of surprised interest here in the subject of hypnotism and allied science by the novel method of giving away books absolutely free. By merely writing to the Psychic Research Publishing Company, Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C., you can, according to their advertisement, receive by return post a most remarkable, fascinating, and instructive illustrated book called "The Power Within." This book and accompanying literature contain some most startling information, setting forth not only how to set about it to learn hypnotism at your own home, but revealing the fact that this mysterious art is now actually being used to advantage by English people in daily life.

According to the publishers, the aim of this startling little free book is to answer such questions as occur to all interested in the mysterious relation between mind and matter.

Such questions as these, for instance:—Can I learn how to hypnotise? Why is the art not more widely known? Just how should I set about it to learn at home, and practise it? Is instantaneous hypnotism possible? What is "personal magnetism," and how is it acquired? What is the mysterious secret of the wonderful success and influence of certain people who seem most ordinary in other ways? Is there really a scientific mode of life or thought which attracts health, success, and happiness? Is it possible to thus radically change one's whole life in a few days, as many claim to have done? Is it true that humanity in general is, in a sense, hypnotised by conventionality and thus blinded to splendid opportunities for success and happiness which lie on every hand? What can I do to arouse myself from this "hypnosis of custom," and rise to the attainments which my natural ability would warrant? What must I do to become a hypnotist? To develop a magnetic, attractive, forceful character? To acquire courage, ambition, cheerfulness? To kill fear and worry? To make myself a source of happiness and inspiration to my friends?

The reader will readily see that a book, especially a free book, dealing with such vitally interesting subjects as these is arousing a lively demand, and the edition provided by the Company is being rapidly exhausted. To obtain this book, which is entitled "The Power Within," it is only necessary to send your plainly written name and address, enclosing a penny stamp for return postage, to the Psychic Research Company (Dept. 437), Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C.

As the nature of the contents of this book is of such vital interest and importance to many, it is requested that no one write out of mere curiosity. It is desired to supply the book only to those having a genuine wish to be informed on these subjects.

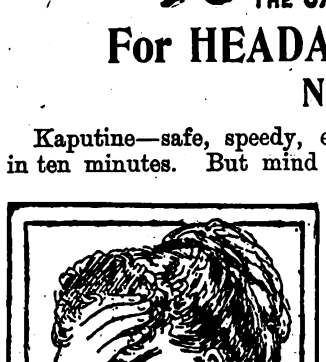
MR H SAMUEL
DEAR SIR,
SEND ME
FREE GRATIS
YOUR GREAT
PRIZE
CATALOGUE
AS ADVERTISED.

A PRIZE
within the reach of every man and woman in the Kingdom.
A POST-CARD WILL BRING
H. SAMUEL'S
BIG FREE BARGAIN BOOK.
Contains nearly 200 Pages, over 3,000 Actual Engravings of Astounding Bargains, all at
LOWEST FACTORY PRICES.
Ladies' Gold Watches, 21/-; Gent's Silver Watches, 8/6; Gold Gem Rings, 3/6; Silver Alberts, 3/9; Alarm Clocks, 1/6; Cutlery, Plate, and all Household Requirements.
DEAL DIRECT AND SAVE HALF!
VALUABLE FREE GIFTS TO ALL BUYERS.
H. SAMUEL, Dept. 29, MARKET STREET, MANCHESTER.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY
For HEADACHE & NEURALGIA.

Kaputine—safe, speedy, effective. Cures in ten minutes. But mind it is Kaputine, the **safe** remedy, and not some dangerous substitute offered for extra profit. Kaputine is endorsed by the medical faculty—**safe**.

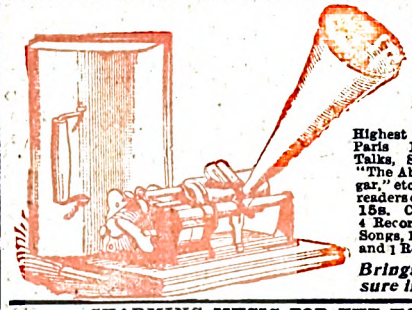


Packets of 18 doses 1/-.
Samples 1d. each.
KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR . KSR

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.
A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

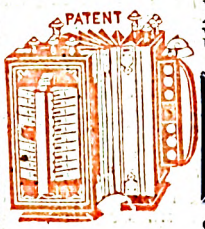


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. **No Home should be without one.** *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*
Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, „ 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, „ 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, „ 16/6
Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount
Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—
CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.
Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

EVERY WISE WOMAN
Will Insist on Having

CROSFIELD'S PURE CANE SUGAR

Sweeter and More Economical than Common Beet Sugars. It Produces NO Fermentation.
The Best Sugar for Household Purpose. Ask your Grocer for Crosfield's Pure Cane Sugar and Syrup. CROSFIELD'S LTD., Sugar Refiners, LIVERPOOL.

"MENE"

Ladies say these Towels are superior to all other makes for cleanliness, comfort, and economy. May be obtained from all Under-clothing Houses and Chemists, or 2 doz. No. 1, 1/-; 1 doz. No. 2, 1/-; 1 doz. No. 3, 1/6; post free. A Free Sample of No. 1 sent post free to any lady mentioning this paper.

MISS HAYNES, 55 Fann St., London, E.C.

SANITARY TOWEL FOR LADIES.

Sole Proprietors: ROBINSON & SONS Ltd., CHESTERFIELD.

MACKINTOSH'S

Is DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

IF

ALL BRITISH HOUSEWIVES purchased "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH in preference to Foreign Metal Polishes, it would enable us to give employment to a larger number of British Workpeople. We Manufacture

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

IN ENGLAND, also make all our own Tins, Cardboard Boxes, &c.

DON'T PURCHASE FOREIGN POLISHES.

Most of these set up acid, and are of a very "Sticky" nature, thus causing more labour in polishing. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH spreads evenly over the surface of the metal, can be easily removed, and produces quickly a lasting brilliancy.

It is also GUARANTEED FREE FROM ACID, POISON OR GRIT.

MANUFACTURERS:

THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH CO. LTD.,
LIVERPOOL.

Short Stories.

No. 733.] Week ending January 17th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

(Illustrating a Powerful Incident from our Complete Story, "The Drama of a Day." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia.

Curés In TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is compos d of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY p eparation of its kind used in British and F reign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

The Editor of the "Family Doctor," the People's Medical Paper, IN ONE OF HIS C MMENTS, SAYS:

"After a careful examination of Kaputine, and learning its component parts, we should certainly recommend it as a Safe and Reliable Remedy for Headache."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-, of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from **KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield,** for 12 stamps.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' System

On J. G. GRAVES' System you are absolutely certain of what you are buying before you pay for it.

You only send 5/- to start with

THE "EXPRESS"

50/

ENGLISH LEVER, (Regd.) **50/-** is then forwarded to you. You examine and test it, and, if satisfied, you complete the purchase in nine more monthly payments of 5/-; or, if you prefer to pay the balance in one payment of 45/- within seven days from receipt of goods, a HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT (which you choose yourself) will be sent you. If you are not satisfied return the watch, and your deposit is instantly refunded.

SPECIFICATION.

First-grade English Lever Movement, Capped & Jewelled, Safety Winding Pinion, Chronometer Balance, Massive Sterling Silver (Hall Marked) Cases. Warranted Seven Years.

Guaranteed BRITISH Manufacture throughout.

THE LARGEST WATCH-SALES FIRM IN THE WORLD.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post Free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. Good Commission. No Risk.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD

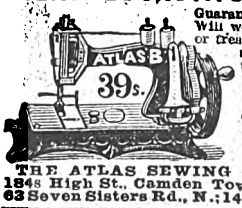
FREE PRESENTS.

You can earn a 3 years warranted Watch, Life-sized Doll, Powerful Air Rifle, Beautiful Solid Gold filled Dress Rings, Long Guard, Bracelet, and Jewellery of all kinds from our lists of presents. You can have any of these FREE after selling Fine Articles of Exquisite Jewellery, at 9d. each (sold by shops at 1/6). We send the goods on approval on receipt of your post-card. When sold you remit us the 6/-, and you get a Beautiful Present, *absolutely free*. Send no money, we trust you. You take no risk, as they sell at once, and we receive back unsold goods. Colonials must send 1/- for extra postage.

FREE.

(Room 59) HYDE PARK WATCH CO., 14 Ranelagh Road, Paddington, London, W.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.



Guaranteed 4 years. Will work by hand or treadle. To ensure satisfaction, machine sent on receipt of 1/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL; or, if desired, can be paid 5/- Monthly. Write for terms, Designs, and Samples of work. **39/-**

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., 184s High St., Camden Town, London, N.W. 63 Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn

3/- THE WORLD'S WONDER. 3/-

OUR BEST CHEAPEST WATCH. With a guarantee to keep correct time for 3 years, will be sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value 3/- and three stamps extra for postage. For accurate time-keeping equal to any Lady's or Gent's watch costing 5 gns. All we ask of you is to show the Watch to your friends, as by so doing you advertise our business. — SWISS WATCH IMPORTERS, 12, Goswell Road, London, E.C.

Mention "Short Stories."

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

JUST ONE BARGAIN

out of the many hundreds that NOBLE'S

Money-Saving CATALOGUE

is full of. Wonderful offers in Costumes, Blouses, Corsets, Underwear, Dress Fabrics, House Linens, Blankets, &c., during Noble's Money-Saving Sale.

Catalogue Post Free.

THIS PARTICULAR BARGAIN

(Model 1562) is the coat now so much worn and may be had in **Good Black Beaver Cloth** or in **Grey Frieze Cloth**, with the New Round Collar and Gauntlet Cuffs, finished Rows of Stitching. An excellent Tailor-made production. Lengths & Prices:

30	33	36	39 ins.	Carriage
9/11	**10/9**	**11/9**	**12/9**	6d. extra.

Kindly mention *Short Stories* when writing.

9/11

John Noble LTD., 46 Brook Street Mills, Manchester.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

SHORT STORIES

No. 733.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending January 17th, 1903.

THE DRAMA OF A DAY.

The Tale of a Journalist's Desperate Struggle for Life and Love.

The Story of the Week—See our Coloured Cover.

The Day Opens.

"MANY happy returns, my darling. Did you think I had forgotten?"

The speaker made a swift motion with one closed hand, and a delicate gold chain was flung over a fair head to incircle a slender throat. He had risen from his chair at a dainty breakfast-table and stooped over the woman who sat opposite him. She put up her arms and clasped them about him.

"Gilbert!" she said reproachfully.

Gilbert Hamlyn kissed his pretty wife. He was a tall, dark, reserved looking man, with a sprinkling of grey on his temples and in his moustache. But his eyes dwelt upon the upturned face with a passionate tenderness that beautified them.

"Ella!" he answered, mimicking her banteringly, "there, you are so indulgent to my absent-mindedness that I know you would forgive my even forgetting your birthday. And I really couldn't resist the temptation to make you think I had done so. I bound myself to wait till your second cup of tea, but it was all I could do to hold out. And now, do you like what I have for you? I can't tell you to change it, for it has your name on it."

He opened his hand with mischievous deliberation. In his palm there lay a tiny watch, its gold case rimmed with diamonds and pearls. Hamlyn turned it over—on the back, in brilliants, was the monogram, "E. H."

"How beautiful," cried Ella Hamlyn, taking it, "but, indeed, I did not want anything, Gilbert. You are always giving me jewellery. I have more already than it is wise to keep in a flat. I shall have to deposit some of it with your bank one of these days."

She dropped the watch into her lap and clung to her husband. "Oh, my dear," she said, "you are too, too good to me. Are you sure you can afford it all? I should be happy enough, more than happy, with your love alone."

Gilbert Hamlyn laughed. "Afford it, of course I can," he answered, "it was only yesterday Schillerman gave me a big cheque for royalties. I thought that American book had stopped selling, but it appears not. Truly, darling, America has been a mascot to me, it has given me you, reputation, and quite a gratifying balance in cash."

Ella put an elbow on the table before her, and leant her chin upon it. Her features were those of a resolute, capable, woman, her face seemed as if it had once been much older looking, but had grown, by some magic, younger and happier.

"America!" she murmured; "how I hate the very word. I am an Englishwoman by descent, why could I not have been an Englishwoman by birth? Then I should have escaped—what should I not have escaped? Shame, humiliation, squalor, the shadow of crime."

Her husband drew her to him. "My darling!" he whispered, "did you not promise me that you would try not to remember?"

Ella Hamlyn brushed away a tear. "I can't help it," she said, "I do try, Gilbert, for your sake. Oh, why couldn't I have met you when I was a girl—free, merry, ignorant!—instead of meeting—Robert Lorimer? What right have I to be the wife of such a man as you, I that have been wife to him, wife to 'Kentucky Bob,' 'Bob the Crook,' 'Bob the confidence-man.' I that have been known, and pitied, by the police in half the great towns of the States?"

Hamlyn pinched the pink lobe of a small, well-shaped ear.

"Ella," he said, "you know that I never argue with you in these moods. They are foolish, unreasonable, unfair to yourself. It was not your fault that, as a girl, you made a girl's mistake, and plighted your troth to a plausible scoundrel. Had you been born in England we might never have met, which might not have been your loss, though it would certainly have been mine."

He stroked the soft tendrils of fair hair that clustered naturally about her brow.

"I love you for what you are, dear," he murmured, "a brave, upright, experienced woman, who has come through the fire without even the odour of burning upon her garments."

Gilbert Hamlyn was silent for a moment, then he roused himself, and resumed his rallying tone.

"I was going to come home early to-night," he said, "and take you to the theatre. For once the paper can go to press without me. But, as you have misbehaved yourself, I think I shall change my mind."

Ella lifted her head and tried to smile, though the tears were hanging upon her lashes.

"I am silly," she confessed, "and selfish as well. I ought to be happy if only I can make you happy. And this is not the way to do it. But if you knew how things conspire to remind me! I cannot actually touch the piano, without feeling myself back in that horrid little dime museum, strumming on that awful tin-kettle they called an instrument."

"I wonder however you managed to get a bar of melody out of it," said her husband cheerfully, emptying his tea-cup, "but you did. Though I expect Mascagni would have fainted to hear its top-notes in the Intermezzo. Never mind, you played well enough to make me take the liberty of speaking to you."

"And of waiting to walk home with me," added his wife, "which was a much greater liberty."

All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

"How vexed you were!" exclaimed Gilbert Hamlyn; "but I plead love at first sight. I read it all in a glance. Crape at your throat, a wedding-ring on your finger, bitterness in your face—a disappointed wife, freed by death and captured by poverty. But what a queer, happy little courtship I had!"

He was gathering up a medley of documents from a writing-table as he spoke.

"Sweet as are the pleasures of reminiscence, my darling," he observed, "I must be off. You would marry a slave of the journalistic lamp."

His wife went for his hat and coat. He put them on, a grave, almost melancholy figure. But he drew her into his embrace with the ardour of a stripling.

"You shall have your theatre, after all," he said, "be happy, dear. I ask no more from you ever, than that you should be very, very happy."

Their lips met lingeringly, mutely, and Gilbert Hamlyn tore himself away. From the lofty window of the flat Ella watched him thread the busy West-end street.

"My dear, dear husband!" she murmured; "so loyal, so tender, so generous." She pressed her finger-tips to her quivering mouth, to hold back the sob that ended the words. "I must be happy," she said, "he wishes it. I will forget."

She sat down at a small concert grand and began to touch the notes; she played well and firmly, with a style more masculine than feminine. She glided into the famous and beautiful, if hackneyed "Intermezzo," she had been playing it in a wretched and half-empty Western "show"—playing it sadly, abstractedly, despairingly, and when she had finished she had looked up to see for the first time the face of Gilbert Hamlyn and to hear his grave "Thank you." It had been the beginning of an acquaintanceship that had meant much to Robert Lorimer's widow.

"If you please, ma'am, a person to see you."

Ella started. A white-capped maid had come into the room. Her mistress rose from the piano.

"A person!" she repeated; "what kind of a person?"

The girl prefaced her answer with a little jerk indicative of contempt. "A man, ma'am," she intimated, "very shabbily dressed. He says he must see you on business, and that you'll know him when you see him."

Ella Hamlyn smiled. "What a singular message!" she commented, "however, in that case, perhaps I had better see him, whether he sees me or not. Where is he?"

"In the hall, ma'am," she was told.

A light step carried Ella to the door of the room, and she peeped out into the tiny square ante-chamber of the compactly-built flat. In it there stood a lean, brown-skinned, sinewy fellow, with a soft felt hat in his restless fingers. At the sight of him Ella Hamlyn recoiled.

"I—I will speak to him, Ruth," she stammered; "you may show him in."

The maid stole an inquisitive glance at her and retired. In another moment her visitor had been ushered in and the door was closing upon the curious Ruth.

Ella had drawn herself up, very pale and stern.

"So, Jim Spinifex," she said, "you have dared to track me down. For no good purpose, I'll be sworn. Do not think that you can blackmail me, my husband knows all, he knew all when he married me."

The other grinned. "Well guessed, Ellie," he responded, "but don't be too quick. I knew fast enough you'd have told Hamlyn the truth, you always were that sort. But don't—don't——"

He drew nearer, screening his mouth with a hollowed palm.

"Don't call him your husband," she was bidden, "he can scarcely lay claim to the title so long as—as Bob Lorime is alive."

Ella gasped and caught at the table to steady herself.

"Bob!" she said, in a horrified whisper. "Bob alive?" The man she had called Jim Spinifex nodded.

She moaned and hid her face. Mr. James Spinifex shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll allow it's a bit of a jolt for you," he added, "but that's the fact. Howsomever, I'm not disposed to be hard on you, and Bob having sent me over here to make inquiries I can as easy put him off the scent as not. If you like I can tell him you're dead and buried, and then you'll be safe from him for good. The question is, how'll it pan out for me if I do?"

Ella was swaying to and fro. "Bob!" she murmured "Bob alive—and I his wife—not—not Gilbert's."

Jim Spinifex trifled with his soft hat. "Take it cool," he said. "All I want is to be paid for the trouble of holding my tongue. Hamlyn need never know. See here, I'll be content with a thousand dollars—two hundred pounds, and you can send it me by instalments. Fifty pounds'll do me now, in cash or jewellery. That's a pretty thing you've got on."

He extended his hand to the jewelled watch that swung at her belt. Ella sprang back and touched the bell.

"Go! go!" she exclaimed, "the sight of you is hideous to me. You contaminate his house with your presence. Go."

Her visitor faced her threateningly. "Not me!" he retorted; "I suppose you don't want me to go to Hamlyn and tell him you're not his wife."

Ella sneered. "Fool!" she said, "that would do you no good. Fate has tied a knot and I must untie it as best I can. But you will not stand to win by my method of doing it."

The other stared at her. "What are you going to do?" he queried.

Ella wrung her hands. "What do wounded creatures do?" she asked, wildly. "Creep away and hide themselves from all the world. Go, before I send for the police to fling you out."

Mr. Spinifex's jaw dropped and a low whistle broke from him. The maid was opening the door of the room. He turned and went out, muttering to himself in a dazed kind of fashion.

The Day Closes.

"RUTH, is your mistress not at home?"

Gilbert Hamlyn was standing on the threshold of the small kitchen of the rear of his flat. He had just entered with his latch-key and found the other rooms of the suite in darkness. The parlour-maid rose from the tea-table, where she had been gossiping confidentially with her fellow-servant.

"No, sir," she said. "Mrs. Hamlyn went out this morning about ten, sir. I got a cab for her, sir, and she took a hand-bag. And if you please, sir, she left a note for you on the toilet-table."

Hamlyn reflected an instant. Then he took a match-box from his pocket, passed into his own and his wife's sleeping apartment and lit the gas. On the toilet-table there lay a square, delicately-tinted envelope, addressed to him in her familiar handwriting. He picked it up and opened it, muttering a mild anathema.

"Called away suddenly, I suppose," he said. "Someone must be ill, yet she has so few friends in Eng——"

The word was left unfinished, and he started violently. His eye had fallen on the letter. It was brief and amazing.

"*I must go away and leave you—for ever. Something has happened. Never seek to learn what. I have taken nothing but a few clothes and a little money. I could not take any of your presents. Blame me, hate me, forget me. Good-bye.*—

"ELLA."

The paper fluttered from Hamlyn's fingers. The wife of a

Digitized by Google

twelve-month, and gone from him without a word of explanation!

He had rescued her from what a depth of misery and danger, and she had deserted him! That was what the world would call it—deserted! Gilbert Hamlyn ground his teeth; he was a proud man.

Gradually his love—the strong, steady, pitiful love of a generous man—reasserted itself. There was some mystery behind this sudden departure. He knew that she loved him, not with the caprice of a girl, but with the passionate self-surrender and pathetic trust of a woman who had suffered and found consolation. He remembered her strange, tender mood of the morning.

Putting his cold hands to his burning forehead he tried to think. While he stood, wrestling for self-control, the parlour-maid's voice came to him arousingly.

"Please, sir," he was informed, "a person to see you. He won't give his name, but it's the same one as called to see Mrs. Hamlyn this morning. He wouldn't give his name then, either!"

Gilbert Hamlyn turned, bewildered yet attracted by the reference to the unknown morning visit. But he was too reserved to question a servant.

"Very well," he said, pulling himself together and crumpling the letter in his palm. "You may show him into the drawing-room. I will see him at once."

He glanced at his face in the mirror as he passed it—he seemed to have grown suddenly very white and old. He threw off his overcoat and wiped the perspiration from his brow—it had broken forth in drops of beaded sweat. Then he entered the drawing-room and paused, surprised at the sight of his shabby, sinister-looking caller.

"I—I have not the pleasure of knowing you, I believe," he began. The other interrupted him with a gesture.

"My name is Spinifex," he said, and his accent was that of a low class American from the Western States. "There's no reason why you should know it, but I don't think it can do any harm."

"Upon my word, Mr.—Spinifex," observed Hamlyn coldly, "you take an extraordinary tone. May I ask the reason for this visit?"

"You may," he was answered. "I believe you have quite recently discovered your loss of something that many men would give a good deal to lose, but which, I daresay, you would not be sorry to regain, need I say that I allude to your wife?"

Gilbert Hamlyn strolled forward and seized the speaker by the collar. "Blackguard and scoundrel!" he said hoarsely, "for blackguard and scoundrel you are, it is written in your face. What do you know of my wife?"

Mr. James Spinifex threw off his grasp.

"Go slow," he observed, "you can't bluff me, and I don't need to bluff you. I know something that you want to know, and whether you end by knowing it or not depends on me."

He studied Gilbert Hamlyn with insolent deliberation.

"You want your wife's present address," he said; "well, I've got it—in my head, and nowhere else. There's only one thing that will bring it out, and that's dollars. You'll never find your wife again on your own, and you couldn't persuade her to come back if you did. Now, if you're in the mind to part with a couple of thousand dollars, and will put yourself in my hands, you shan't regret it."

"And if I refuse?" demanded Hamlyn. Mr. Spinifex snapped his fingers.

"I guess you can say good-bye to Mrs. H. for the rest of your earthly career!"

Hamlyn hesitated.

"Why has she gone away?" he asked.

Mr. Spinifex made a motion of irritation.

"Hadn't you better ask her that?" he said. "If you've got the cash, or can get it, I'll manage you an interview with her at once, if not you'll have to wait. But this is a case in which there's no time like the present."

Gilbert Hamlyn touched the bell.

"Supposing, Mr. Spinifex," he remarked, "I were to send for a policeman and have you arrested?"

The other sat down and stretched out his legs indolently.

"Go ahead," he said, "only I guess her name will be in all the papers to-morrow and her history. 'Ellie Lorimer, relict of the well-known crook and swindler, Bob Lorimer, and now wife of Mr. Gilbert Hamlyn, the successful writer.' H'm!"

Hamlyn abandoned the bell.

"Very well," he answered, slowly, "you and I, Mr. Spinifex, will have a little deal together. And if you play me false I shall know what course to take."

He re-entered the lighted bedroom, wrote out a cheque, and put on his overcoat.

"What am I risking?" he said to himself. "Possibly a great deal! Would to Heaven I had not lent my revolver! But there is no time to get it back, or opportunity to get another. Stay!"

He went out into the hall, took a thick walking-stick from the stand and felt it peculiarly. It was a sword-stick he had carried once or twice on special "commissions," when a firearm would have been inadmissible. The spring was in order, and the blade slid easily in its sheath. He put the stick under his arm, picked up his gloves, and regained the threshold of the drawing-room.

"I am at your service," he said. Mr. Spinifex bowed, clapped on his soft hat, and followed the journalist into the open air.

Hamlyn hailed a cab.

"I shall have to call on a friend as we go, for some cash," he remarked, "after that, no doubt you will direct the driver." His companion assented curtly, and Hamlyn gave the jehu the address. For the cab to reach it, for Hamlyn to leave Mr. Spinifex and return, was but the work of a quarter of an hour. As the journalist emerged from the shop of a large art dealer and jeweller in Piccadilly, the American stood up on the front of the hansom and spoke to the driver. The locality that he mentioned was a street in Pimlico not far from Victoria. The cabman saluted with his whip and drove off.

During the journey neither Hamlyn nor his companion spoke, each was covertly watching the other. At the point specified by the American they descended and the latter paid the fare. This done he grasped the journalist's arm.

"Pardon me, Mr. Hamlyn!" he observed, "but this is a curious neighbourhood, and you had better let me pilot you."

Hamlyn yielded reluctantly, to be led through street after street each dingier and more squalid than the other. Mr. Spinifex was evidently taking, of set purpose, a confusing route. Hamlyn lost track of his movements completely.

Finally his guide halted, and, drawing Hamlyn down a flight of area steps, tapped on a door at the bottom. At the end of a flagged passage, however, beyond the threshold of a room, a lamp was burning. The American pushed his companion towards it, and they gained a large, bare sitting-room, with dusty, barred windows, looking on a back street, where a gas flame was burning in a bracket attached to a wall. There were long serge curtains to the windows, Spinifex crossed and drew them closely.

The man who had ushered them into the apartment was short and square-shouldered, with a sullen, low-browed visage, and soiled, much crumpled linen.

"Waal," he said in a drawling nasal twang, "so you've got our joker. I reckon he's not come empty-handed?"

"I guess not," was the answer. "And now, Mr. Hamlyn, you have another thing to do, that is, to write a little note to your wife."

Gilbert Hamlyn started.

"Then she is not here!" he exclaimed.

"Not much!" said the shorter of the two Americans, "that's what your note is for, to bring her here. Luckily for

you, Spinifex had me wait about for her this morning and follow her when she came out, or she'd have given all of us the slip."

"That's so!" added Mr. Spinifex, thrusting towards him a blotting pad, a bad pen, some cheap note paper, and some envelopes. "And a line will do it, something like this:

"MY DEAR WIFE—*I am in the power of dangerous enemies. My life will depend on your accompanying the bearer. You will recognise my ring which I give him to show you. Be swift and secret.*

"Not bad, aye, for an impromptu. That turquoise of yours is just the thing, and it will do for a keepsake for Hoby, won't it, Hoby?"

His assistant smiled grimly. "I guess I'm not likely to be able to spare it back again. Hurry up, Hamlyn, if you want Mrs. H. to be here to-night."

"Yes, get a move on you," said Spinifex sharply; "it's easy enough. When Mrs. Hamlyn left the flat she went to a big hotel, booked a room in a false name and settled down for a spell. Ellie Lorimer never was a fool, and she knows that to lie low under the hunter's nose is the best way of putting him off the track. Hoby will slip up with your note, and bring her down in a cab. Just you write as I dictate."

Gilbert Hamlyn took up the pen and put it down again. "I will not write a lie to entrap my wife," he exclaimed; "how do I know what your plan is?"

"Bah!" retorted Spinifex, "I could forge just such a letter, take your ring by force, and get her here on my own. But I want your fist, it's safer. And as for the lie—I'll soon make it true."

He lowered his hand to his heel, pulled from his boot a gleaming sheath-knife, and held the point to Hamlyn's throat.

"Write!" he said, brutally. A curious smile crossed Hamlyn's face, and he obeyed without further parley.

A few moments later Hoby's square, slouching form was disappearing through the door on his mission. Spinifex motioned the journalist to a battered sofa, and sat down himself, laying his knife on his knee.

He lit a cigarette and puffed at it calmly. Hamlyn, his stick planted between his knees, his palms crossed upon the horn handle, regarded him steadily. Slowly the journalist's fingers changed their position, so slowly that a church clock hard by had chimed out two quarters before they settled upon the hidden spring.

"You have remarkably large rats here," he said, glancing across the room. "May I ask if you make pets of them?" Spinifex started, caught up his dagger, and turned his head. "Rats," he ejaculated incredulously, "where?"

There was a gleam of steel in the air, and he looked back again towards the journalist to find a slender blade pointed at his breast.

"A word, a motion," said Gilbert Hamlyn, "and you are a dead man!"

The American laughed in his face, struck the sword blade aside with his dagger, and slipping out of his chair darted, weapon in hand, at the journalist.

Well was it for Gilbert Hamlyn that he was a practised amateur of fencing—in a dagger and rapier duel the dagger wielder is at an advantage. His short, strong blade forms a more powerful lever in a parry, and if he can but get inside his adversary's reach he has him at his mercy.

The American having shown fight, Gilbert Hamlyn knew his danger and leapt back. Spinifex followed him up, and the two sprang from side to side of the room with agile, tactlike footsteps, thrusting and parrying as they went.

Driven to bay in a corner, the journalist lunged, and his point pricked the American's shoulder, but before he could recover his weapon, Hamlyn had received at close quarters a stab with the American sheath-knife that made him reel. It had been planted over the heart. But luckily he wore his watch in an upper pocket, and the metal had turned the blow. Spinifex felt it, and struck again; the blade gashed the muscles of the swordsman's right fore-arm.

Suddenly he saw that the American had backed to the fire, and was striving with one hand to extricate a folded paper from his pocket. Succeeding, he swerved, and, still standing on his guard, flung the paper towards the fire. It missed the bars, and fell upon the hearth.

The American stooped sideways to pick up the paper. Hamlyn flung himself upon him. Sword and dagger met, clashed, and the point of the long blade buried itself in the throat of James Spinifex. He staggered and fell, the dagger wrested from his hand.

Hamlyn snatched up the paper. A leaping flame of the fire illumined it. It was an attested copy of an American death certificate. And the name of the dead was Robert Lorimer!

As he stood wondering what it might mean, there was the sound of feet in the passage without. Hamlyn dropped his weapon, caught up a clumsy poker from the grate, and leapt to the side of the door. It opened, and his wife entered the darkened room followed by the man Hoby. As the latter passed the hidden journalist, Hamlyn struck desperately with all his force at the American's head. He fell with a groan.

Gilbert Hamlyn threw down the poker, caught his wife in his arms, and drew her through the door, down the passage, and out into the street. He had forgotten his trusty sword stick, but in his hand he still clutched mechanically the attested death certificate of his wife's first husband.

* * * * *

The servants at the flat stared when their master and mistress came back together, and they saw that Gilbert Hamlyn's right arm was tightly bound with a crimson handkerchief and his face rather paler than its wont. Ella had somehow staunched the bleeding in the obscurity of the four-wheeler which had brought them from Pimlico, and in which she and her husband had exchanged their amazed and amazing explanations.

The discreet doctor who was sent for to provide the wound with more professional bandages asked no questions, but warned his patient to rest for a day or two.

When he had gone there was a romantic little supper at the flat, during which Gilbert Hamlyn and his wife sat on the same side of the table, and talked a great deal, if they did not eat much.

"It was a clever lie, my darling," said the journalist at last. "but thank Heaven it failed. Yet, if they had not laid a second plot to get us both into their power and exact I know not what terms from us, it might have succeeded, at least in parting us, if not in enriching them. But I am glad I gave the scoundrels their deserts. I wonder if I ought to have informed the police—I may have killed one or other of the villains."

Ella shivered. "Wait," she said, "we will look in the papers for a day or two and see if anything is reported."

"Discretion is the better part of—honesty!" commented her husband. "Well, we will lie low, for a time at any rate."

As it proved, they had no need ever to depart from their policy of silence and inaction. The Americans, killed or wounded, were never heard of again. And it was in vain that the journalist explored the recesses of Pimlico in search of the scene of his desperate duel.

R. Norman Silver.

£5 A Week for Life!

This is the

HUGE PRIZE OFFERED BY

Pearson's Weekly.

For Particulars, See Page 85.

Digitized by Google

ONE TOUCH OF CUPID.

Which Gives Us Fresh Views of Life.

She had always been counted, above all else, a good woman. Indeed, goodness was so entirely the aim of her existence, the incentive for her strivings, that she fell into the common error of narrowing her life and its interests.

That hers was the virtue of the untried, the untempted, she did not know, and not knowing, she deemed herself strong and brave and true.

The rigid line along which her life was patterned formed the criterion by which she judged others. Consequently her judgment was often severe.

She looked with disgust upon the follies and weaknesses of other women. In her eyes there was never justification for sin.

"Women should so train their wills that temptation should be impossible," was her verdict always.

Duty being the keynote of her life, it came about that she married a man whom she "esteemed" but did not love. True, there was no one else whom she loved at that time. Nevertheless, somewhere in the exalted regions of her nature was a sense that told her how inadequate was the placid response which this man's regard awakened in her.

She felt instinctively that she would never be really happy with him. There were chords in her being which he never touched, depths which his love of her did not stir.

But she made up her mind to be content and to forget the visions of forbidden blessedness which that inner sense had told her was hers by right.

So she married and settled down to an existence of seeming happiness. The world spoke of the match as ideal and envied her the harmony of her lot, for the world knew nothing of her subjective life.

There were times when dissatisfaction lifted its head and stared her relentlessly in the face. Times when the old dreams and imaginings came thronging back. But she stifled them resolutely. Had she not promised to be true? To her that meant true in thought as well as deed.

With the birth of her little girl came new duties, new interests to fill the blanks and hollows of her existence. In watching the baby form develop, the precious mind unfold, she forgot dissatisfaction.

For three years she lived in this new-found happiness and smiled to feel that the old restlessness had left her, never to return.

Then she met the other man.

The revelation did not come at once. There was a vague intimation of it perhaps the first instant that her glance met his. But it was in talking with him of the things she loved that she first felt the delicious dawning of a joy never before experienced.

"It is mental congeniality," her heart explained to her conscience, for she wanted above all things to be honest with herself.

But as the days sped by she found the changing situation harder to explain. This new exhilaration, this wonderful joyousness—what was it? Why was it? Could simply the pleasure of a hostess in entertaining her husband's friend be such as this?

Then came the flashing moment of ecstasy when her wide eyes, meeting his, read the whole truth, and, reading it, gazed back in mingled fright and shame and joy.

In the quiet of her room that night she tried to think, to reason, to explain. But instead of the firmness and high resolve which she had always believed would be hers under such circumstances, she felt a wild wish to hug this great gladness to her heart and keep it always.

In vain did she chide herself, over and over. In vain did she lean above her sleeping child, reminding her soul again and again of the sacred calling which was hers. No thought of husband, child or duty could drown the music of this great experience.

A long night of reproaches and resolves made her no less responsive to the glow and thrill of the other man's presence next day. In shame and in delight she let her gaze drink deep of the concentrated sweetness in his eyes.

She would not think now, nor reason. She would not face herself as before in the quiet of her room. Beyond the present she cared not to live.

To see him daily, to talk with him, to feel that he loved her, was happiness so great that neither remorse nor resolve could strangle it.

"I am going away," he said to her, a week earlier than his intended departure.

Stunned by the unexpectedness of the announcement, unable to consider anything save the one black thought that he was to leave her, she stood facing him dumbly, her eyes fully speaking the despair that descended upon her.

"You understand," he said at length, as he released her hand.

"Yes," she said, "I understand."

He left that afternoon. She made some excuse and did not accompany her husband to the station with his friend.

As she saw the carriage drive away, it seemed to her that she must and would do some desperate thing. But she did nothing more desperate than to sit with clenched hands and miserable eyes, staring blankly at surroundings from which all shine and colour were now blotted out.

Months passed before her struggling will could assert itself above the awful numbness and despair which had threatened to throttle it. But the time did come, at last, when she could look at the world again with calm eyes of hope and faith.

It was then she felt the transformation. It was then she knew that in place of her former harshness and prejudice was a warm, sweet kindness, a great compassion, a wide sympathy for all those on earth, whose fate it seems to suffer and to love.

Angela Morgan.

Digitized by Google

THE DESPISER OF LOVE.

The Story of a Man who Chose Wealth.

THERE was a strong personality about Edwin Dale that raised him far above his fellow clerks at Chard's Bank. On the best of terms with one and all, yet none could say they knew him well. Some indefinable characteristic in his nature acted as a barrier to anything approaching friendship, and, apart from the daily association his fellow clerks had with him in the routine of their avocations, Dale was a stranger to them.

Different from most men, he seemed totally unaware of the existence of personal pronouns, and as reserved men always seem to be keeping something back, endless efforts were made off and on by the *employés* at Chard's to learn something of this enigma. But they were as ignorant at the end of twelve months as on the first day Dale joined the firm.

The various heads of the firm considered him a model clerk. He was as punctual as the sun, and accurate and precise in everything he did, and at the time of the opening of this story had just been appointed confidential clerk to the junior partner, Mr. Arthur Chard.

It was an old custom at Chard's that when one of the rank and file received sudden promotion to any important or confidential position, to celebrate it in the form of a supper, for which the recipient of the new post had the privilege of paying. On this occasion, however, and it was openly mooted as being the only one on record, there was no conviviality.

Dale explained that he knew what was the custom, and what he was expected to do, but pleaded indisposition—he called it liver. He hoped, nevertheless, that his enforced absence would not in any way interfere with the ancient precepts being upheld, and he would be more than pleased if they would allow him the privilege of suggesting that the Holborn——

His little speech was not permitted to go beyond that point, for one of the features of the supper was the ceremonials attached to it, which naturally necessitated the presence of the principal. So the supper was indefinitely postponed.

The possession of an affected liver is an affliction that only those who have realised the ownership of that special piece of the internal anatomy can truly understand and sympathise with, yet Dale, despite his, managed to demolish a good many epicurean dishes at his club that same evening, and as we find him now—is calmly smoking a cigar with two aristocratic-looking young men, while taking sips of liqueur coffee.

"What are you going to do with yourself to-night, Dale?" asks the elder of the two strangers.

"Oh, I think I shall turn in—I feel as if everything jars to-night."

"Come and have a turn in the card-room," suggests the other.

"I never play cards," Dale quietly replies.

"What's the difference between cards and backing a horse, old chap? Come, that's straining at the gnat a little, isn't it?"

"There's a vast difference. You back a horse by speaking three words, or by a mere nod—but cards, pshaw! breathing bad air, smoking, drinking, and losing a night's rest!"

"If Dale did that, what on earth would become of Chard's Bank, I wonder?"

"Oh, I suppose I should be compelled to resign, and no doubt my successor would be chosen from that class who have no brains to fuddle."

"Thanks, Dale."

"Well, you asked for it, Jack."

"If Dale is really going, I'll give you one in five for fifty, Jack."

"Not good enough; I'll take two hundred."

"Split it?"

"Any way you like."

"I wonder," thought Dale, as he slowly strode along Pall Mall, "what those two men would do if they knew I was on the brink of—of what—say ruin? This is almost Thursday. By Monday I must raise two thousand seven hundred. If I owed it to a man I don't think I would have any compunction in being dubbed a defaulter, but I cannot, no I cannot let Jessie in, she has sacrificed a lot for me, and I've been blackguard enough in that quarter. No, I see but one course open. It will provide the evening papers with a good bill. Absconding bank clerk—enormous defalcations—yes, and as soon as Jessie saw it she would return the two-seven to Chard's. I'll go to see her now."

"Is Miss Caister in and alone?" Dale asked the question from the boy in charge of the lift at Cambridge Mansions.

"I think so, sir, but I've been away for my supper. Going up, sir?"

"Yes."

Arrived on the fourth floor, he quickly crossed the balcony, and touched the electric bell on the door, whereon "Miss Caister" was printed.

"Is Miss Caister in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"She is, sir."

"That will do, I know the way."

In a room furnished with exquisite taste—if slightly foreign in appearance, sat Jessie Caister reading. When she heard the well-known footsteps of Dale she ran to meet him.

"Oh, Eddy, my love, this is kind of you. Have you come for supper? Are you in a hurry, because I will order it at once if you are?"

"No, dear, I'm neither in a hurry nor hungry. I've come just to have a talk—if you'll have me."

"Ah, but have you come to talk to me nicely, or to hedge that bet on Will-o'-the-Wisp?"

"Who told you that I had a bet on Will-o'-the-Wisp?"

"Sir John Farren himself. He came this morning and asked me what the price was. I told him——"

Digitized by Google

"A hundred to six."

"And then he offered to buy part of the book."

"The fool."

"I don't think he is a fool at all. He certainly allows that man Edgcombe to sponge dreadfully, but apart from that I don't think Sir John is at all foolish. But we are talking shop. Come and sit here by me, and put your arms round me, and love me as you used to do."

"No, dear, I would bore you, I——"

"You bore me, Eddie, you know you couldn't."

"It is sweet of you to say so, dear, but what I want is sleep. Let me lie down here for an hour, will you?"

"Will I? You stupid boy. Now wait a minute, don't be so impatient. Lift your head—no, this way. Isn't that better?"

"Yes, darling."

"Are you warm enough, or shall I put this rug round you?"

"Put it over my feet. Ah, that's splendid. Call me when it's time for me to go."

"Is that all?"

"All! What do you mean?"

"Don't you want a kiss?"

This was the lady bookmaker over whom all London was agog. No paper with a society column but had some personal item concerning Miss Jessie Caister—the usual paragraphs. How she preferred her soup cold, and never was known to tie her bootlaces in a double knot. Rumour, and the ever-moving current report, gave the most brilliant details of her career, all of which were wonderful pieces of news to the lady herself.

One particular item of *truth*, however, if put up for auction in Fleet Street, would have obtained a fabulous price, but that was a secret between Jessie and Dale.

And she sat in the subdued light watching the sleeping form of the man she loved, not a movement of his escaped her. If in restless turnings he moved the cushion from beneath his head, she would promptly and gently replace it. She was perfectly happy, and he?

The tender pressure of her lips—their very warmth, was still upon his when his brain became troubled with dreams. At first they were mere reflections of his active thoughts, the passing in a clouded phantasm of daily scenes and troubles. A period of deep sleep followed. Then he became conscious that he was dreaming again, but the dream took the form more of a vision. Someone was speaking to him, he knew not whom, nor could he tell what was said at first. Gradually, however, the buzzing in his ears took more definite sound, and he saw a figure kneeling beside him—and understood.

In his imagination he said to the figure at his side:

"Have you come to warn me?"

"No, to offer you your choice. Which will you have?—and your wish shall be granted. Honour, health, fame, happiness, or wealth?"

"Give me wealth—give me wealth."

"Eddie, Eddie, wake up."

"Give me, give me, oh——"

"What, dear—some water?"

"I was dreaming, Jessie."

"You are ill, darling. Do let me give you something—a little brandy?"

"No, I will go home. I'm all right except a touch of liver; it will be well in the morning."

And he went.

Settling day arrived, and Dale had failed to raise the necessary money. On the way to the office he pondered deeply over his affairs. His objection to robbing Chard's bank was not from any sense of honour—for he was absolutely unscrupulous—but it would end all his scheming and ambition.

"I will see Jessie and put her off for a week and do a plunge. It is my only chance!" he muttered, as he entered the bank.

Fate, however, in the shape of a fortune, rescued him from himself. Some old idiot—his thankful way of putting it—had left him seven or eight thousand a year. The old idiot in question was his father, who had died without leaving a will—at least none was found, fortunately for Edwin Dale, for he had long left the family circle with the proverbial shilling.

As soon as all the necessary legal arrangements were settled, Dale went away, "to let the thing blow over a bit," was his motive.

Much talk ensued at the club over Dale's good luck, but the general surprise was nobody knew Dale possessed a father. Major Bousfell and Sir John Farren were discussing Dale and his affairs one morning, and Sir John staggered the Major by remarking:

"I suppose he will marry Jessie Caister, now?"

"By Heavens, I hope not!"

"Ah, Major, have you a tender spot for that quarter?"

"Not I, my boy. I was meaning that Jessie Caister is far too good for him."

"You haven't a very exalted opinion of Dale seemingly?"

"I should think not; he is a cold-blooded cur!"

"I say, that's strong for you, Major."

"Yes, but I mean it."

"Well, I think Dale is strangely selfish, but I am certain Jessie Caister loves him—dotes on him."

"Aye, and he?"

"Who could fathom that statue?"

For six months nothing was heard of Dale. He seemed to have dropped completely out of existence. Sir John Farren was ruminating over the fact one Saturday morning. Sir John was an ardent footballer, and every Saturday during the winter assiduously scanned the lists of the teams in the sporting papers, and seeing the name of Dale, of course it recalled memories of Edwin.

"Hullo, Jack!" The newcomer was Major Bousfell. "Have you seen this?" handing over a paper.

"The vile sneak!" remarked Sir John after reading. "It's odd, I was just thinking of him. But how on earth has this come about?"

"Simple as possible. The Earl of Torpington and family are at Cannes for the winter. Dale has evidently found the climate there equally charming."

"It will kill Jessie Caister."

"Not it; she will be well out of it."

"I'll go to see her."

"Don't, Jack. She'll never like you again if you tell her. Your presence will always recall the misery—take my tip!"

"No; I'm off at once."

Ten minutes sufficed to reach Cambridge Mansions.

"You are an early visitor, Sir John."

"Yes. I say, Miss Caister, I wish you would drop the handle, I hate it!"

"But I cannot call you Mr. Farren."

"Why not call me Jack like the others? And you and I are such old friends! I mean to call you Jessie. Miss Caister is such a lot to get out, isn't it?"

"Yes—Jack."

"Now, Jessie, I want you to think as well of me as you can, because I'm going to run the risk of—of making you hate and despise me!"

"Whatever is coming? Are you broke, Jack?"

That was the maximum of calamities that Jessie thought could be wrong with Sir John Farren.

"No. I am not going to speak about myself at all. And, first of all, I'm going to ask you a question, and don't think it is out of mere curiosity or impertinent."

"You are going to frighten me, Sir John."

"Sir!"

"I mean Jack."

Digitized by Google

"Do you love Edwin Dale? Oh, Jessie, forgive me. I was brutal to ask so bluntly."

"Tell me all—quick, quick, is he dead?"

"No."

"He is ill, dying in some foreign land, and I here? Oh, tell me where he is."

"He is neither ill nor dying, but, Jessie, he is dead to you."

"To me?"

"Don't you understand? He is a cur and has——"

"No, no, you don't know. What has he done? I forgive him, whatever it is—even if it is murder."

"He is married."

"Married!" with a gasp.

"Yes, he's married Lady Isobel, second daughter of the Earl of Torpington."

"Leave me, Jack."

"No, I won't yet."

"I want to be alone—to think."

"Let me manage a bit for you. How is your book?"

"Full. I shall never take another bet. This is the hand of Providence; I should never have taken up such an unwomanly occupation!"

"Nonsense! I'll take your book over, if you'll let me."

"No, Jack. I mean what I said, so do go."

"And you won't hate me for bringing this bad news; but remember you have escaped marrying a blackguard!"

"I shall never hate you, whatever you do; you have been very kind to me this morning. I would rather have heard it from you than anyone. Now go."

"Now, then, Jack, you fool, pull yourself together, else you'll be in fine trim this afternoon," and with this admonition to himself he walked off as straight as a British soldier—which he was.

* * * * *

"I am going with father and the girls to Daly's to-night. Will you drop in?"

"I may if I get back in time, but in all probability I will have to run down to Newmarket."

"Whatever for, Edwin?"

"Well, you see, Isobel, every man in my position is supposed to do something these days, so I mean to keep a few horses."

"But we have enough, surely?"

"I mean racehorses, my dear."

"Oh, Edwin, cannot you find anything else than that?"

"I knew, of course, that you would object to any scheme I suggested, particularly if it would give me pleasure."

"I hate betting and horse-racing."

"Don't be foolish, Isobel! It is the duty of those who can afford it to try to improve the breed of racers in England to purify the turf generally."

"I am sure your motives are purely philanthropical, dear, but I dislike the idea all the same."

"Of course you do! You dislike anything I do, and will soon dislike me also, I suppose."

"Is that kind, Edwin?"

"Well you goad me to saying nasty things. You seem perpetually trying to thwart me."

"Do I, Edwin? Well, I won't even comment on your doings for the future, except that I do wish you would see someone about your cough."

"Oh, hang the cough! I beg your pardon, Isobel; come back—I am very sorry. Isobel!"

She had gone.

"I wonder what on earth is the matter with me. I used to have myself under better control. Isobel is very irritating sometimes; she either can't, or won't, see how her constant worrying annoys me, but I was a fool to swear. Yes, I'll go and see her."

Without speaking or knocking, he made an attempt to open the door of his wife's boudoir, but found it locked.

"Let me in, Isobel!" he asked pleadingly.

No answer.

"Isobel! Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear, but I am busy, and prefer my own company just at present."

Dale's lips twitched slightly; it was a unique experience for him to be baulked in anything.

"Open this door at once, or I'll smash it in."

"Please yourself, of course."

For a moment his temper got the better of him, and he burst open the lock and entered the room.

"You had better continue the dictates of your breeding, and beat me now."

"Look here, madam"—grasping her by the wrist—"I want you to fully understand that I am the master of this house, and will be obeyed. Don't think you've got one of your blue-blooded puppets to deal with now."

"At least the blue-blooded puppets don't bully and swear at their wives. Edwin, you are hurting my wrist. Edwin, oh, you brute!" With an effort she managed to escape from him.

"My Lady Isobel requires taming, and objects to the process."

"You will not have the opportunity of repeating your cruelty."

"Ah, you purpose showing only the velvet paw—a wise discretion on your part—very wise."

"Don't flatter yourself. I mean to leave you to-day."

"Oh, surely not. Will it be for good?"

"Do you think I am going to live with a man little less than a wife-beater?"

"I didn't know you had any private income."

"I shall go home again."

"I don't somehow think you will."

"Do you imagine that your threats will prevent me?"

"Well, my dear, your father is indebted to me for a few thousands, and has been for some considerable time. If he allows you to remain in his house against your husband's wishes I will—ah, request an immediate settlement—and I know he hasn't got it, and matters might become strained. Think the matter over, my lady, but don't do anything rash."

When Dale returned in the afternoon he was surprised to find that his wife had gone to Cadogan Place, and at once jumped to the conclusion that she had left him for good; whereas Lady Isobel had merely gone to see her father to verify Dale's statement regarding the loan and to ask his advice.

All the pent-up venom and passion in Dale's nature appeared to suddenly spring into life, and instead of the calm, sneering, calculating man of the world, he was changed to a fiend incarnate. His features were distorted to ghastliness, and the violent fit of coughing that now and again attacked him with terrible violence only added to his awful appearance. James, the butler, when summoned, stared horror-stricken at his master.

"James, have my things packed for a year's foreign tour, and send them to Charing Cross Station."

"To-day, sir?"

"Yes, at once, and I want you to pay all the servants off and shut up the house as quickly as you can. If Lady Isobel returns she is not to enter this house on any pretext, do you understand?"

"Ye—es, sir."

"Have her clothes and things sent to Cadogan Place."

"I believe this is her ladyship coming in now, sir."

"Yes, go and obey the other orders."

"You have changed your mind too late, my lady; you can return to your father's house, no one wants you here."

"Edwin! Whatever do you mean?"

"Neither more nor less than what I said. In an hour's time this house will be shut up, so if you want any of your effects you had better see after them."

"Edwin, dear, you are not well. Oh, surely you don't mean this just because of the few words we had this morning. Edwin, speak to me!"

Digitized by Google

"It's too late, I tell you; my mind is made up."

"Oh, Edwin, darling, forgive me; I didn't mean to vex you like this."

"Get out of my way. I am going."

"No, no. I cannot let you go like this. Edwin, my love, my husband, forgive me."

She stood facing him, with her arms pleadingly extended, and as he made a stride forward, she flung herself against him, crying and imploring him not to leave her. He tried to disengage himself from the nervous arms that were round him, but they held him with the strength of despair. Losing every atom of control of himself he flung her violently from him, and Lady Isobel fell with a crash against the marble fireguard, her head striking the outer rail with a horrible thud—she was dead.

Dale left the house a different man—he hadn't the remotest idea that he had killed his wife. The evil passions deserted him as quickly as they had risen, and he felt almost inclined to go back and make it up with Isobel; and possibly might have returned on that errand, but for one reason. He didn't love her, and had never done since his marriage, which, in fact, was only a means to attain an end.

"It is always well," Dale mused as he walked towards Cambridge Mansions, "to keep one good card in reserve, if only to gain the lead. Yes, I will play mine now, and when it scores, as it is sure to, Jessie and I will leave this miserable climate and go somewhere where there is warmth and sunshine."

"Miss Caister said she would be back by six, did she? Ah, then, I will wait, it is nearly that now."

A bright red fire gave not only actual heat to the room, but reflected a warm glow on the surroundings, and as Dale sat watching the ever-changing pictures in the grate, his thoughts gradually released from their continual strain, ran riot for a while, but the warmth and soothing influence soon impelled reflections of that last visit, and everything that occurred, even to his dream, was vividly depicted in his mind. The reverie was interrupted by the sound of voices and footsteps approaching, and Dale turned to see who it was just as Jessie and Sir John Farren entered the room.

"How do you do, Jessie? How are you, Jack?

"What's the matter? Can't you speak?" as Jessie and Sir John drew back.

"Yes, Dale, kindly drop Christian names for the future. In fact, I think we had better drop acquaintanceship altogether. My wife and I don't——"

"Your what?" meaningly.

"My wife, sir," taking Jessie's hand.

Dale sank into a chair; he tried to articulate something, but the red stream of life choked his utterance, save a sickening gurgle; he had burst an artery.

When Sir John returned to Cambridge Mansions, after taking his wife to a neighbouring hotel, two men accosted him.

"Excuse me, Sir John," said one. "Is Mr. Edwin Dale upstairs?"

"He was; why do you ask?"

"We're two police officers, and we have warrants for his arrest for forgery and murder. Do you know where he is, sir?"

"Heaven knows that; he is dead." **C. E. Cowan.**

£50 FROM ONE READER TO THE REST.

A reader of SHORT STORIES won a prize of £10 in 1894 and with the help of this money emigrated to America making a fortune out of the cycle boom of 1897 and 1898. He recently wrote a letter, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Dayton," to the Editor of SHORT STORIES, inclosing dollar bills to the value of £50, and asking that this money may be offered as prizes in five sums of £10 each.

The Editor has given the matter very careful consideration, and has arrived at the conclusion that, as his anonymous correspondent was in great want when he won his prize, the most satisfactory manner of distributing his gifts of £50 would be to offer them to those who can give the best reasons for receiving them.

You may be wanting to emigrate to one of our Colonies. You may want £10 to buy something you have needed for a long time. You may want to clear off some small debts that have been worrying you. Or you may want to trade with the £10 and, like "Dayton," turn it into a fortune.

Whatever your reason for wanting it may be, write it down in the space below, and send it to "The Competition Editor of SHORT STORIES," Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "Dayton 4," by Tuesday, January 20th.

Readers may send as many reasons as they like, provided each is written on a separate coupon. Another coupon will appear next week. The Editor's decision is final, and competitors may enter only on this understanding.

CUT OFF THE COUPON HERE.

FOURTH COUPON.

My reason for wanting £10 is.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name.....**Address**.....

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. A celebrated French artist in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman and friend of Lady Peggy.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

The House in the Rue Burgoyne.

Of the scene that followed I find it difficult to give an adequate description. The whole vast mass of spectators rushed pell-mell to the spot where Adams, who had been lifted from the horse, was lying. Loud and violently excited voices filled the air with shouts, one faction contending that Adams, having failed to ride the horse, the race, so far as Maraschino was concerned, was void; the other as vehemently asserting that, having secured first place, the horse must be held to have won. And in the midst, unconscious of the loud voices, the flushed and angry faces, the din and clamour of the crowd, the young jockey lay, unmindful of it all.

Stanley had hurried to his side, and, resting the lad's head on his knee, was trying to force some brandy through the fast-closed lips. Somebody called, another fetched a doctor, there was a moment's pause—a pause in which the violent clamour died away, and then in a quiet voice the doctor gave his verdict.

"He is dead," he said slowly. "The cause?" he shrugged his shoulders. "Heart affected, I should say, but we shall tell better later."

"I say the man was drugged," cried Stanley, starting to his feet, "drugged, and by *you!*" and, like a flash, he sprang at Eastacres, striking him in the face. The next instant he was surrounded and dragged back. The Duke, pale as death, save for the livid mark upon his cheek, retained his self-control, and listened quietly to the regrets and apologies of the stewards of the race for Forbes' unprovoked attack.

"Mr. Forbes is suffering from great excitement," he said calmly. "He has had much trouble of late—domestic and otherwise. He has dropped a good deal of money over the race, I fancy."

Then, with a sneer at Forbes, he turned away, murmuring a few words in my ear as he passed. I nodded in reply, and signed to Baron Rolla to approach me.

"Where is Belinda?" I asked.

"My dear lady," he returned, "I was about to ask you the same question. I left Miss North at her own request to find out what was happening to that poor young fellow, Adams; when I returned she had vanished, gone, no trace of her to be seen."

"She may, perhaps, have left the course, and be waiting for us in your motor, Baron."

"I have already looked there, but in vain."

"What can have happened?" I asked in agitation.

The Baron smiled.

"Nothing for which you need feel concerned, I am sure," he said. "Miss North is an adventurous young lady, possibly we shall find her exploring the stables, or——" he paused, "she may have come after me to inquire for herself into Adams' condition. I will go and find out."

As he spoke he hurried off, and, a moment later, was in close conversation with Stanley, who, quieter now, and more like himself, was ready to answer the Baron's questions.

The latter returned, looking rather troubled.

"No," he said slowly, "Forbes cannot help us at all. He suggests," the Baron frowned as he spoke, "he suggests that the Duke of Eastacres may have driven her home. Is it likely, do you think?"

"Not for an instant. Eastacres has only this moment left the course."

"Then," said Rolla dubiously, "I don't know what to do. I have questioned the officials closely, and no one remembers to have seen her. She is certainly not here," he glanced at the rapidly thinning crowd.

"We had better go at once to the Hotel D'Auteuil," I said. "Belinda is quite likely to have started off by herself. In all probability she took a fancy for a ride on a tramcar. She's a dreadful responsibility, Baron; one never knows what she will do next."

"A responsibility I should be more than thankful to accept," he said, flushing.

I shook my head.

"I'm afraid it is no good for me to raise false hopes, Baron," I said with a sigh. "There's only one man who has any chance of winning Belinda, and that's the Duke."

"*The Duke!*" Rolla gave me a quick, curious glance from his keen black eyes. "Incredible," he said, astonished out of his self-control, "Miss North has told me over and over again that she disliked——" He paused, bit his lip, angered at his lack of reticence.

"Oh, as to that," I returned lightly, "young girls often affect dislike for a man when, in reality, they feel very differ-

Digitized by Google

ently. Take my word for it, Baron, Belinda will marry Eastacres yet."

He looked politely incredulous, and escorted me to his automobile. We arrived at the house of my friend the Marquise in a few minutes, to find that Belinda had not yet returned.

The Baron seemed surprised, almost, I thought, alarmed. I was amused at his anxiety, amused though a little apprehensive.

My apprehension increased when Paul de Sonnaz joined with Rolla in declaring that a vigorous search should be instituted for Belinda.

"Who does she know in Paris besides ourselves and the rest of our set, Lady Peggy?" questioned Paul.

"There is Mrs. Murchison-Lee," I suggested, "she is putting up at the Nord, I believe. Belinda may be there, or——" I paused, "she may have gone to Mrs. Forbes. She's rather fond of Sheila."

"We will go to both places," said Rolla, and Paul eagerly fell in with the suggestion.

I had no option but to accompany them. Paris was full, and the streets crowded, but we went at a good round pace, and, regardless of the cries of the unfortunate *cochers* and enraged pedestrians, whirled round to the Nord and on to Sheila's. The latter was out, also Midge; at neither place had Belinda been seen.

"We will return to my aunt's," said Paul quietly. "If she is not there"—he paused, his boyish face turned pale, and a look of resolution tightened his mouth.

Meanwhile, for all my calmness and my self-possession, I was undergoing a purgatory of doubt and fear.

I knew where Belinda was—had known it all along. At that moment she was in a house in the Rue Burgoyne, the house where Honoria and Mark Striven lived, the very house to which Honoria had warned her never to come.

A verbal message had reached Belinda, presumably from her weak-minded ladyship, begging and praying the girl to come to the Rue Burgoyne at once, as Honoria was in great trouble and distress. Those who have read my previous articles do not need me to tell them the effect of this appeal on my charge. Then and there she rushed off without a word to me, without a look at Rolla, filled with pity for her friend and indignation against those who were troubling her.

A fiacre was waiting into which Belinda stepped with unsuspecting readiness, and was driven away to the house in the Rue Burgoyne.

In that house the Duke of Eastacres was to play his last most desperate card, to force her into marriage.

It was now close on seven o'clock. I had hoped that Belinda's absence would be unremarked until much later. If I felt uneasy before, judge of my state of mind when, with a sudden inspiration, Paul rose to his feet and shouted to the Baron to alter his course.

"I know where she is!" he exclaimed. "Ten thousand to one Belinda's gone to see Eastacres' sister. She told me about her only yesterday, how unhappy the poor creature was and what a brute the Duke had been to her. What do you say, Lady Peggy, isn't it possible she may be there?"

For a moment I could not speak, my heart throbbed so violently that the agony was most acute. Gasping, I put up my hand.

"She's not likely to be there," I said, and then, white with pain and agitation, I fell back in my seat with a faint request for air.

I really felt very ill, and the concern the two men displayed was genuinely excited. All the same, I took advantage of the attack to gain time. It was quite an hour before I felt sufficiently recovered to leave the café where Paul had brought me.

During that hour I had contrived to send a word of warning to the Duke. Whether or no my message would have the desired effect, I could not say. I could only hope and pray for its success.

"And now," said Rolla, when at last I was able to take my seat in the car, "what are we going to do?"

"Go as quickly as possible to the Rue Burgoyne," said Paul. "Belinda has not returned home. If she is not at Honoria's I shall begin to be alarmed."

Without further question or delay we started. It was a long drive to the house, which lay outside Paris, some few miles from the town, and the sun had set when at last we reached our destination. The house stood by itself, in a large garden thickly planted with trees. It was gloomy and deserted in the extreme, the windows were all shuttered, and the garden gate was barred; the whole place spelt desolation, not a sign or sound of life about it!

There was no bell or knocker at the gate, so, after a little demur, Rolla forced it open and led the way up the moss-grown path to the house door. Here we waited for some ten minutes, pulling an old and rusty bell handle at intervals, or knocking loudly on the panels of the door.

At last an answer came. An old woman, rather dirty and stone deaf, appeared, and told us that the family were away!

She paid no heed to Paul's impatient questions, but repeated the formula with a queer shake of the head, until in despair he gave up trying to communicate with her, and flung off down the garden path. Rolla followed more slowly, while I, for reasons of my own, continued to loiter some distance behind them both, and gazed intently at the upper windows of the house. At length I was rewarded by the appearance of the signal upon which the Duke and I had agreed. The shutters of the attic window were unbarred, and from the open casement streamed a handkerchief. For one second only it fluttered in the breeze, but in that second the world seemed changed. It told me that Belinda was in the house and that things were shaping as the Duke and I desired, that I was so much nearer £20,000.

An immense weight was taken from my mind. I rejoined my two companions with a feeling of triumph, almost exultation.

"What next?" said Paul anxiously. "Shall we not communicate with the police? It is after nine, and one shudders to think of Belinda robbed, ill-treated, perhaps." He paused, and in the faint light of the May evening I saw his face was very pale.

"We will not go to the police," I said firmly, "neither will we make any further inquiries of a public nature. Whatever is done now must be carried out with the greatest discretion."

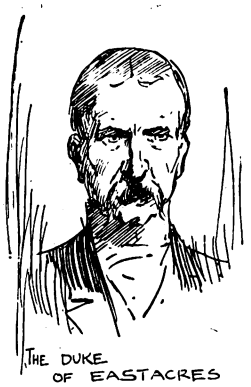
He looked puzzled, and showed signs of making protest.

"You at least should understand my reason," I said severely. "Belinda is a young, a high-spirited, hot-tempered girl, ready to throw conventionality and custom to the wind—ready, if needs be, to risk her whole future for the sake of an impulse. You know this as well as I. You realised to the full the girl's generous, guileless, but most thoughtless disposition. Yet you encouraged her in every imprudence, assisted her in every whim. And now"—I threw out my hands indignantly—"what is the result? Belinda is missing, gone where and to whom? Ah, you have much to answer for, De Sonnaz. As I live, I fear Belinda has left her friends, abandoned her future, disobeyed her father, and run away with David Carr."

"Impossible!" said Paul.

"It is easy to say that now," I retorted. "You evidently thought otherwise when you encouraged her to speak of him, calling yourself his friend and a lot of other rubbish. A nice friend you've been to Belinda, at all events. Oh, don't excuse yourself," as he broke out into protestations of innocence and regret, "the thing's done, the mistake's been made. What we have to do now is to avoid all scandal and bring her quickly back to the Hotel D'Auteuil. You, Baron," I turned to Rolla, "must go to the British Embassy and find out if Carr has been or is likely to go there to arrange for his marriage.

Digitized by Google


THE DUKE OF EASTACRES

with Belinda. Paul must return to the Marquise and narrate a colourable story as to Belinda's and my absence. For myself," I paused, "I intend to find my charge."

The Baron murmured his admiration of my intrepidity, and readily agreed to play the part assigned to him. Paul was not so easily disposed of.

"You are wrong, Lady Peggy," he said firmly. "Belinda gave her word she would not see or speak to Mr. Carr without your knowledge. I will swear she has not broken her word."

"Where is she, then?" I asked impatiently. "You waste time, precious time in useless discussion. Believe me or not, as you will, but do not hinder me. I must go."

With a nod to the two men I hastened off, past the house in the Rue Burgoyne, out towards the open country. Rolla and De Sonnaz gathered that I possessed certain knowledge of the girl's whereabouts that I did not wish to share with them, and did not attempt to follow or to question me. A few minutes later, to my intense relief, I heard the sound of the automobile travelling swiftly towards the city.

I took a deep, hard breath. The strain of the last few hours had been severe; that which was to follow would be even greater. I shrank back at the prospect. I was almost tempted to return to the Hotel D'Auteuil and leave matters—and Belinda—to chance.

I should have a few hours' rest and quiet, and to-morrow—with a sigh I dismissed the pleasant prospect. No rest, no quiet for me till the marriage of Belinda to the Duke was an accomplished fact.

I waited another hour, and then, when the clocks from the neighbouring churches chimed half-past ten, I retraced my steps, entered the old iron gate, traversed the weed-grown path, and stood once more before the portals of the house in the Rue Burgoyne.

All was silent and still therein. I had half expected to hear angry voices, Belinda's and the Duke's. I had dreaded the former's cries of distress. The strange, the deathly stillness of the place quickened my sense of fear. What if the Duke had played me false, what if Belinda were not in this grim house? What——?

I all but cried out in my alarm, and eagerly sought to find a way by which I could enter the house without the knowledge of those within. The front door was fast locked, so also the small door at the back. The windows, still barred and shuttered, afforded me no chance of ingress. I was in despair, and had almost resolved to formally demand admittance, when the flash of a lamp in a window in the side of the house from a room on the first floor caught my eyes. Immediately, following the train of thought suggested, my glance fell upon a block of outhouses, disused stables, and wood-sheds, which, though fallen on evil days, were in a better state of preservation than the rest of the property. Moreover, and this had first attracted me, they were built so close to the house that there was but the distance of a few feet between them. And from the window of the room above the stable one could look straight into the window of the room from where the lamp had shone. The room, where, unless I had been shamefully deceived, Belinda and the Duke were now quarrelling.

I formed my resolution quickly, and acted upon it then and there. Five minutes later found me leaning from the window of the stable, listening intently to what was happening in that room so short a space away.

It was an ideal position. I could see all, hear all that passed, my presence being unsuspected.

The room was lit by a small hand-lamp, placed on a table near the window. Bending towards each other, so that the flicker of the flame lit up their faces, were two figures—Belinda and the Duke!

"Where is Honoria?" she cried, "and by whose orders have I been kept in this place, this wretched room, for hours? I came here in response to an appeal for help from your unhappy sister, and when I came——" she paused, "you know what happened," she cried angrily. "I see it in your face—mean, treacherous, false——"

He stopped her with a gesture.

"You were brought into this room," he said calmly, "and the door—a thick, stout door, was locked on you. All that has happened to you since you left the racecourse this afternoon was pre-arranged. By whom, you ask? Can you not guess—it was your most devoted slave," and he bowed in a mocking fashion, pressing his hand to his heart.

"And Honoria?" The girl's face had grown white; she glanced half fearfully over her shoulder towards the door. "Where is she?"

"Honoria, to the best of my belief, is with her husband at the Hotel du Nord. They have gone to see your friend, Mrs. Murchison-Lee."

"Then—then—I am here alone with you?" The words were forced from her white lips; she trembled, and grasped the table for support.

"Alone with me," he replied softly.

She turned upon him swiftly, suddenly, all traces of weakness gone, her eyes flashing, the red blood mounting to her cheeks.

"What do you want?" she said fiercely.

"That is a simple thing to answer. Listen, and you will comprehend exactly how the matter stands. We are here, you and I, in a lonely house some distance out of Paris. You will stay here until to-morrow. And then," he smiled—"then if you wish you shall return to the house of the Marquise D'Arteuil. And do you know what will happen then? The Marquise will refuse to receive you. Society will be closed against you."

"What then?" Belinda asked, with scorn equal to his own. "My friends will believe no ill of me. My enemies can say what they like. It will not trouble me."

"Your friends will not be able to believe you. This"—he drew out a note—"this will testify to the truth of what I say, that you came here to meet me by appointment, an appointment made by yourself. Ah! you may well turn pale. Did you think to outwit *me?* Look"—he thrust the letter in her face—"your writing, your words, your signature. 'Come, come this evening, ten o'clock in the Rue Burgoyne.—*Belinda*' Yes," as she gave a quick and startled cry, "yes, it is true. You sent me the note and I, I am here."

He stepped towards her, and took her arms roughly.

With a cry she broke from him, and flung herself against the door. It would not yield despite her strength; the panels did not give an inch. Eastacres waited till the fury of her onslaught had abated. Then he drew near her.

"Sit down," he said, "and let us talk the matter out. It will not help you to make all this noise, no one can hear; be reasonable and listen to what I have to say."

"I will not marry you," she said, "and if I promised to-night, I should break my word to-morrow."

"You will promise for to-night, for to-morrow and for always," he said persistently. "If not, at the first sign that you intend to go back upon your word, I send this note and the account of the circumstances that preceded it, to your father, to David Carr, and to the principal papers in London and Paris. Do you think your David will believe in you then?" he sneered.

"He will always believe in me," she answered, "nothing could shake his trust in me." At the thought of the young engineer her eyes grew soft, the beautiful mouth trembled. I was sorry for her at that moment, truly sorry. But I was none the less determined that she should not marry Carr.

"Men are not credulous as you suppose," Eastacres answered. "Consider the facts. You leave the racecourse without a word to your friends, without a hint to anyone, and drive here in a hired cab. You do this on the very day that Honoria wrote to say she was calling on you at the Hotel D'Arteuil as soon as she left Mrs. Murchison-Lee's. You had that letter?" "I thought so," and he smiled malevolently.

Digitized by Google

"I forgot it," Belinda answered, "as I forgot everything when I had Honoria's message begging and praying me to come here."

"Where is that message?" said Eastacres grimly.

"It was brought me by a boy. He said he was employed here to——" she paused, frightened at the look on Eastacres' face.

"There is no boy employed here," he said curtly. "Honoria and Mark have but one servant, an old woman."

"Then, then"—she paused—"it is all a trick," she panted, "a vile, horrible trick. What shall I do?" She glanced round wildly. "David, David," she cried, "what shall I do?"

"Face facts, my dear Belinda," said the Duke, "and acknowledge yourself beaten. To-night I ask you to be my wife. After to-night"—he paused significantly—"you, not I, shall be the one to plead. Refuse me, and I will make your life unbearable. Everywhere I will follow you, everywhere you shall find averted faces. Your friends shall one and all turn from you. This David that you talk of, you shall lose even him."

"Never," she said proudly; "come what may, David will stand by me."

"To his undoing," was the reply; "what chance would he have of rising in the world with a wife like you? A woman of whom scandal told a thousand tales. You yourself would refuse to marry him."

He spoke quickly, coldly, without a touch of heat or passion, but his words carried a terrible conviction. Belinda had been long enough in Society to understand that much of what he threatened could be done. The Duke was strong-willed, persistent, untiring. He would work out his purpose to the end, no matter at what cost. For the first time terror, real and tangible, showed in the girl's face. She was very young, very lovely, and life had been pleasant to her. She could not face the thought of coldness, suspicion, such as Eastacres pictured, unmoved. Something of the world's cruelty—our world's—she had seen meted out to Sheila Forbes on her re-entry into Society. But Belinda was threatened with something far worse to bear. No wonder she faltered, no wonder that even her high spirit quailed. David, her rock of strength, her shelter from all harm, even he would turn from her, or rather she must, dare not appeal to him.

With natural quickness, the Duke realised what was passing in her mind. With a sudden change of manner he drew close to her, and in a voice exquisitely modulated besought her to yield.

"Be my wife," he pleaded. "Don't harden your heart against me. I love you with all the strength, the passion of a man who has known and tasted life and love. Dear one," he clasped her hands, "don't refuse me. You shall not regret your choice. I vow it, I swear it. I lay my heart at your feet. I put my life into your hands. Dearest"—he kissed her fingers eagerly, "dearest, will you not listen to me."

With a gesture of contempt she tore her hand from his grasp, and with all the insolence of youth and inexperience laughed—*laughed* in his face.

"Love," she said scornfully, "coming from your lips! The word is defiled. You don't know the meaning of it. *Love!*"—she threw back her head—"Oh, how I scorn and how I hate you," she said fiercely. "Do what you will, slander me if you can, spread your lies broadcast, still I defy you—still I reject you, and will, unto the last."

Her words, her look, swept from him all gentleness, all tenderness towards her. His face hardened, his eyes glittered, cold, cutting as ice. He paled to a deathly whiteness, and with a swift and sudden gesture he advanced towards her.

"Now," he said, "for the last time, will you be my wife?"

"Never," she answered, "never. You shall kill me first."

A strange look came into the Duke's face, the look that gleams from a man's eyes when for a moment the fierce primitive instinct, the desire to kill, beats down the thousand civilising influences that war against it. I held my breath, wondering what would happen next. Would he kill her? Would he, in his fury, crush out that fair young life rather than let her marry David Carr?

[*This question will be answered in next Tuesday's issue.*]

Your Editor Chats.

I DON'T pretend—no editor does—to be able to please everybody, but I am certainly surprised that H. M. L. should have felt justified in writing me a very long letter, proving to his own satisfaction that *Short Stories* is not worth the penny asked for it. He starts with the cover and points out that the coloured pictures on it are not nearly so attractive as the old plain buff cover in which it used to be wrapped. Next, he takes the serial story, which he regards as "devoid of human interest," and regards Brett as "a conceited idiot." The "Belinda" series next comes under his knife, and these articles he politely terms "balderdash," adding that, from his knowledge of the world, such things as are related never take place in High Society. There is much more of this sort of thing, ending up with the remark that the least interesting portion of the whole paper is that "egotistical column of self-glorification known as 'Your Editor Chats.'"

Of course I don't take this sort of letter seriously, but I give you extracts to show you how really funny some people unconsciously are. The best test of the popularity of any publication is the circulation book, and the fact that the circulation of *Short Stories* has during the past year almost doubled itself, is sufficient refutation of the ridiculous criticisms my correspondent makes.

Moreover, I have received hundreds—several hundreds—of letters from readers within the past few week testifying to the excellence of both "Belinda" and the serial story. All these letters have been spontaneous expressions of their writers' feelings and go to show that H. M. L. is alone in thoughts. His knowledge of life in High Society is certainly not wide, or he would have known that every line of "Belinda" was absolutely true. Those things which seem most incredible are the most interesting. If they were not, I shouldn't trouble to publish the series.

Another powerful new serial will start in a few weeks from the pen of one of your favourite authors.

Scotch readers will be pleased to hear that another Tartan cover will be issued with *Short Stories* dated February 14th. The Tartan will be that of the Clergy.

Your Editor.

Result of the "Burglar" Competition.

THE Gramophone prizes have been awarded to:

P. Hart, "The Hollies," Vicarage Road, Waddon.
S. A. G. Macquoid, 32 South Street, Greenock.
W. B. Good, 22 Cambridge Road, King's Heath, Birmingham.
Mrs. M. Matthews, 12 Jacob Street, Toxteth Park, Liverpool.
E. Moore, 285 Borough Road, Birkenhead.
E. Barker, 129 Queen's Parade, Scarborough.
Mrs. E. M. French, 194 Birkbeck Road, Beckenham.
D. Ryan, 11 Upper Elmwood Avenue, Ranelagh, Dublin.
L. Judd, St. Monica, Whitton Road, Twickenham.
S. Bryant, 18 Llantwit Street, Cathays, Cardiff.

Digitized by Google

Love Problem No. 5.

WAS HE . . JUSTIFIED?

How Should a Man Act when in Love with an Engaged Girl?

THERE must have been something more than coincidence in it. Every morning as the 'bus swung round the corner of Majoram Street, it had to wait a minute or two owing to the street being so crowded.

The first time Jack Sutcliffe noticed it from his seat beside the driver was one morning in September. When the 'bus jolted clumsily to a standstill he glanced up from his paper and found himself gazing straight at the most comfortable little breakfast party he had seen for some time.

There were only three people—father, mother and daughter. At the first two he glanced carelessly, but as soon as his eye rested upon the girl, his heart was gone in a moment. Such a bit of a girl as she was, with the most ridiculous untidy curls you ever saw, and a little nose you could have ruled lines with, it was so straight. And then her mouth, why, you couldn't have measured it to save your life, for first it dimpled into a smile at one end and then drooped at the other, and the next moment opened into the merriest little laugh you ever heard. Not that Jack Sutcliffe could hear it, although he soon began to wish he could.

Next morning the 'bus stopped again at exactly the same corner. He glanced eagerly towards the window and saw the same three persons seated as before at the breakfast table. But this time he looked beyond the elderly people and bestowed his attention entirely upon the girl, finding her more bewitching than before; and when the 'bus presently rumbled forward again he turned in his seat so as to feast his eyes and his heart until the last possible moment.

He began to look forward to the morning ride, and when on one occasion the 'bus actually swung its way round the corner and down Majoram Street without stopping he was quite indignant with the driver; scarcely spoke to him until they reached his destination, and was irritable at business all the morning.

Of course this sort of indefinite adoration could not go on for ever, and as Jack was a practical man, he began to cast about for means to obtain an introduction. Here again Fate befriended him, or so he thought. The same lucky chance that had caused him to glance at the window just as the 'bus stopped, now led him to accept an invitation from a friend to a literary evening, when one of the first persons he saw was the very girl he had tried for several weeks to meet!

"How much is the subscription to this affair?" he whispered excitedly.

"For the session?"

"Yes. I want to join. Am I eligible?"

"Oh, yes. Five shillings."

"Right. I say, that's—that's not a bad-looking girl over there, the one with a pale blue top-dress, and a black skirt."

"Oh, Miss Mellor?" His friend laughed slightly. "Curious you should have noticed that identical girl. Do you know, I'm engaged to her, or practically so. Not settled in so many words, but it's quite understood on both sides."

"Oh—yes—yes, of course."

The next moment he found himself standing opposite to the corkscrew curls and the dimpled mouth, and all the other perfections. Then his friend said something—he knew not what—and she smiled in such a maddening way that poor Jack found himself wondering what would happen if he suddenly seized her in his arms and kissed her. But the next moment he realised that his friend was staring at him in surprise and he bowed confusedly.

"Very pleased indeed," he murmured; "the 'bus stops every morning, you know."

After this, seeing their looks of amazement, he pulled himself together and managed to talk sensibly. But all through the evening he paid very little attention to the literary proceedings. Several times when she happened to turn her head she found his eyes fixed upon her, with an earnestness which indeed was one of Jack's best characteristics.

Such an evident case of love at first sight both flattered and alarmed her. It set her thinking too, and girls of twenty think quickly, almost as quickly as boys of twenty. We may as well admit at once that she was not by any means engaged to Jack's friend, although he undoubtedly was first favourite.

Of course Jack had no idea she had so quickly guessed the state of his feelings, and indeed would have been very sorry had he known it; for he was an honourable fellow and had no idea of endeavouring to supplant his friend.

But one thing he could not help noticing afterwards, and it hurt him quite as much as having his hopes dashed at the moment when success was in sight. His friend, although by his own statement, engaged to be married, or practically so, still continued to spend his spare evenings in what he vaguely termed "knocking about town."

Now Jack never accompanied him on these expeditions, for he had very soon severed his connection with the worshippers of Bacchus, but he lodged in the same house as his friend and could not help noticing that frequently when the latter returned home his footsteps were decidedly unsteady. On more than one occasion he was brought home in a cab and Jack was called downstairs to help him to his room.

So long as Fred Winston was single and with nobody's happiness dependent upon him, Jack held, and rightly, that this conduct was entirely a matter for his own consideration. But his engagement to Miss Mellor—which was presently announced—made the case much more serious, especially as he appeared to make no effort to keep straight. In fact, he was, if anything, worse than before, for the restraint necessary when he visited the house in Majoram Street made him abandon all self-control as soon as he was free.

A very awkward question rose in Jack's mind. None of the Mellors had any idea of the double life led by Winston. Probably the knowledge of this would end the engagement at once. Jack had an uneasy feeling that it was his duty to tell them, although the mere thought of becoming a tale-bearer, and with interested motives, as people would say, was most repugnant to him; and probably Miss Mellor would never speak to him again whilst loving Winston all the more.

Besides, Winston might reform either before or when he married. On the other hand if he did not do so, his wife's life would be a tragedy. But there were thousands of women with drunken husbands—that did not affect the present case. But it was not his business to interfere—it is every man's business to save his friends when they are in danger. But what right had he to judge Winston? he was not going to judge him, but to bring the truth to light and leave it to those whom it concerned to decide.

And so on for half an hour until at last all the doubts and difficulties had been swept away and he stood face to face with his duty.

Digitized by Google

That night when Winston arrived home he tackled him fair and square.

"I've something rather unpleasant to say to you, old man," he said; "but it's got to be done."

"Well?"

"It's this," said Jack steadily; "you're going to be married. Miss Mellor is a girl who's been very tenderly brought up, and if you come home to her in this state——"

"Well, what if I do?"

"You'll break her heart, that's all," said Jack earnestly. "Don't you see, old chap, it's no use thinking you'll change after you're married. If you don't stop now, you never will stop while you live."

"Will you mind your own business?"

"I'm sorry, but——"

"Never mind being sorry, keep yourself out of my business, that's all."

"I had rather the duty had fallen to anybody else, Fred, but I shall have to tell them next time."

"You may tell them now if you like, you sneak, I can easily explain your motives to them afterwards."

"If it means losing Miss Mellor's good opinion," said Jack quietly, though his heart sank at the thought; "and that's the most serious part of the affair to me, I'll still do what I say."

But the other man stumbled out of the room, uttering all sorts of threats against his former friend.

TWO WEEKS LATER.

MISS MELLOR sat beside the drawing-room fire with an open letter in her hand. Her eyes were red and swollen and the little curls were rumpled and tossed about more untidily than ever. Since receiving Jack's Sutcliffe letter—the writing of which had troubled him, poor fellow, quite as much as the reading troubled her—she had made careful inquiries about the life led by Fred Winston.

For she was a very earnest little champion of those whom she loved, and she was fully resolved to prove Jack's statements false and then crush him for once and all. She had asked him to call to-day—he was due now—but alas, the statements he had made were only too true!

"Not that I shall be any nicer to him on that account," she said to herself, shaking her dainty little head till the curls almost rattled; "I shall be just as nasty as I possibly can, because I quite understand why he wished to get rid——"

The door opened and Jack Sutcliffe walked in. His face was very pale, for he knew the reception he might expect from this imperious, warm-hearted little partisan. The interview was certainly short, and that was all the better.

"I asked you to call, Mr. Sutcliffe," she said, speaking unsteadily at first; "because I wished to tell you personally that your statements about—about Mr. Winston—were quite untrue and—and awfully mean."

"I wish they were untrue," said Jack miserably.

"But they are all true," she continued, her lip quivering; "and our engagement has been ended. Probably that was your desire," she added, with a sudden rush of bitterness, and then looked up to see if her words had hurt him.

He said nothing, for what could he say? It was not the moment in which to justify himself; but, of course, she misunderstood his silence and flung a last taunt as he rose to go.

"I want you to know," she said, "that I understand your reasons for trying to break off my engagement with Mr. Winston; but if you had been really fond of me," she added, with an effort; "you would not have tried to break my heart and—and ruin my happiness."

And with that she fled from the room, for the tears were struggling to the surface.

Jack found his way to the front door alone.

TWO YEARS LATER.

DEAR MR. SUTCLIFFE.—*I hear you are giving a paper at our literary society on "Elizabethan London." Father has an old book on this very subject if you care to borrow it. I shall be at home to-morrow evening if you will call, and shall be very glad to see you, as I have something else to explain, yours faithfully,*

EILEEN MELLOR.

Jack read this letter just before his breakfast one morning nearly two years after the events just related. He read it through carefully about half a dozen times—he is a poor man who never passes through this stage of life—and then propped it against the coffee pot and stared at it all the time he was eating his breakfast.

Surely it was the most wonderful letter that had ever been written! Such a beautiful undercurrent of friendliness ran through all the words, as though Cupid had pinned them together with one of his famous arrows! Such a thoughtful consideration for his success in giving the paper before the society! And then the delicate hint at the end, why, she meant to take back her unjust suspicions of course. As though it were necessary! And yet—it would be pleasant to hear her withdraw those cruel words—oh, if only he were free to say what he really thought of her, but he was not free—and besides, her friendliness would certainly not extend so far——

He had a firm conviction that their interview, two years ago, formed an insuperable barrier to prevent him from ever speaking to her on a subject dearer than ever since prohibited. He could never propose to her, no matter how free she might be, for the first words he spoke would rouse her suspicions of his motives. Though she withdrew her words twenty times over, it could not set him free to say what he wished. There was only one element of satisfaction in the whole business—that Fred had been persuaded to go to an uncle in Canada where he was doing famously and—as he admitted in a letter to Jack—was already engaged again.

Jack went round to the house in Majoram Street the following evening, and was shown into the same room as before. Next moment the door was opened again and she entered. Jack spoke first to remove the confusion that was painfully evident in her face.

"I am much obliged to you for the offer of the book."

"Yes," she answered quickly, "and I want to—to say how sorry I am for the unjust words I used when we last met. It was a very hard duty for you and——"

"Don't say another word," said Jack quietly, "this acknowledgment of my motives pays for all."

"Your motives were as true as they could be. I'm quite sure now that you only spoke because—because——"

"I can never explain the reason now," said Jack sadly.

"You had a reason?" she murmured, and came and stood closer to him and presently sat beside him on the sofa. "You had a reason?"

"I had indeed."

"And I suppose it really was a—a good reason?" she continued, stooping to pick a stray thread of white cotton from the floor.

"The best reason I ever had for anything in my life," said Jack passionately.

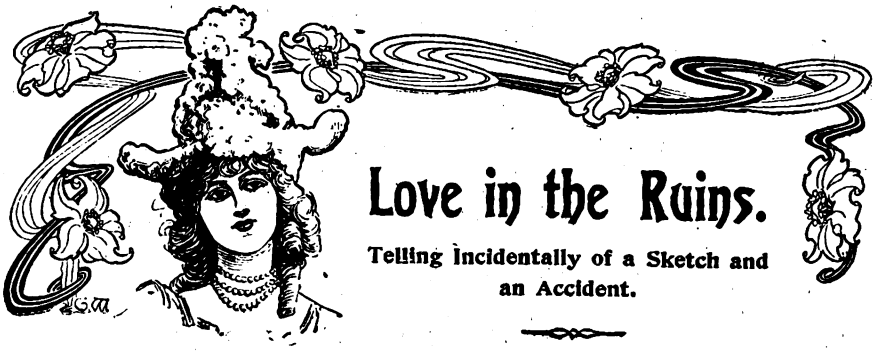
"It must have been very—very interesting," she whispered, almost inaudibly. "Won't you tell me—what it was?"

* * * * *

"Dear me!" said Jack three hours later as he walked briskly down Majoram Street, "I've forgotten all about that book. I must call round to-morrow!

Wal Frank.

Digitized by Google



Love in the Ruins.

Telling Incidentally of a Sketch and an Accident.

ISABEL DE LACY sat in solitary state in the beautiful old drawing-room of the Priory, furnished in mediæval style with its old Bayeux tapestries on the walls and the old carved oak furniture, black with the passing of centuries. Reclining on a low chair, she leant her head against a softly-tinted Liberty cushion, which showed off to advantage the mass of soft, silky, golden hair which wreathed her brows like a queenly diadem. A dainty work-basket was at her side, a book lay half open on her dress, but she neither sewed nor read just now, and seemed lost in thought.

She mused on the strange destiny which had left her, a mere girl, sole mistress of this beautiful old Norman Priory, one of the show places of England.

Hugo de Lacy, one of the Norman barons who had accompanied William the Conqueror over to England, had been given these broad lands in recognition of his deeds of valour in the king's service. He had built himself a castellated keep as was then so prevalent among the Norman noblemen, and had returned to France to wed the lovely Jeanne de Crétigny, who had plighted her troth to him ere he sailed with the Duke of Normandy to conquer England.

Alas! the fair Jeanne had grown weary of waiting for her lover, who tarried so on England's shores, and Hugo de Lacy returned only to find she had just been wed to Estienne, Sire de Morneville. The young baron challenged his more fortunate rival, killed him in single combat. He alighted from his charger, tore the mailed gauntlet from the dead man's hand, steeped it in his blood, and then made his way to the Chateau de Morneville. Boldly entering the presence of the lady of the castle, he walked straight up to her and struck her brutally in the face with the crimson-dyed gauntlet.

"Here, false jade! Your black-hearted treachery has caused the death of your husband, and the lover whom you foully betrayed has steeped his hands in blood; accursed of men, denounced by God as a murderer, he goes from you henceforth to expiate in the cloister the crime you have goaded him into committing."

Jeanne flung herself at his feet and implored of him to forget her baseness and marry her, since he had removed the only obstacle to their union.

Hugo's soul turned sick at the vileness of this woman whom once he had loved, he plunged his rapier in her heart, spurned her dead body from him, and fled to England, where the brilliant knight and warrior was seen no more, except under the monk's cowl.

He built and endowed the Priory de Lacy in the grounds adjoining the castle he had erected, when he hoped to bring back from France his beautiful bride. Several holy men gathered round him, and for several centuries the monks of St. Hugo were far famed all over England for their great piety and saintliness. The barony of de Lacy had gone to a younger brother of the luckless suitor, and some generations further the then baron de Lacy obtained from King Edward III. that the broad lands of De Lacy should once more revert to their original owners, and the friars were expelled from the Priory, while Percival de Lacy took up his abode in the old castellated keep built by Hugo.

The Priory had never again been used as a monastery, and had gradually fallen into decay; it was now a most picturesque ivy-covered ruin, standing in the grounds.

Poets delighted to describe it, painters to reproduce it on canvas. The place still bore the name of the Priory, but the family really resided in the restored and a good deal modernised original old keep. The last owner, Gerard de Lacy, had died very shortly after his wife, who had gone off in a decline, and their infant daughter Isabel had been left as sole heiress of this beautiful place.

She had been brought up by an uncle, and had resided little at the Priory, but a couple of months ago she had come of age, and had at once asserted her independence by shaking off the shackles of her uncle's guardianship, and, in spite of all remonstrances, had insisted on coming to take up her abode at the Priory, unchaperoned by any one, her sole companion besides the staff of servants being a school friend, Fanny Mainreed, an orphan like herself, but not so favoured by fortune, as she had next to no money, and was going out to be a governess when her former school chum, the great heiress Miss de Lacy, hearing of the straits she was driven to, had engaged her nominally as her companion.

Miss Mainreed, however, had soon found that her duties were a mere sinecure, and that she was really treated as a friend and sister. Isabel was in a pensive mood just then, her sprightly companion having gone to do some shopping in the village. Isabel scanned the long future lying before her in no very bright or hopeful way.

She had unfortunately formed the unreasonable notion that no man would love her for herself, but that if she ever married she would only fall a victim to a fortune-hunter; and she had firmly made up her mind never to wed. Only such a resolution to a girl of one-and-twenty is not very conducive to cheerfulness, and Isabel wondered what she would do all alone in the long years to come. Fanny, her chosen friend whom she dearly loved, would marry; she, lucky girl, was dowerless; and when men would seek her hand she would know it was for herself and not for her broad acres or her gold.

Her meditations were suddenly broken in upon by the entrance of Miss Mainreed, who came dancing into the room holding a tiny slip of cardboard in her hand.

"Oh, Bell, just look, here is something exciting to break the monotony of our dull lives!"

"Well, Fanny, what is it? I think it must be the near neighbourhood of the cloisters which depresses you!"

"Really, Bell, to tell you the truth, I cannot think why you do not fill this beautiful old place with a jolly house-party, and then we could have dances, tennis, ping-pong, badminton; it would be simply ripping. But just now, with only us two girls, it is a bit tame."

"What would Mrs. Grundy say to the two of us girls, as you say, entertaining a lot of people."

"Oh come, Bell, you know you do not care a rap for that respectable old viper-tongued matron, or else you would not have elected to live here just with me, and no staid old chaperon in a beribboned cap and spectacles to act propriety! So you need not pretend to be afraid of Mrs. Grundy."

"Well, no; as a matter of fact, I do not care a straw about her. But it is such a bore having to entertain people whom one feels no interest in; women who will envy me my dresses or my servants, men who will make love to me just because, as the French say, 'The pill is well gilt!'"

"Come now, Bell, none of that nonsense to me; as if any man would not love you for your beauty without ever thinking

Digitized by Google

of that dross we call gold! But look here, I am keeping the poor fellow on tenter-hooks all this time."

"What poor fellow?" and Isabel looked up bewildered.

"A knight errant, my dear, who, having heard of the fame of your beauty, lies at your gates languishing for one pitying look from you!"

"Fanny, don't be a goose," Isabel remonstrated severely. "Do be sensible; what is that man you are alluding to?"

Fanny drew up her pretty rose-bud of a mouth into a bewitching pout.

"Oh, well, if I am to be snubbed every time I open my mouth, I shan't speak again, *never no more*, so there!"

Isabel reached out her hand, and twitched the card out of Fanny's fingers; she had been nervously twisting it into the shape of a curl paper. Isabel carefully smoothed out the creases, and flattened it on her knee, then she read what was on it—Harold Varly.

"Fanny," she said, pretending to be severe with her irrepressible young friend, "may I ask who is Mr. Harold Varly?"

"Oh, certainly you may ask!"

"Well, and *will* you answer?"

"Awfully sorry I cannot comply with your wishes, but the fact is I have not the very least idea of who or what Mr. Harold Varly is."

"Fan, you are a provoking minx!"

"Yes, that's very much the same sort of thing only differently worded which the curate told me this afternoon."

"Fan, Fan, I do believe you are flirting with that unfortunate young man."

"Well, I have nothing else to do, and you know 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.'"

"Seriously, Fanny, if you have no conception of who is Mr. Harold Varly, why on earth were you in possession of his visiting card?"

"Well, Bell, this time I shall be quite candid with you. Old Johnson met me in the hall, and handed me this card, saying a gentleman was at the lodge gates asking for permission to paint the ruins of the Priory."

"Oh!" said Isabel, "I wish my home were not a show place, not really belonging to me, but a sort of public property. Besides, the official day for visitors to see the Priory is Saturday and this is Monday. I think one day a week is quite enough to throw open my grounds to a herd of visitors."

"Well, then your answer is that Mr. Harold Varly may whistle for permission to paint the ruins. Poor fellow! I am sorry for him; perhaps his daub might have brought him in a few pounds, and the poor beggar may be terribly out at elbows. Bell, do let us see him at least before you give your final answer."

"Oh, as you like, if it pleases you." She rang the bell as she spoke.

"Tell the gentleman who has just sent in his card that Miss de Lacy will receive him."

The old butler bowed acquiescence to his mistress's orders, and promptly retired to do her bidding.

In a few minutes he returned, and throwing open the drawing-room door, admitted a tall, gentlemanly young fellow, who seemed not one whit abashed at the sumptuousness of the drawing-room to which he was admitted. He bowed, and advanced towards the two ladies.

"Miss de Lacy?" and he looked inquiringly at both.

"I am Miss de Lacy," Isabel said, acknowledging his bow by an almost imperceptible bending of the head, while Fanny smiled quite graciously at him.

"I have come to beg a favour at your hands, Miss de Lacy."

"Yes," was the chilling, unencouraging response; but he proceeded—

"The fame of your beautiful Priory ruins has spread all over England; my speciality in the painting line lies in reproducing old abbeys and castles, and I have travelled specially from London here to paint De Lacy Priory."

"Any guide-book would have told you that the day for visitors is Saturday."

"Yes, but I do not wish to go there on the visitors' day. I must, for at least a whole week, go to the Priory day after day if I wish to make a good picture of it."

"And you wish me for a whole week to forego the privacy and seclusion of my grounds?"

Mr. Varly looked surprised at the ungraciousness of the tones. Very good looking and highly cultured, he was mostly a favourite with ladies, and was not accustomed to be received with such scant courtesy at their hands.

"I do not think I would interfere very much with your privacy," and he added with a smile; "You must pay the penalty of being the owner of such a beautiful, historical place!"

"There is no *must* in the case." Isabel looked at him haughtily. What presumption of him to come and tell her she *must* do so and so.

"Oh, come, Bell, dearest; don't be so obdurate. I am sure Mr. Varly won't be in our way at all; will you now?"

The young artist smiled at this fair advocate who so unexpectedly backed up his request.

"Well, I shall try not."

"And, in fact, it will be rather fun to go down every day and see the picture. Oh, perhaps you won't want us to do that though, will you?"

"Only too pleased, I am sure," he quickly responded.

"And you will let us have a little pencil sketch of the Priory, will you?"

"Yes, certainly; but you seem to forget Miss de Lacy has not yet granted me permission to paint on her premises."

"Oh, Bell, Bell! it is Mr. Varly," cried Fanny. "He must have been killed by that old wall falling on him."

Digitized by Google

Isabel smiled faintly.

"No; but my friend Miss Mainreed has done so."

"Has Miss Mainreed authority to grant this permission?"

"Miss Mainreed does very much as she pleases. Don't you, Fanny, dear?"

"Oh, that's because you are such a darling. You do not know, Mr. Varly, how good Miss de Lacy is; why in the village they simply worship her."

"Fanny," Isabel interrupted severely, horrified at her friend's outspoken praise of her to an utter stranger.

"I can quite believe it," Mr. Varly assented politely; but Isabel thought she detected a slight veiled sarcasm in his tone, and she felt intensely and unreasonably angry at the artist's presumption.

She rose saying:

"It is needless to prolong the interview, Mr. Varly; to please my friend, Miss Mainreed, I grant you permission to come every day to the Priory as long as you will find it necessary to do so to complete your picture. But I lay no conditions, and you will please not feel obliged to execute a sketch of the Priory in payment for this."

"Most certainly, madam, I shall not force any daub of mine on *your* acceptance," he laid stress on the pronoun; "but Miss Mainreed will perhaps honour me by accepting a rough outline of the old ruin, as a small token of my gratitude for her successful pleading in my favour."

"Thanks, awfully. I shall be delighted," Fanny frankly responded.

Mr. Varly bowed to Isabel.

"I am deeply obliged to you, madam, for the gracious permission you have been pleased to grant me," and again Isabel detected that same ring of sarcasm in his voice.

He turned to Fanny, hesitated; then both spontaneously held out a hand, and his leave-taking of her was most cordial.

"Good-bye, Miss Mainreed, I can't tell you how grateful I am to you."

When he left the room Fanny turned to her friend.

"Bell."

"Yes, dear."

"You are horrid!"

"Am I? I had no idea I could ever be that to you!"

"No, not to me, silly; you know you never are that to me, but to that poor young man."

"Well, child, were you not gracious enough to him for the two of us?"

"Oh, come. I suppose you will say I flirted with him, you always say that. But you know I can't help it, it is part of my nature to be amiable to all gentlemen when they are at all nice, like this Mr. Varly. Whereas you put your worst foot forward. I am sure he has gone away with the worst possible opinion of you."

"A matter of the most supreme indifference to me."

"Yes; but I cannot bear to think that any one can have a bad opinion of you, my own dear Bell."

"Well, my dear, you see I am a man hater, and in the presence of the objectionable sex I never do shine to my advantage."

"But a man hater is such an anomaly for a woman; there are heaps and heaps of women haters, like Lord Kitchener——"

"Oh," interrupted Miss de Lacy. "I see your theory is that men have a right to spurn us; but we must grovel at their feet and be ready to accept the first man who proposes to possess himself of our money-bags!"

"Tush, there you have mounted on your hobby again! Why I have no money-bags, not the very tiniest of wee ones, and yet I mean to marry!"

"There goes the tea bell, far more welcome than all these discussions on the merits of man!"

* * * * * * *

Four or five days passed, Isabel in her walks about the grounds avoided the Priory ruins, and therefore saw nothing of the stranger. Fanny went down twice or thrice to see the progress of the picture, chatting pleasantly with Mr. Varly each time. She spoke most enthusiastically of his talent as a painter, of his agreeable conversation, &c., and her friend laughingly answered by an allusion to the inflammatory nature of her little heart.

"You are quite shameless, Fan, you are actually carrying on two flirtations at the same time. I am quite sure the Rev. Mark Linten does not pay us the frequent calls he does for the sake of my society!"

Fanny flushed hotly.

"Well, I happen to meet Mr. Linten when I am visiting among the cottagers, or when I take a walk through the village, and he will insist on walking back with me. I cannot do less than ask him in to have a cup of tea with us."

"How strange that I never meet Mr. Linten when I go out. I wonder how much premeditation has to do with these chance meetings!"

"Oh, Bell, shut up, do, there's a dear; look, it is a lovely moonlight night," and she moved to the open window and looked out on the lawn over which was shed a halo of light almost as strong as the sun's rays. "Let us go out, do, we might saunter down to the ruins; you know at this hour you are quite safe from meeting the unfortunate knight of the mahl-stick to whom you so grudgingly gave permission to paint the dear old Priory."

"If you wish to speak the exact truth, you might just say it was you who gave the permission."

The two girls passed out arm in arm through the window, and a pretty picture they made in their white dinner dresses, just slightly open at the neck, with sleeves reaching only down to the elbow. They wandered past the shrubberies and beautiful sloping lawns, across the little wood till they reached the magnificent old ivy-covered ruins, which never looked so picturesque as when thus lit up by the silver beams of the moon.

Neither of the girls were superstitious, and they loved to roam about the deserted cloisters at night, quite regardless of the village legends which asserted that Hugo de Lacy's spirit could not rest in his grave, and that moans and groans proceeded from the Lady Chapel, where he was supposed to have expiated his crimes with prayers and fastings. They seated themselves on the well-worn steps of what had been the high altar, and awed by the solemnity of the hour and place, neither of them carried on their usual chaff and fun. Suddenly Fanny clutched her friend's arm.

"Oh, Bell! What was that?"

"Fan, child, don't be silly. I heard nothing."

"But I did hear; it was not fancy, it was just like a moan."

"Oh, come, what nonsense; just an owl hooting over the towers of the Priory."

"Hush! Listen! Oh, Bell, you must have heard this time."

There could be no mistake; both girls distinctly heard a deep-drawn moan, as of some one in great pain. The blood of the hardy Norman barons coursed through Isabel's veins; she did not faint or go into hysterics, but calmly said—

"Come, the sound issues from the Lady Chapel, just at the back of the cloisters, we must go and investigate what it can be."

Fanny was not so plucky as her strong-minded friend, but she was too unnerved to stop behind while Isabel went on to see what was the cause of these uncanny noises which caused them this feeling of uneasiness. Passing rapidly through the cloisters they stepped into the Lady Chapel, and the first thing they saw was the figure of a man lying prone on the ground, surrounded by a heap of stones, which seemed to have detached themselves from the wall and fallen on the unfortunate man.

Digitized by Google

"Oh, Bell, Bell! it is Mr. Varly! He must have been killed by that old wall falling on him!" piteously exclaimed Fanny.

Isabel, always prompt in all her actions, was very soon kneeling by the unconscious figure.

"He is not dead, Fanny, or else how could his groans have attracted us here, but he is badly injured; our coming here to-night was providential; had he passed the night here he would have been dead before morning."

Fanny felt numbed and quite helpless; Isabel was calm and self-possessed, passing her arm under the injured artist's head, she gently raised it; a gaping wound from which the blood flowed copiously had been inflicted by a sharp stone just at the back of the head; she bound it up as best she could with her handkerchief and strips of her skirt, which she tore ruthlessly.

"Run, Fanny, as quick as ever you can to the house, and tell Johnson to come with the two footmen and a mattress so that Mr. Varly may be borne to the house with as few jars as possible, and send the gardener for Dr. Elliott."

"But, Bell, where is he to be taken to?"

"To the house, of course. When a human being is in trouble or suffering, he loses all personality, and is only a brother who needs our help and sympathy. Mr. Varly has been injured severely on my premises, through my fault, so to speak, from my negligence in not having the dangers of these crumbling walls seen to; and we are bound to nurse him and see that he pulls through."

Very gently the men bore the sufferer from the ruins to the house, and with the help of the old housekeeper, Mrs. Bently, who had been Isabel's nurse, they settled him comfortably in the big four-post bed of the best spare room.

When Dr. Elliott arrived he looked very grave, said it was a serious case, that most probably brain fever would set in after such a bad cut in the head. It was most unfortunate, he said, that the patient had lain for several hours before he was discovered.

The two girls shuddered to think what the consequences would have been, had they not mercifully had that strange fancy for a moonlight ramble.

The doctor's surmise proved only too true; the next morning the artist was in a state of high fever and raved incessantly, babbling of his mother and his childhood, as most of us do when old age or a severe illness overtakes us.

Isabel, Fanny, and Mrs. Bently watched and nursed him with untiring care and devotion. Isabel did not rest content with the opinion of the village practitioner; she felt herself responsible for the life of this man who had come to grief as she persisted in asserting, through her carelessness in not having the bad state of the ruins seen to, so she telegraphed to London for one of the ablest physicians of the day. His verdict was much the same as Dr. Elliott's. The patient could only pull through with the greatest possible care and forethought, half the battle lay in the nursing.

"Then we shall save him!" and Isabel resolutely set to with a will; the man should not die, she would save him, if human power could do so.

Mrs. Bently did her best too, though she repeatedly protested she did not know what the world would say to these two motherless girls having taken in this stranger with no one in the house but servants to act propriety.

"Come, Nana," Isabel would answer; she always clung to this familiar old name of her childhood, when speaking to her former nurse, "would you have me cast out that poor fellow when he nearly met his death in my grounds, and all on account of my culpable negligence, simply because that old viper, Mrs. Grundy, will pick holes in us? Besides, Nana, you are here to chaperon us."

Fanny suggested their having the curate in to play propriety; but Isabel did not quite see how the presence of two young men in the house, instead of one, would shield their reputation, so Mr. Linten contented himself with calling every day to inquire, and he caught glimpses of Fanny when it was possible.

After weary days and nights of watching, the crisis so much dreaded passed, and Harold Varley was pronounced to be out of danger at last.

"And I am sure our patient owes his life to you, Miss de Lacy—the most devoted of his three nurses," said Dr. Elliott.

With returning consciousness the young artist realised what had happened, and he showed the greatest distress over the trouble and anxiety he had given his nurses.

Directly he was pronounced to be out of danger and when he ceased to be delirious, Isabel's visits to the sick-room became very rare, and finally ceased altogether; she now left him exclusively to the care of Fanny and Mrs. Bently. Mr. Varly said nothing on the subject, but quick-witted Fanny noted the eager, wistful look in his eyes every time the door opened to admit any one, and how wearily he turned his head on the pillow when he found it was not Isabel who entered.

One day when he was alone with Fanny, he turned to her:

"Miss Mainreed, from the very first day I set foot here, you have been my friend; will you promise me one thing?"

"Depends on what that one thing is," responded Fanny warily, but smiling at the same time.

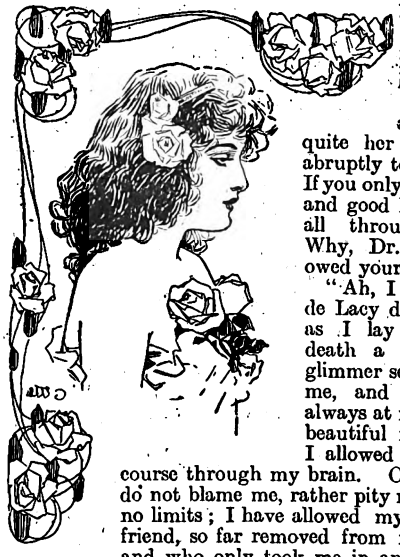
"I am quite strong enough now to be taken back to my lodgings in the village. Will you have me transferred there this afternoon?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Varly; after all the trouble we have had over your case it is most ungrateful of you to wish maliciously to have a relapse. You are absolutely unfit to be moved yet. Besides, Isabel would not hear of such a mad freak."

"It is just because I do not wish to t[illegible] further on

The kiss had hardly been given when the door softly opened and Fanny entered.

Digitized by Google



Miss de Lacy's hospitality that I implore you to allow me to leave this house."

"Well, it is not a nice way to requite her hospitality thus abruptly to leave her house. If you only knew how devoted and good Isabel was to you all through your illness! Why, Dr. Elliott said you owed your life to her!"

"Ah, I do know all Miss de Lacy did for me; often as I lay between life and death a sort of conscious glimmer seemed to return to me, and I could see her always at my bedside like a beautiful ministering angel. I allowed mad thoughts to course through my brain. Oh, Miss Mainreed, do not blame me, rather pity me, my folly knows no limits; I have allowed myself to love your friend, so far removed from me in every way, and who only took me in and nursed me out of pity, as she would have done a stray dog. There are times when I wish I had died in the ruins before this fatal love entered my heart. It is hopeless and will but wreck my life!"

Fanny gently took his hand.

"Hush, hush! do not excite yourself, you are hardly strong enough to battle against such strong emotions. Let me whisper a little bit of comfort to you. I do not think Isabel is so indifferent to you as you imagine."

"Oh, Miss Mainreed! surely it could not be—I so unworthy of her in every way; besides, how could I ever bring myself to ask her to be my wife, I, a poor struggling artist, when she is so wealthy. It would be degrading to my manhood to think of such a thing—I never could!"

"Tush! That's stupid pride."

"Well, but it is impossible she can love me; why, she never comes near me now, and I so hunger for the sound of her sweet voice, or one kind look from her eyes."

"Trust me, Mr. Varly, and all will be right; but you are not to talk of leaving this yet, till I give you leave, and perhaps you will not feel inclined to *then!*"

Fanny, on leaving the sick-room, went to seek her friend. Having vainly looked for her all over the house, a sudden thought struck her, and she went in quest of her in the grounds. Reaching the Priory ruins, she paused ere crossing the threshold of the Lady Chapel, as she caught the sound of subdued sobbing.

"Well, I do not suppose it is Hugo de Lacy's ghost crying over his murdered sweetheart!" she mentally ejaculated, as she passed under the archway and down the steps which led to the crypt of our lady's shrine. Isabel was seated on the fragments of the broken wall which had so nearly caused the death of Harold Varly; in her hand she held the beautifully-executed though unfinished sketch of the ruins which had lain forgotten in the Lady Chapel ever since the night of the accident.

"Bell darling!" softly murmured Fanny; and Isabel hastily sprang to her feet. With a guilty look she flung from her the picture at which she had been gazing.

"Really, Fanny, you should not creep up to people like this and startle them!" She had never spoken so harshly to her friend before; but Fanny heeded this not.

"Bell, why are you making yourself so needlessly miserable, why do you no longer come to see Mr. Varly?"

"Fanny, you presume too far on the privilege of friendship. I am not miserable," and she raised her head haughtily, "and if I were I do not quite see how my going to see Mr. Varly would make me happy. You evidently judge from your own feelings, and think *that* is the height of bliss!"

Fanny broke into a merry, rippling laugh.

"Oh, Bell, come, this is rich, you do not surely imagine that I am in love with Mr. Varly?"

"Well, if you are not, you have been trifling in the most unwarrantable, unladylike way with his affections, as he most certainly loves you, and you have given him every encouragement."

"Well, I declare, people do say love is blind, but I never before realised to what an extent! Why, Bell, have you been jealous of *me* all this time, and is it this which has made you so cold to poor Harold Varly, and driven him to the verge of despair? Surely, if you are not as blind as a bat, you would have known long ago that he worships the very ground you tread on!"

"Oh, Fanny, it cannot be, he and you are such friends, I have been thinking every day I should have to wish you joy of having secured the affections of the best and noblest man that ever was."

Fanny turned away her head to hide her blushes.

"Well, so I have, as a matter of fact, but not *the* man whom *you* think endowed with every earthly and heavenly perfection; mercifully, we women vary in our tastes, or else what rows there would be over the chosen few. This morning, as I was walking down the lane, I stopped at the stile and met Mark Linten, and—and—well, I have promised to be his wife. Will that convince you that I am not in love with Harold Varly, nor he with me?"

Isabel threw her arms around her friend.

"Oh, Fanny, please forgive me, I have been so rude, so snappish to you, but, oh, I have felt so utterly wretched in every way. I despised myself for having, as I thought, been so unwomanly as to let myself love a man who had never cast a thought on me!"

"Well, dear, I should be sorry to think of how many thoughts the poor fellow bestows on you, his very being is wrapped up in you."

"But, Fanny, how do you know all this?"

"I am not blind, and, besides, he has just confided his woes to me, and told me that never will he ask you to be his wife, because he is too poor, and you too rich! So there is the answer to all your fine theories about men seeking you for your gold!"

"But how are we ever to marry if he will not propose to me?"

"Why, propose to him yourself, of course!"

"Oh, Fanny, how could I?"

"What a nuisance you both are with your woman's pride, and his manhood's dignity! I am sure Mark and I were not half so fussy with all those high-flown sentiments. When we found out that we loved each other, he told me so quite plainly, and asked me to marry him, and I said 'Yes, thank you!' and then we kissed, and the whole business was settled in about ten minutes!"

Isabel could not help laughing over her friend's description of the curate's courtship of her.

"Well, dearest, and I am so selfishly engrossed in my own affairs that I have never even congratulated you. But I shall bring to bear all my influence upon my uncle, the Bishop, and see if I cannot secure Mr. Linten a good, fat living."

"Oh, you are a perfect duck! Now go to that poor fellow, and turn his black despair into ethereal bliss!"

Isabel repaired to her room, and, having donned her most becoming dress, a softly-tinted blue tea-gown with lovely frills and ruffles of old lace at the neck and wrists, she tapped at the door of the sick-room.

"Come in," was the response, but Harold had long ago given up expecting a visit from Isabel, and he did not look up from the book he was reading. She glided up to the bed and sank gently on the chair at his side.

"I am so glad you are better, Mr. Varly!"

At the sound of her voice, so long waited for in vain, he started, and a hectic spot gathered on either of his pale cheeks.

Digitized by Google

"Miss de Lacy, this is indeed good of you to come to see me."

"I am afraid I have sadly neglected you lately," she whispered softly, "please forgive me."

"*I* forgive you? Why, Miss de Lacy, what have I to forgive? It is I who never can repay all your many kindnesses to me. But I am quite strong again now, and I wish as soon as possible to relieve you of the burden of my presence."

"Is my hospitality to you so irksome, then, that you are so anxious to be gone?"

"No, but—Miss de Lacy, you cannot understand what I feel on the subject."

"Yes, I think I do, in a way, Mr. Varly. I have been down to the ruins and seen your sketch of the dear old Priory. Won't you finish it when you are well enough to take up painting again, and give it to me, please? That is if you will be generous and forgive me my horrible rudeness to you that first day you called."

"Miss de Lacy, is it possible that any daub of mine can meet with your approval?"

"It is the fact of its being done by you which lends it all its charm in my eyes," this she said so low that it needed the quick ears of love to catch the sounds.

He took her hand and tried eagerly to scan her face, but she perversely and womanlike averted her eyes from his.

"Isabel, is it possible, but, nay, I am absolutely unworthy of such untold happiness."

"Well, but try, at any rate, if it lies within your grasp!" She still kept her eyes on him, but did not draw away her hand clasped within his.

"Isabel, my darling, you know I love you, but it is folly to think of wedding me, you, who can choose from among the highest and noblest in the land. Your pity alone dictates these compassionate feelings of yours for me. I shall leave this place, and you will soon forget the penniless young artist who disturbed your thoughts for a short time!"

"Nay, Harold, I am not going to let you wreck both our lives, yours and mine, for I could never forget you, and *never* think of marrying any one but you, so please do not be both proud and selfish."

"Good Heavens, do you call selfishness my condemning myself to perpetual darkness by exiling myself from your presence. Why, it is positive agony to me to think of it, only I want what is best for your happiness."

"Will you kindly allow me to be the best judge of that? I shall begin to think you do not love me."

"Isabel, doubt not that my love for you, deep and true, shines forth as the gold which has been through the refining influence of the cleansing fires. But, what will the world say? That I have married you for your money."

"What need we care for the world or its sayings if we are happy in each other's love!"

"My own true darling," and he drew her down towards him, and pressed a passionate kiss on her lips.

At this very critical juncture, when to them outside their own two selves, the whole world was blank, the door was gently opened and Fanny entered the room.

"Oh, my goodness! I am afraid I am intruding, but I knocked and knocked, so that I imagined Mr. Varly was asleep, and as it was time to give him his port wine I came in. But I suppose you were too much absorbed in each other to hear my taps, besides, I expect our patient is having a far more refreshing tonic than any port wine, however old the brand," and she looked mischievously at Isabel's crimson cheeks.

"Fanny, you are really too bad," remonstrated Miss de Lacy.

"Ah, well, bless you, my children! and she raised her hands with mock solemnity, "you have evidently kissed and made it up, like two naughty children. If any one were to write your love story, it might quite appropriately be called after Burne Jones' picture, 'Love in the Ruins'!"

Lily Butler.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

AND

£1,000 IN CASH CONSOLATION GIFTS.

THE MOST LIBERAL PRIZE EVER OFFERED BY ANY PERIODICAL IN THE WORLD.

The prize of £5 a Week for Life will be paid to the person (perhaps *you*) who correctly solves the set of pictures which appear in "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," under the conditions published in that paper.

Each of the pictures represents the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom, and every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

A further sum of £1,000 in cash will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:

FIRST CONSOLATION CASH GIFT: £100.

2nd	Cash Gift	£50.
3rd	" "	£50.
4th	" "	£25.
5th	" "	£25.
6th	" "	£25.
7th	" "	£25.
8th to 57th	Cash Gifts	£10 each.
58th to 97th	" "	£5 "

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of £5 a Week for Life (*which will be paid under any circumstances*), you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash prizes.

In order to form some idea of the size of the prize of £5 a Week for Life, we would ask you to glance over the following figures. Assuming that you live to the age of 70—which is quite reasonable—you will have received one of the following amounts, according to how old you are when you start receiving the prize:

If you are	60	you will have received	£2,600.
"	50	" "	£5,200.
"	40	" "	£7,800.
"	30	" "	£10,400.
"	20	" "	£13,000.
"	15	" "	£14,300.
"	12	" "	£15,080.

From this table you will be able to calculate exactly the amount of money which will come to you.

The first set of pictures will appear in the issue of *Pearson's Weekly* published on January 23rd. Order a copy to be reserved for you.

Digitized by Google

Alma—a Sketch.

THE BARRIER BROKEN DOWN.

"Please fetch the book, Harry," said Nan with a confident air. "You'll find it, I think, on the library table."

I slid unwillingly from the rail of the verandah, where I had been sitting industriously watching the sunbeams caressing Nan's hair as she sat sewing. Ardently I wished that I might follow their example, but this my little lady would not suffer.

For months I had laid steady siege to her heart only to meet with repeated refusals from her. Had it not been for a certain something in her manner I would have been as utterly discouraged as she seemed to wish me to be.

Without being afflicted with great conceit, I was yet almost sure that she was not unmoved by my pleadings; some emotion, some response they woke in her that she could not always conceal, nor had she ever told me outright that she did not love me. When I put the question to her point blank, she always evaded it in skilful fashion. Once when I pressed her very hard she had hinted at some secret that was keeping us apart, but never again had I been able to lead her into any reference to it. To all my questionings she remained silent; to all my vows to win her in spite of any or everything, she listened, smiling rather wearily and saying that if she gave me time enough I would tire myself out. In the meantime she was glad to be my very good friend; more she would not be.

To-day we had been having a discussion concerning the wording of a quotation, so her challenge put me on my mettle. I assumed an air of confidence equal to hers and entered the house in search of the book, leaving the sunbeams for the time being master of the situation. They made her hair look so pretty that I did not grudge them their short supremacy.

I had heard Nan speak of her father though I had never seen him, so when I saw a white-haired man seated at the library-table I felt sure that it was he. He was writing and did not look up.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but your daughter——"

"Yes, yes, my daughter!" he interrupted eagerly, and I was startled by the melancholy of the dark eyes that he raised expectantly.

"Miss Nan sent me."

The light died out of his face. He pushed back the snow-white hair from his brow with a gesture of great weariness, then drummed idly on the table with his thin fingers.

"Ah! you mean Nan—yes, to be sure," he said dully. Then suddenly with an accent of apology. "But, pardon me, sir, you are looking for something—what can I do for you? Won't you be seated? You see I forget now that Alma is not here to remind me, and I am so engrossed in writing her life. That's odd, isn't it? She is dead, yet here is her life," pointing to the closely-written sheets of paper which were strewn about him. He pulled a budget from a long envelope.

"Here is a fair copy," he said, turning again to me. "Won't you read it—it's only a sketch."

I took the paper mechanically, feeling vaguely uncomfortable, but not knowing what else to do. He leant eagerly towards me.

"Sit down, sir, sit down," he commanded querulously. Fearing the result of opposition upon his apparently overwrought nerves, I again obeyed.

"I want an unbiassed opinion of it," he told me confidentially.

"They all tell me it is good and sometimes I think that it is, yet," mournfully, "I know I am not capable of doing justice to the subject; hers was such a beautiful life."

"I shall be glad to read it, sir, and will let you know what I think of it," I made answer, hoping thus to effect my escape. But I was not to be let off.

"No, no!" he replied quickly, "read it now; read it"—cunningly—"aloud."

Loath as I was to pry into any matter not intended for me I knew that I must humour him. My hands trembled, and I was strangely agitated as I unfolded the pages, for I was possessed of a feeling that almost amounted to certainty that the reason for Nan's refusal of my love was soon to be made clear to me. The reading of these pages seemed like disloyalty to her, and yet? I looked up before I began to read. Nan stood on the threshold of the room. Her eyes were brimming with tears but she nodded encouragingly to me, so my doubts were set at rest. This is what I read:

"Never shall I forget the day that she came to us, my darling, my blessing; how my pulses beat and my head reeled when the nurse laid in my arms this tiny living creature, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. My tears mingled with those on the mother's white cheek when I leant over to lay our treasure once more beside her. In the years that followed other little ones came to us and I loved them, but never, God forgive me, as I loved her. That first wondrous tendril that crept forth from the root of our happiness twined inextricably about the warmest spot in my heart.

"She was so like a beam of sunshine in the house; her first thought even as a little child seemed always to be for others. It is natural for us to idealise those whom we have lost, to fancy them as perfect, but I do not idealise my Alma. She had her faults like any normal child, though when she was taxed with any mischievous wrong-doing she admitted her fault and was ready to take her punishment. There was never any trickery or deception about her, and her fervid, 'I'm so sorry!' was something which her father, at least, could never withstand.

"One awful time there was when we came near to losing her. A dread disease of childhood attacked her, and for days her mind was fever-clouded. At last, one night as I sat holding her hot little hand in mine, she looked at me and, even in the dim light, I recognised the reason in her eyes.

"'Daddy,' she said feebly, and I made answer as best I could.

"'Alma's been very ill, hasn't she, daddy?'

"'Very ill, yes, darling,' I said, 'but you'll soon be better now.'

"'I think I will for I saw the angels, daddy, and I asked them please to let me stay because my daddy would miss me so. Don't cry, daddy,' and she fell into a peaceful sleep.

"She had asked the angels to let her stay so that I might not miss her! That was so characteristic of her—always considering the happiness of 'her daddy,' or someone whom she loved.

"As the years passed, and 'my little girl' grew into 'my daughter,' I watched her maturing beauty jealously, proudly, selfishly, dreading unspeakably the time when someone would take her from me. Kind indeed were the fates which withheld from me all knowledge of the future.

"It seemed at first that I was not to lose her, for, when she finished school, she begged to be allowed to take up the study of medicine under my direction so that we were together more constantly than ever. Our preference for each other

Digitized by Google

was of such long-standing that it was an accepted fact in the household and never caused any jealousy or unpleasantness. I was her guide, philosopher and friend, and she was my right hand man. She took entire charge of my study, kept my books, and copied my manuscripts whenever I would let her.

"For several years she was quite indifferent to the young men who sought her out. Their friend she was glad to be, but nothing more.

"'They are not any of them half so nice as my daddy,'" she told me laughingly.

"Even when the inevitable came she fought against her happiness for fear of grieving me, until her lover took the law into his own hands and told me how things were. He was a straightforward, manly young fellow, an engineer who had accepted an appointment that would take him to South Africa in a few months. He said that Alma loved him, but would not become engaged to him because she knew how we should feel to have her go so far away. I sent for Alma, and when she came shyly in I saw that what Fred had told me was true, so I gave her to him. I had had my full share of her bright young life.

"Even in her new-found happiness she never forgot me; devoting, in fact, so much of her time to me that at first Fred rebelled, but—

"'I shall be leaving him so soon, my poor old daddy,' she told him, 'and,' with a look that should have compensated him for anything, 'you will have me always.'

"On her wedding morning she came to my room in her spotless bridal white, and with her own dear fingers tied my necktie, and gently reminded me of one little point and another which she knew I should be apt to forget. Indeed I was in more need than usual of reminding that day, for I felt dazed and numb. I could not realise that after that day the old home would know Alma only for brief visits, the first of which could not be for many months.

"After she left us all her letters told eloquently of her happiness, and after she was settled in her new home she kept a sort of journal, which she sent us each week, so that we became quite well acquainted with some of her neighbours and surroundings.

"At the beginning of the second year she wrote with some uneasiness of Fred's failing health. A little later there was a break in her letters, and then a cablegram told us that he was very ill with fever. Then again came unbroken silence. We were nearly wild with anxiety over them, and when I could bear it no longer I arranged to go to them. Before I left I wrote rather sharply to Alma, telling her that in some way she should have managed to send us further word of how it fared with them. As soon as the letter was posted I regretted having written it, for I felt that I had been over hasty. My girl would not willingly have exposed us to this dreadful uncertainty. Something must be very wrong with one or both of them.

"When I at last arrived at their house in the hot little inland town there was an air of hush and gloom about it that sent a chill through me in spite of the heat of the sun which beat down upon me. As I mounted the steps leading to the porch the door was flung open and I was face to face with a white-haired surgeon, who had been a good friend of mine at home.

"'My poor old friend,' he said, as he wrung my hand, and looked pityingly at me.

"'Alma, man!—Alma!' was all that I could say.

"'The child is dead,' he said gravely, 'and, God help you, the mother's dying!'

"I flung off his kindly hand with something between a sob and a curse.

"'No, no, you would not let her die!' I said wildly, and rushed into the house only to be stopped on the threshold of a room by the shadow of Fred—gaunt, sorrow struck, white. The world seemed peopled with shadows that day, and the shadow of death lay over all.

"When I was calm again they led me in to her. It seemed at first that she would not know us, but when Fred spoke her name, though his husky voice sounded strange to me, she opened the glorious eyes in which the light of suffering still lingered.

"'Poor boy!' she said, as he clasped her hand. Then she saw me, and she smiled feebly.

"'Daddy, daddy, so you did get here. I'm so glad. I'm sorry I could not write, Fred will tell you,' she murmured, as I leant down to kiss her. The words cut me like a knife.

"'Take care of Fred, daddy,' she begged a little later. Her voice was weaker now. 'Try not to grieve too much for me—it's not really so hard to go though I have been so happy with you both. First daddy, then my Fred.' A wonderful smile broke over the pale face, with unwonted strength she raised herself slightly, and looked lovingly at each of us in turn, then, with a sigh, sank back among her pillows.

"'So happy all my life!' she breathed.

"The beautiful life was ended. My daughter, my Alma, had passed away. She had laid down her life for another—for Fred. He told me how, after she cabled to us, that he grew steadily worse, how devotedly Alma nursed him, hardly ever leaving his side.

"His pay had not come, and for a time she was sore pressed for money, and he being often delirious did not realise either this, or how unwise it was for her to tax herself as she was doing with the care of him. For a long time there was no doctor to warn him, for she, because of her knowledge of medicine, constituted herself both doctor and nurse in order to cut down expenses. It was only by chance that the old surgeon had called one day, because of a promise to me that he would look Alma up. He took matters in hand very quickly, but the mischief to Alma was done. While Fred mended slowly day by day, she grew weaker and less able to withstand the ordeal that was before her."

* * * * *

The old man sprang to his feet.

"And I wrote her that letter," he cried. "I wrote her that letter," he repeated, as the tears coursed down his cheeks. Nan came to him gently, soothing him as best she could. A man came hurrying in, looking very apologetic.

"I'm so sorry, miss," he explained. "I must have gone to sleep just a little minute, and your father slipped away," and he led the old gentleman out of the room.

Nan turned to me.

"Now you know all about it," she said tragically. "There's insanity in the family you see."

I put my arms around her, and she did not repulse me.

"Is that why you will not marry me, Nan?"

"Isn't that 'why' enough? When my own father——"

"But, darling, that's quite different. It's not hereditary or anything like that; it's simply the great trouble he has had, and the brooding over that letter. Isn't that so, sweetheart?"

If she had not looked so pathetic I could have laughed at her.

"I never thought of it that way, but I suppose it's true," she said. "Do you want to marry me now that you know, Harry?"

I considered that a superfluous question.

"Do you love me?" I asked.

And at last—

"Yes, yes, yes—ever so much," she answered me. I triumphed over the sunbeams. **May Hueston.**

Result of the "Feature" Competition.

THE Gramophone prizes in the above competition have been awarded to the following readers:

A. E. Piggott, 11 Clayton Terrace, Chapelizod, Dublin.
Miss A. Blair, South Bank, Atherton, Lancs.
L. E. Lydeard, 6 Woodbine Terrace, Hexham.
Jas. MacArthur, Main Street, Glengarnock.
W. Waters, 1 Hawthorn Villas, Aberkenfig, Glam.
J. Garner, 27a Lotherton Street, Harpurhey, Manchester.
B. Arnold, 57 Plumstead Road, Woolwich.
A. F. Vincent, 107 Faraday Street, Walworth, S.E.
W. Thomson, jun., Kirk Hill, Penicuik, Midlothian.
H. C. Flowerdew, Pied-à-Terre, St. Peter's Park, Broadstairs.

Digitized by Google

Making it Sprout.

"WHAT on earth are you doing with that little water-can, Tommy?" "Sprinkling the baby's head so's his hair'll sprout."

Temporarily Incurable!

TIMPKINS: "Hallo, Simpkins, you've got your leg straight again? I thought you said it was incurable." Simpkins: "Well, you see, I got my damages against the railway company last week, so now I'm all right."

The Merchant's Device.

VISITOR: "Are all these ladies waiting for change?" Merchant Prince: "Oh, dear no! They are connected with the house. They stimulate trade by struggling with customers who try to approach the counter."

Heard at the Dance.

SHE: "But you don't know my name! What have you put on your cuff?" He: "Oh, I've put down 'Pearl Necklace.'" She: "But there are lots of pearl necklaces here!" He: "Yes; but I've also put down, 'Small and rather tight'—I mean the necklace, you know!"

A Large Order.

"AND the name is to be——?" asked the suave minister, as he approached the font with the precious armful of fat and flounces. "Augustus Philip Ferdinand Codrinton Chesterfield Livingstone Smith." "Dear, dear!" (Turning to the sexton): "A little more water, Mr. Perkins, if you please."

John's Industry.

"YES, I know," said old Mrs. Homespun, "John is sort o' lazy like about some things; so are we all for that matter. But he ain't downright lazy. He'll work hard enough when he gets the work that suits him." "It is good o' you to say so," said Uncle George, "but what kind o' work does suit him?" "Well," replied Mrs. Homespun reflectingly, "there's—there's—well, John is awfully industrious at smoking, for example."

Breaking It Gently.

SOME time ago a troopship was returning from abroad and among the passengers was an old lady, who had a favourite parrot, which she placed under the special care of one of the sailors. On going to attend Polly one morning he was surprised to find the poor bird dead, and knowing how very much upset the old lady would be to hear of the death of her favourite, and not feeling equal to imparting the sad intelligence himself, he employed a brother tar, who was famous for his gentleness in matters of that nature. Going up to the old lady with a very sad face and touching his cap he said: "I don't think that 'ere parrot of yours will live long, marm." "Oh, dear," said the poor old lady. "Why?" "'Cos he's dead," was the comforting reply.

Father Wanted the Light Put Out.

DAUGHTER: "I love him. He is the light of my life." Father: "Well—that's all right; but I object to having my house lit up by him after midnight."

A Soft Answer.

BROWN: "But why do you stop so often? Can't you keep up with me?" Typino (who is rather shaky in her spelling): "Oh, yes; but your language is so eloquent that I frequently find myself spellbound."

A Horse of Experience.

RIDING MASTER: "Give him his head, ma'am—give the horse his head! He knows more about this business than you do!" Miss Westend: "Well, he certainly ought to! I have had only one season's lessons, and he's had twenty!"

Didn't Want to Dust Unnecessarily.

SHE: "Is that friend of yours whom you are expecting a tall man?" He: "About six feet two inches. Why do you ask?" She: "Because in that case I shall have to dust the ornaments on the top shelf."

A Terrible Penalty.

MABEL: "That's what I get for giving my maid my cast-off Worth gowns." Constance: "What's happened?" Mabel (bursting into tears): "That rich old Moneybags caught her in a dark corner and proposed to her, and she accepted him."

Hopeless.

PHYSICIAN (severely): "I have no hesitation in saying, sir, that your wife's nervous fits were occasioned by your staying out so late every night." Witherby: "Good gracious, doctor, I didn't know she was suffering from an incurable disease!"

A Ruffled Air.

COUNSEL (cross-examining complainant): "Was the defendant's air, when he promised to marry you, perfectly serious, or one of levity and jocularity?" Complainant: "If you please, sir, it was all ruffled with him running his hands through it."

Base Ingratitude.

HE: "I am really surprised at Dr. White. After being our family doctor for years, and treating me for all sorts of things, and to think of all the money we've paid him, too!" She: "What has he done?" He: "He wouldn't pass me for the life insurance company!"

Time's Changes.

"I THOUGHT you said about a year ago that you would not ride a bicycle, as your husband did not like you to make yourself conspicuous?" "So I did." "Well, why do you ride now?" "For the same reason. My husband does not like to have me make myself conspicuous."

Tumley's Mistake.

MISS VERE DE VERE: "Only think, Mr. Tumley, they have a custom in Spain that when one admires anything the owner immediately presents him with it." Mr. Tumley (desperately): "I admire your hand very much, Miss Vere de Vere." "I beg your pardon, Mr. Tumley, but we are not in Spain."

Couldn't Injure His Cheek.

THE stories told about the brazen cheek of commercial "gents" have been increased in number by the following: Railway Official (breaking the news gently to the wife of a commercial traveller): "Ahem! madam be calm. Your husband has met with a slight—that is to say, one of the front wheels of a passenger locomotive struck him on the cheek, and——" Wife: "Well, sir, you needn't come round here in order to collect damages. You won't get a penny from me. If your company can't keep its property out of danger, it'll have to take the consequences. You should have your engine insured."

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Mr. Brett's Quest.

A NUMBER of priceless diamonds having been most mysteriously stolen from an Albert Gate Mansion, and four of the custodians of the jewels murdered, Mr. Brett, barrister and detective, in conjunction with the police, is called upon to help clear up the mystery.

The diamonds, it appears, were sent over by the Sultan of Turkey in charge of a number of Turkish officials, and, being of political importance, the mission was placed by the British Government in the care of Mr. Jack Talbot, of the Foreign Office. Upon the night of the robbery and murder, Mr. Talbot disappears.

The Earl of Fairholme, being engaged to be married to Talbot's sister, intrusts Brett with the finding of Talbot.

Brett's first clue is the statement of Mr. Winter, a Scotland Yard detective, that Mr. Talbot and a lady have been seen in Paris, Talbot having signed his name in a hotel register. Brett goes to Paris to see if the signature is genuine.

On his way he falls in with Captain Gaultier, a King's messenger, from whom he learns that Hussein ul Mulk, the Sultan of Turkey's nephew, who had fled from Turkey, is in Paris. Gaultier promises Brett an introduction. Meanwhile Brett has discovered that the signature in the hotel register is not in Talbot's handwriting.

Brett now wires to Fairholme to join him in Paris.

He suspects Hussein of having caused the diamonds to be stolen, and with a view to eliciting information regarding Talbot's whereabouts, pays a visit to the Turk.

Hussein admits complicity, and even allows Brett to see the diamonds which his agent had just brought in.

No sooner does Brett see them than he discovers that the stones are imitations, and immediately tells Hussein so. The agent is furious, but Brett proves his assertions by crushing one of the gems under his heel.

The agent, seeing that the game is up, decamps, but his destination is ascertained by Fairholme, whom Brett had stationed outside the door.

Subsequently Brett and Fairholme together visit the Cabaret Noir, to which the agent had retreated.

This Week's Instalment.

"THIS is the Cabaret Noir?" said Brett questioningly.

"But yes, monsieur," said the waiter.

"There is no other of the same name in Montmartre?"

"But no, monsieur."

"A gentleman, a friend of mine, came here a few minutes ago in a fiacre. He was small, slight, so high"—illustrating the stature by his hand. "He was dressed in dark blue clothes with shiny boots. He was ——"

But Brett's eager description was cut short by the appearance of a new character. Through a narrow door leading into the bar came a handsome, dark-eyed woman, aged perhaps twenty-five, well dressed, shapely, and carrying herself with the easy grace of a born Parisienne.

Her hair was jet black. Her large dark eyes were recessed beneath arched and strongly pencilled eyebrows. Her skin had that peculiar tint of porcelain-white so often seen in women of southern blood when the face has not been tanned by exposure to the weather.

Yet there was nothing delicate in this lady's appearance or manner. A rich colour suffused her cheeks, and her language was remarkably free both in volume and style. She addressed a few observations to the waiter in the common vernacular of Montmartre, the only translatable portion being the question why he was standing about the floor like the ears of a donkey when there was work to be done.

Her manner changed somewhat as she addressed herself to Brett and his companion. There was sufficient of the landlady in her demeanour when she said, "And what would messieurs be pleased to command?"

Now if there was one type of femininity more than another which Brett thoroughly understood it was the saucy, quick-witted, handsome adventuress. He knew that the woman scrutinising him so coolly came well within this category.

He could not tell, of course, in what way she might be associated with the gang whose proceedings contained the explanation of Talbot's fate, but he instantly resolved to adopt a determined position with the lady who half-petulantly, half-curiously, was awaiting his reply.

He came nearer to her.

"I am glad," he said, "that I have met you."

The woman looked him boldly in the eye. "Was it for the happiness of seeing me that monsieur has visited the house?" she said.

"That might well serve as the reason," he answered, "but the pleasure is all the greater since it was unexpected."

"You are pleased to be facetious," she replied. "Will you not tell me your business? I have affairs to occupy me."

"Assuredly, I have driven here as quickly as possible from No. 11, Rue Barbette."

This attack, so direct and uncompromising, did not fail to have its effect. A stony mask of suspicion fell almost imperceptibly across the woman's impudent pretty face.

There was just a tinge of stage laughter in her tone when she cried: "Really, how interesting. And where is the Rue Barbette, monsieur? In what way am I concerned with—No. 11, did you say?"

Brett well knew how to conduct the attack upon this lady. His voice fell to a determined note, his eyes looked gravely into hers as he answered: "It is useless to pretend that you do not understand me. You are losing moments worth gold, perhaps diamonds! Within a few minutes the police will be here, and then it will be too late. Help me first, and

Digitized by Google

I will let the police take care of themselves. Refuse me your assistance, and I will leave you and your friends to the mercy of the district commissaire."

A dangerous light leapt into the woman's eyes at this direct challenge.

"Monsieur is pleased to speak in riddles," she said. "This is a restaurant. We can execute your orders, but we are not skilled in acting charades. You will find better performers in the booths out there;" and she swept her hands scornfully towards the boulevard, with its medley of tents, stalls, and merry-go-rounds.

Brett smiled. "You are a wilful woman," he said, "and think you are serving your friends by adopting this tone. In effect you are bringing them to the guillotine. Now listen. If I leave you at this moment you do not see me again. You will know nothing of what is going on until the police have lodged you in a cell. Neither you nor your associates can escape. I promise nothing, but perhaps if you tell me what I want to know there may be a chance for you. Otherwise there is none. Shall I go?"

And he turned as if to approach the door.

For an instant the woman hesitated, and Brett thought that he had scored.

"Here," she said, lowering her voice, though there was still the menace of subdued passion in her accents. "Who is your friend?"

"A gentleman," he said, "whose identity in no way concerns you. You must deal with me, and it would be better if you had asked who I am."

"I know," she said laconically. "Come this way, both of you."

The Lady from the Circus.

SHE indicated a passage through a flap door located at one side of the counter. Brett followed her into a passage behind the doorway that led into the bar. Fairholme seconded him.

The trio passed rapidly through a door at the end of the passage, and quickly found themselves in a long, low room, usually devoted to billiards.

The place was dark and smelt evilly of stale tobacco. Daylight penetrated but feebly through the red blinds that blocked up three windows on one side. The woman drew two of these blinds, and thus illuminated the interior, but Brett quickly saw that the windows opened on to a yard, and the place was thus thoroughly cut off from all observation from the street.

"Now," she said, "I will show you something."

She walked towards the fireplace at the end of the room. On the mantelpiece was a square of iron sheeting, painted white and studded with curious looking spikes in circles, triangles, and straight lines. From a box close at hand she took half a dozen small glass discs, red and blue. She placed these in a line on some of the spikes at intervals of two inches. Then she retired to that side of the room where they had entered. The distance was perhaps thirty feet.

Before Brett or Fairholme could vaguely guess her intention she whipped a revolver out of her pocket. It would be idle to deny that they were startled, but the woman paid not the least attention to them.

She steadily levelled the weapon and fired twice, smashing the two outer balls of the six. Then she transferred the pistol to her left hand and smashed another pair. Then she turned her back to the target, adjusted a small mirror attached to the butt of the revolver, and smashed one of the remaining bulbs by firing over her left shoulder. Sweeping round with a triumphant smile towards the barrister, she said, "I can do that in fifty other ways, but five will suffice."

"It is very clever, madam," he said. "May I ask why I am indebted to you for this display?"

She replaced the revolver in her pocket. "It is my answer to your question, monsieur," she said. "That is the way I and my friends often talk to people who annoy us, and now I shall wish you good-day. You will find other sights in Montmartre to interest you."

Brett laughed easily, and bowed low.

"Believe me," he said, "I will find few performers so expert, and may I add, so discreet. We will meet again, and perhaps test your skill in other directions."

Without another word the party returned to the front room of the restaurant and Brett and Fairholme passed into the street where their cab was waiting.

"I suppose she meant," said Fairholme, "that if we were not jolly careful she would put a bullet through our hearts as easily as through those glass bulbs."

"Such was her intention," said Brett drily. "But women never have true dramatic genius. That was a piece of melodrama which might suffice with many of her class. It amused me, but it was a waste of time on her part."

"Anyhow," said Fairholme, "we shall not get much out of her in the way of information."

"Oh, yes, we will. She will tell us everything. She has told me a great deal already."

"What?" cried his lordship. "Did that shooting affair convey anything more to you than what I have said?"

"Of course. What need was there for such a trick? In the first place it is very simple. You or I could do it after ten minutes' practice with an expanding charge and a show pistol. Secondly, she admitted that the Cabaret Noir is a centre of operations for the gang in whom we are interested. By the way I should like to know her name."

He directed the driver to wait for them at a street corner some little distance further on. Close to where they stood an itinerant vendor was selling some mechanical toys.

Brett bought one. The price was twenty sous. He gave the man a two franc piece and refused the change.

"Do you know," he said, "who is the proprietor of the Cabaret Noir?"

"Certainly, monsieur," replied the gutter merchant; "it is Gros Jean. His name is, I think, Beaucaire."

"Ah. And the lady who lives there, a dark pretty woman with white skin, who is she?"

"That is his daughter," said the man. "She is known as La Belle Chasseuse."

"Why such a name?"

"Because she is clever with fire-arms. She used to be in a circus, but she left the profession a year ago."

"And does she live here constantly?"

"I cannot say. I think she goes away a great deal. She was travelling recently, she came back—let me see—last Tuesday evening."

"Thank you," said Brett. The two re-entered their cab, and Brett told the driver to proceed as rapidly as possible to the Rue St. Honoré.

"I hope to goodness," he said to Fairholme, "that Captain Gaultier has not left Paris already; these Foreign Office Messengers are liable to be dispatched to the other end of the earth at a moment's notice."

"Why do you wish to see him?" said Fairholme.

"Simply to obtain definite information of that which I already know. La Belle Chasseuse was the woman who accompanied the man made up to look like Jack Talbot during his journey from London. If Gaultier can see her and assure me that I am right I will simply be convinced concerning that which I already know to be true."

"By Jove," cried Fairholme, "that never occurred to me; I wonder if it is so."

"Mademoiselle Beaucaire is quite an adept in two things. She can break tiny glass bulbs and she can flirt. She chose to exhibit the first of these accomplishments to us, and convey what was intended to be a warning: in reality she gave us some valuable information."

ARE YOU IN NEED OF £10?
See page 73.

Digitized by Google

"I suppose," said Fairholme, "that this crowd will watch us pretty closely, won't they?"

Brett leant back in the cab and laughed heartily.

"We are the most interesting persons in Paris to them at this moment," he said. "That poor chap who sold us the toys, and gave us the information we wanted, will have to change his position, I am afraid. One of them is following us now. Let's see who it is."

At the next street corner he stopped the cab suddenly, and jumped out, followed by Fairholme.

A minute later another vehicle dashed into the street. In it was seated a lady, closely veiled; but a large feather hat and the grotesque pattern of a black veil could not wholly conceal the pretty, determined face of La Belle Chasseuse.

Evidently she had no one at hand to undertake the mission, so she had followed Brett in person.

He signalled to her and her driver. Astonished, the man pulled up.

Brett instantly advanced and took off his hat with that pleasant smile of his which usually went straight to the female heart, but which now thoroughly lost its effect upon the furious young woman who looked at him from the interior of the voiture.

"Allow me," he said, "to offer my friendly services. It is a close day and mademoiselle has, I am sure, many other calls on her time. I will save you at least an hour, and myself nearly the same period. I am going to secure the presence of a witness to identify you as the lady who crossed the channel last Tuesday in company with a gentleman. You both drove to the Grand Hotel, and your companion signed the register there in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Talbot; is it not so?"

She bent forward and looked at them viciously. Her eyes sparkled with annoyance at being caught so easily in her self-imposed piece of espionage.

"Monsieur is clever," she said.

"Thank you," he replied, still smiling, "I can occasionally hit the mark with a guess as well as mademoiselle can with a pistol. But, believe me, I only intend at this moment to be polite. Of course, the presence of a witness to identify you is unnecessary. Mademoiselle can now return to the Cabaret Noir, whilst my friend and I will proceed direct to the Grand Hotel. It saves so much trouble, does it not?"

For a moment the woman looked as though she would have liked to produce that infallible revolver and shot him on the spot. Then she angrily commanded her driver to return.

Fairholme had surveyed the scene with open-eyed amazement. "Well," he said, "that beats anything. You really have a splendid nerve. The whole business reads like a chapter out of one of Gaboriau's novels."

"That is the way people live in Paris, my dear fellow. Life is an artificial matter here. But all this excitement has made me hungry. Let us have déjeuner."

On Guard.

On their way to the hotel, Brett, yielding apparently to a momentary impulse, stopped the cab at a house in the Rue de Chaussée d'Antin. Without any explanation to Lord Fairholme he disappeared into the interior of this house, a quiet, staid-looking place, and did not rejoin his companion for nearly ten minutes.

"It is perhaps not of much use," he explained on his return, "but I do not like to leave any stone unturned. The man I have just called upon is a well-known private detective, and I can trust him to look after my business without taking the police into his confidence. Two of his smartest agents will maintain a close watch upon both the Cabaret Noir and No. 11, Rue Barbette during the afternoon."

"You do not seem to expect much result?"

"No; we are tracking some of the most expert and daring scoundrels in France. It is hopeless to expect them to provide us with clues; they simply won't do it. No one but a genius in criminality would have risked such a dramatic move as the impersonation of Jack Talbot, or dared to put in an open appearance at the Grand Hotel. So my agents here can only

Tramped the Room in Pain.

A WOMAN'S SEVERE ORDEAL.

BILE BEANS EFFECT A COMPLETE CURE.

LIVER COMPLAINT, INDIGESTION AND NEURALGIA ENDED.

In the centre of the Lincolnshire Fens, under the shadow of the famous Boston Stump, lives Mrs. Margaret Goy, who, the other day, told a *Boston Guardian* reporter a remarkable story of her restoration to health by Bile Beans for Biliousness, after years of acute suffering. Mrs. Goy resides at White House, Boston West, and said:

"All my life I have been a great sufferer from indigestion, liver complaint, and neuralgia. I have walked up and down the room for hours, suffering terribly, and unable to keep still. Last winter, the

pains in my face, back, and chest were so bad that I could hardly breathe. Time after time I would be driven nearly mad with pain. For a month at a time I have been unable to get any sleep, and I became so despondent that I really thought I should never get better. I could not eat any solid food, but had to subsist as best I could on milk and similar nourishment. I went to nearly every druggist in the town, in the hope that I might obtain something to alleviate the pain, and spent pounds in this way, but with no result. I also obtained the advice of two medical men. They said the trouble was really due to indigestion, and gave me some medicine which relieved me a little, but I soon was as bad as ever again.

"At last a gentleman who called at our house recommended me to try Bile Beans for Biliousness as he said they had cured him of liver complaint. After I had taken a few doses the pains were much relieved. I continued taking the Beans until the neuralgia completely left me, and I have not been troubled with it since. The indigestion and liver complaint have both disappeared, and now I can eat and enjoy my meals without discomfort. As the result of taking Bile Beans I now feel better than I have done for years."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain cure for indigestion, neuralgia, biliousness, liver and kidney disorders, pains in the side, loins and back, constipation, piles, dizziness, sleeplessness, nervous and general debility, anæmia, and all female ailments. Also for colds, chill, lumbago, rheumatism, and as a preventative of influenza. Bile Beans may be had of all chemists or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., on receipt of prices, 1s. 1½d., or 2s. 9d. (2s. 9d. box contains 3 times 1s. 1½d. size). They are sold only in boxes; never loose.

Digitized by Google

hope at the best, to get sight of any messenger or assistant scoundrels who may turn up at either of the places indicated."

"May we expect to be busy to-night?"

Brett did not answer for a moment. It was evident that whilst he rattled on in a careless strain his active brain was busily employed in discussing the future.

"I hope so," he said at last. "Of course I cannot tell. Our only chance is that we may be able to guess the course of the hidden trail. If to-night does not yield us some information our chances of solving the mystery will be remote, in which case we may as well abandon the quest."

This faint-hearted reply naturally surprised Lord Fairholme considerably. To his mind a considerable measure of success had already been achieved, and he utterly failed to understand why his friend should take such a pessimistic view of affairs at the very moment when they appeared to be opening up somewhat. Brett noted the Earl's perplexity and smiled with genial deprecation as he said—

"Do not be afraid, Fairholme, I will liberate Mr. Talbot and clear his name so effectually that all difficulties will disappear from the path of your marriage."

"Then what is it that makes you so downcast?" cried Fairholme.

"I hate to be beaten at the final stage, and I have a premonition that were I in England—had I but the power to proceed unchecked and unhindered by officialdom—I would soon lay my hands upon the man who originated the Albert Gate mystery. But we are in France for the first thing—in a country of queer legal forms and unusual methods. At home I can always circumvent Scotland Yard; here I am in the midst of strange surroundings, and know not what may happen. Therefore, we must possess our souls in patience and await developments. The agent I have just employed has promised me to report every two hours at the hotel until eight o'clock. Then I will take personal charge of the Cabaret Noir, and——"

"What about me?" cried Fairholme.

"You, my dear fellow, will remain in my room at the hotel and await orders."

This arrangement did not seem to suit the active young Englishman who had been so suddenly plunged into the excitement of a criminal chase in Paris.

"Really, Brett," he said, "I hate to grumble at anything you propose, because you are always right, but you must pardon me for saying that I do not see what particular value my presence here has been to you."

"What?" laughed Brett, "not after your dramatic appearance in the Rue Barbette this morning."

"Oh, anyone could have done that. All I had to do was to break in a door at a given hour."

"Exactly so," said Brett, gravely. "I wanted a friend whom I could trust to implicitly obey my orders, and you did it. I am sure you will fall in with my wishes now."

So Fairholme was silenced on this point, but he ventured to put another question.

"How long am I to sit chewing cigars in your room, then?"

"All night if necessary. If I do not appear by seven o'clock to-morrow morning you had better go to the Embassy and tell one of the secretaries everything connected with our visit to Paris. He will then take action through the police in proper form, and after that you must simply await developments."

"Do you mean to say," said Fairholme anxiously, "that you are contemplating another risky bit of business to-night?"

"Once I take my stand outside the Cabaret Noir about 8.30 I cannot tell where fate may lead me. If I am lucky I will certainly return, whatever be the personal outcome. If, on the other hand, I learn nothing, you may as certainly expect to see me about 2 o'clock a.m."

£5 a Week for Life.

Turn to page 85.

At the hotel Brett found awaiting him a letter which had been delivered by the mid-day post. It was from his elderly assistant in London, whom he had told to make a close scrutiny of all inhabited houses within a certain radius of the Carlton Hotel. The man had done his work systematically, and in only three instances was he called upon to report doubtful cases. Two foreign restaurants in side streets contained a number of residents concerning whom it was difficult to obtain specific information.

One of these establishments he believed to be a resort of Continental gamblers driven from Soho by the too marked attentions of the police. The other was a place of even more questionable repute, and in both instances he had utterly failed to obtain the slightest information from the servants, who apparently "stood in" with the management.

The third dwelling which courted observation was a flat situated above some business premises in another quiet street. So far as he could learn, it was tenanted by an elderly lady who was a helpless invalid, and was waited on by a somewhat curious couple.

"They are Italians, I think," wrote the ex-policeman, "and are very uncommunicative people. I have twice called, on one pretext or another, but when the door is opened it is always kept on the chain, and I cannot see more than the face of a man or woman and a few inches of wall beyond. Still, I have no reason to doubt that the view taken by the milkman and baker is correct, namely, that the owner of the flat is confined to her bed and is suffering from a nervous disease, which renders it imperative she should be shut off from all noise. The landlord informs me that these people have occupied the place for nearly two months. Their rent is paid in advance, and they have not given the slightest cause for complaint. There are, of course, in this district a large number of private hotels and lodging-houses, but they seem to be run on regular lines, and although some of their patrons might well demand closer observation, I have come across nothing suggestive of any suspicious circumstance whatever with reference to them. I have kept back my report until I was able to give details concerning the other houses in the district, and I will now fall back upon the second part of your instructions, *i.e.*, to maintain a close watch upon the three establishments which I have picked out as being more unusual in their habits than the others."

This was all.

Preparations.

Brett read the concluding portion of the report to Fairholme.

"He is a level-headed, shrewd chap who sends this communication," he said—"one of the few men whom I can trust to do exactly what I want, neither more nor less. I think when we return to London we must endeavour to get that chain taken off the invalid lady's door, or, at any rate, obtain some specific facts concerning her disease from her doctor."

Fairholme smiled. "I am glad to hear," he cried, "that you do anticipate our return."

"Oh," said Brett airily, "I never count on failure."

Soon after three o'clock a report arrived from the agent in the Rue du Chaussée d'Antin. It read:—

"Nothing unusual has occurred in the vicinity of the Cabaret Noir. The customers frequenting the place are all of the ordinary type and do not call for special comment.

"A Turkish gentleman quitted the house, No. 11 Rue Barbette, at 1.15 p.m., but returned shortly before two o'clock. Half an hour later a man, whom my assistant recognised as a member of a well-known gang of flash thieves, entered the place. His name is Charles Petit, but he is generally known to his associates as 'Le Ver.' He is small, well dressed, and of youthful appearance, but really older

(*Continued on page* 94.)

Digitized by Google

Statistics for the Deaf.

FROM an analysis of 1,000 cases of deafness which have come under his personal observation, the editor of the "Journal for the Deaf," has been able to prepare some remarkably interesting facts. These are contained in a special article in the December issue of this publication. Catarrh of the ear, discharging ears, nose and throat complications, influenza, colds in the head and rheumatism are all carefully considered as causes of deafness. Different forms of treatment are discussed, and a large number of cases described, which have been cured by the Drouet method of external application, after other procedures (even operative) failed; in one case, in particular, two aurists, an operation, and artificial aids to hearing had given no relief. As names and addresses are given, these cured cases can be communicated with by anyone who desires to make further inquiries on the subject. To obtain a free copy of the Journal, it is only necessary to address—The Editor, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. With the Journal is also enclosed a Report Form, by means of which anyone can obtain free advice by correspondence, with full instructions for home treatment.

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

BORAX
Extract of Soap.

A Good Resolution.

The dawn of a new year is resolution time for countless thousands the world over.

In the matter of home management, the housewife who resolves that Borax Extract of Soap shall help in the daily work during 1903 may rest assured that there she can make no better resolution.

For washing clothes and general house cleaning there is no soap will give half the satisfaction, both in the using and results; while its special sweetening quality—owing to the virtue of the incorporated Borax—is absolutely unique.

There is only one genuine Borax Extract of Soap.

The facsimile packet shown is to safeguard you against fraudulent imitations.

Sold in 1lb. packets—same price as the other kinds—by Grocers and Stores everywhere.

FREE SAMPLE PACKET AND SOME NOVELTIES
if you name this paper and your grocer.

BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT MAKERS TO THE KING.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham.

A CELEBRATED
NELSON WATCH & CHAIN
FREE FOR ONE DAY'S WORK.

We send this Genuine Nickel-Plated WATCH, Warranted an ACCURATE TIME-KEEPER, with Chain and Pendant, for Selling Seven Beautiful Articles at 1/- each. Sterling Value. Send your full Name and Address (Post-card will do) by Return of Post, and we will at once forward the box of Handsome Goods, Post Paid, and a large Premium List. No Money Required. WE TRUST YOU. We send the Goods at our own risk. Send us the money that you get for them, and we send you the Watch, Chain and Pendant by Registered Post.

THE NELSON MANUFACTURING CO.,
72, Aldermanbury Street, London, E.C.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)
2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-.
Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

RUN NO RISK
KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE
THE WORST COUGH

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive Free on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium, 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU—
NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at 2d. each, making 4/- altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Timekeeper or other Presents of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of £2 10s. per week. Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE
Delamere Crescent, London, W.

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a marvellous home method that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is simple and harmless.

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W., you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

Itch and Burn of Eczema

Promptly Relieved and Cured by
"ANTEXEMA"—You may try it FREE.

Are you tortured from morn till night with burning, itching, scalding Eczema—worse when you get into bed; no rest day or night; the various remedies you have tried have been of little benefit? If you suffer like this, or with any skin trouble, great or small, send for a free trial sample of "ANTEXEMA," together with copyright treatise on "Skin Troubles," and 200 testimonials from grateful sufferers who have been cured. Sent in plain wrapper, post paid. "ANTEXEMA" is sold by all chemists at 1/1½ (post free from us for 1/3). Refuse injurious substitutes.

THE "ANTEXEMA" COMPANY, LONDON, N.W.

Digitized by Google

than he looks. He is still in the house inhabited by the Turks."

"What is the meaning of 'Le Ver'?" said Fairholme.

"It means 'The Worm,'" answered Brett.

"I must say these chaps do find suitable nicknames for one another. I wonder if he is the fellow we followed to Montmartre this morning?"

"Possibly, though I am puzzled to understand why he should trust himself in that hornets' nest again. Most certainly the description covers him, but we shall probably hear more details later. I wonder where the Turkish gentleman went whom 'Le Ver' seems to have followed. He could not have gone to the Cabaret Noir in the time?"

Brett's curiosity was answered to some extent by the next report, delivered about five o'clock. It read as follows:—

"Le Ver is still in the house No. 11 Rue Barbette. My agent explains that he did not follow the Turk who left and returned to the place earlier, because his definite instructions were not to leave the locality, but accurately report upon all persons who entered or left. Absolutely nothing has transpired in this neighbourhood since my first report.

"Gros Jean, the father of La Belle Chasseuse, arrived at Cabaret Noir soon after four o'clock. My agent ascertained from the cabman who drove him that Gros Jean had hired the vehicle outside the Gare de Lyon. Otherwise nothing stirring."

At seven o'clock came developments.

"Three Turkish gentlemen have quitted No. 11 Rue Barbette, but the Frenchman is still there. As it might be necessary to follow another person leaving this house, I stationed another watcher with my assistant, and this second man followed the Turks to a restaurant in the Grand Boulevard. So far as he could judge, they seem to be excited and apprehensive. They drank some wine and conversed together in low tones. At 6.15 they quitted the café and rapidly jumped into an empty fiacre, being driven off in the direction of the Opera. So unexpectedly did they leave their seats that before my agent could hire another cab they had disappeared in the traffic, and, although he drove after them as rapidly as possible, he failed to again catch sight of them. I have reprimanded him for his negligence, although he did right in at once coming to me to report his failure. In accordance with your instructions, I have ordered the watchers at the Café Noir and in the Rue Barbette to be in this office at 8.15 p.m."

"Now I wonder," said Brett, "why the Turks left the Frenchman alone in No. 11. It is odd, to say the least of it, for since the dramatic discovery of the spurious diamonds this morning they must be even more in the dark than I am. That must be looked into, but I cannot attend to it now. At this moment, if I am not mistaken, the centre of interest is the Cabaret Noir."

The two men occupied a sitting-room on the first floor of the hotel, and their respective bedrooms flanked it on each side. Brett explained that he could not tackle the table d'hôte dinner, so he made a hasty meal in their sitting-room and then excused himself whilst he retired to his bedroom to change his clothing.

He was absent some twenty minutes, and Fairholme amused himself by glancing over the copies of the day's London newspapers which had recently arrived. Suddenly the door of Brett's bedroom opened, and a decrepit elderly man, a shabby-genteel individual, disfigured by drink and crumpled up by rheumatism, appeared.

"Who the dickens——" began Fairholme.

But he was amazed to hear Brett's familiar voice asking:

"Do you think the disguise sufficiently complete?"

"Complete," shouted Fairholme, "why, your own mother would not know you, and your father would probably punch me for suggesting it could be you."

"That is all right," said the barrister cheerfully. "I will now proceed to get quietly drunk at the Café Noir. Good-bye until seven o'clock to-morrow morning—perhaps earlier, and perhaps—well, no—until seven o'clock!"

They shook hands and parted, and not even Brett, the cleverest amateur detective of his day, could have remotely guessed where and how they would meet next.

(To be continued in next Tuesday's "Short Stories.")

PRINCIPAL: (to the new apprentice) "Has the book-keeper told you what you have to do in the afternoon?" Youth: "Yes, sir. I was to wake him when I saw you coming."

HE: "I am delighted with my new doctor. He promises to make my rheumatism disappear within a month." She (shocked): "But then we shall have to buy a barometer."

"I DON'T see how you dare trust yourself to young Dr. Pills. He hasn't any patients." "That's just the point. He'll strain every nerve to keep me alive. I'm his only source of income."

YOUNG MAN: "I assure you, sir, I look forward longingly to the union with your daughter." Girl's Father: "Ah, well, that's a candid confession, anyhow. She'll certainly bring you there if she's half as extravagant as I've allowed her to be."

A REGENT STREET milliner put a basket that had four kinds of paint over it, and had been run over by an omnibus, in her show window, and crowds of women stopped to look at it and to study it, and they went home resolved to have one of that new style of bonnet.

SIR MARMADUKE JAMM: "William, my cigar boxes have emptied themselves with uncommon rapidity during the last month. Is it possible that during the short period you have been in my service——" Valet: "No, sir, I have still in my possession three boxes of my late employer's."

MR. LAFFAN (humourist, looking up suddenly from his work): "My dear, I do wish you would break yourself of that silly habit of laughing out loud when you are reading. How do you expect me to do anything——" Mrs. Laffan: "But it's the manuscript of your own book I am reading, dear." Mr. Laffan: "Ah, yes—certainly—of course! Ah—what was I saying? Oh, yes—wonderful how much more work I can do at home than I could at the office, isn't it, Marie?"

The Art of Beauty.

Price 1s., post free 1s. 2d.

Some of the Contents:

The Cure of Stoutness—The Cure of Leanness—The Figure—Bad Complexions: How to cure them—The Hair in Ill Health—Moles, Warts, and Superfluous Hair—Cure for Acne—Types of Beauty—How to Improve the Bust—The Eyebrows—The Eyelashes—The Figure.

Cut this out and send it with 1s. 2d. and your name and address to the Book Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Book sent on receipt of order and money.

Digitized by Google

ASTHMA

WHY ? ? is it generally thought there is no cure for **ASTHMA, CHRONIC BRONCHITIS. SHORTNESS OF BREATH, EMPHYSEMA, BLOOD-SPITTING, HAY FEVER,** and other Lung Complaints.

BECAUSE ! ! the usual treatments only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE

ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE.

Sufferers will receive, post free, **Free of Charge,** particulars of the famous WEIDHAAS HOME TREATMENT when applying to THE PAUL WEIDHAAS HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, 16 T.A. Buckingham Road, Brighton.

Mr. Weidhaas has tried the Treatment on himself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured himself, and had then practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of special cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by his Treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been **GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.**

Mr. O. DEACON. (From Photo.)

No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from **COLD FEET.** Read the following Testimonial, one out of thousands received:

SEVERE CASE OF CHRONIC BRONCHITIS CURED.

Your cure has done wonders for me; I feel quite a new man. I do not have any of those drowsy and languid feelings, no bad taste in the morning, do not spit any phlegm, do not have any thumping of the heart as I used to, can enjoy food, do not have any pain after eating. No man can be more thankful than I am to think I am relieved of that terrible complaint, and I owe everything to your cure. My friends tell me I should have been a dead man before now if something had not been done for me. Please accept my thanks. OWEN DEACON.
Hurst. (Full address on application.)

The Director is prepared to pay **£1,000** to any Charitable Institution if the above is not a genuine extract from the patient's own letter. The original may be seen at the Paul Weidhaas Hygienic Institute by any bona-fide enquirers.

CURABLE

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** repayable on demand. **2½%**

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Drunkenness

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence,

Mrs. C. H.
(Room 8),
195 OXFORD ST., LONDON, W.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.
(The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

Of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 55 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors:

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

GIVEN AWAY

With this Week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 470)

Paper Pattern of a

WINTER SKIRT.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents. **PRICE 1d.**

"No Better Food."—*Dr. ANDREW WILSON F.R.S.E., &c.*

Fry's PURE CONCENTRATED Cocoa

"Strongest and Best."—*Health.*

Not a stimulant merely for the moment; but a Permanent and Agreeable Form of Nourishment

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Hats and the Girl.

"ALFRED" often does shopping where there are lady assistants. Sometimes he chats with them. Should he, on leaving the shop, raise his hat?

* * * *

It is not a rule in this country to do so, as it is on the Continent, but I think there are many cases in which we should greatly improve ourselves by adopting foreign manners. This is one of them. If you have chatted with the girl, apart from the nature of your business, you are recognising her claims to social courtesy. On leaving, you could quite rightly raise your hat. I do not say make an elaborate bow, but a slight inclination simply. Many men do it, and nothing is lost to themselves.

Addressing a Daughter.

"CHARLES G." inquires: "Is it a breach of etiquette to address a letter to an only daughter, using her initial, as in "Miss H. Brown?" Should it be "Miss Brown" only?

Yes, if she is the only daughter, and is grown up, and there is no senior Miss Brown of another branch of the family staying in the house.

A Tale of Rivals.

"EL ME" has been engaged to a girl for three years. In the same house as herself a gentleman is staying, who has been there for eighteen months. He has noticed, to use his own words, "that she lacks the sentimental expression which she used to have." Also that the man has paid her marked attention, though he knew of her engagement. He has also given her presents. During this time the young lady has twice written to "EL ME" to ask him to break off the engagement, and each time has followed these letters by a desire for its continuance. When questioned as to the reason for wishing to break it off, she said she believed the "other man" loved her more than my correspondent.

* * * *

It is evident that there is something weak in the girl's affection for you, "EL ME." I imagine the other man has gained a hold on her which is decidedly prejudicial to your own chances. His living in the same house has given him an advantage over you which is likely to prove very strong. You might have foreseen this from the first. I hope, for your sake, it is not too late. Evidently the girl suspects you of lukewarmness for not having outwitted him long ago, and possibly she is right. Are you really very fond of her? Or is it just your vanity that has been wounded by a successful rival? Think it well over, and, if you find that her having gone over to him is a matter you can regard with coolness, give her up and turn your attention elsewhere. A girl so changeable and inconstant does not seem a very enviable possession for a man.

How to Become Reconciled.

"ROO" writes, I have had a difference with my *fiancée* on some trifling affair. It has become so serious that we have not spoken for two days. I want to make it up, but am nervous about approaching her after our difference.

* * * *

I should take the next opportunity of speaking to her without mentioning the difference at all. Give the impression that you have entirely forgotten it, and are on the same footing as before. If she is really fond of you, she will soon resume her normal attitude towards you, and will not wait for such a formal and unsatisfactory thing as a reconciliation by apologies. I have known many squabbles settled like this. Nobody's pride is injured, which, I suppose, is the chief consideration to you.

Sudden Coldness.

"EILEEN" has been "keeping company" with a young man, who seemed devoted to her. Suddenly, without any explanation, he withdrew his attentions, and now is only coldly polite. "EILEEN" is very fond of him, so is quite miserable at this turn of affairs.

* * * *

There was certainly no justification for his conduct. If the young man has heard anything about you which has made him change his attitude, he should certainly have let you know of it. I should write to him and ask an explanation. If he does not give it, then you must conclude that he has been merely trifling with your affections.

A Lax Reader.

"PERPLEXED" (Pretoria).—I fear you do not read your "In Confidence" as regularly as you might, or you would have seen that in the issue of November 8, Miss Morris dealt with your case at length. In case you should be equally lax in regard to this paragraph, I have written to you to this effect, and sent you a copy of that number. Now, is it not rather thoughtless for a business man to send over Transvaal stamps for use here in replying to your letter? They are, of course, very nice to give to one's stamp-collecting friends, but have no postal value in Britain. However, I have sent them back to you privately, and only hope that you will find a ready way out of your trouble.

A Case for Interruption.

"J. H." was walking out the other day, and met his *fiancée* in the street, deeply interested in the remarks of a strange man. Should he go up and speak to her under the circumstances?

* * * *

I rather think so. Naturally you would wish to know all about the conversation with the strange man. And no *fiancée* would be of the right sort if she exchanged intimacies in the street with men which she did not wish her lover to hear. Besides, it might only have been her uncle or second cousin, and perhaps they were only talking family matters.

Calf Love.

"MATER" writes to me to say that her young son, seventeen years old, has fallen in love with his landlady's daughter in the country town where he works. What can she do to prevent matters from becoming dangerous? The boy is only getting a small salary in an office.

* * * *

I would privately ask the landlady to keep an eye on him if I were his mother, either in a letter or by going to the country town and seeing how matters stand. But probably the boy is not in love at all. At seventeen one usually falls in love, anything up to a dozen times, with a wide variety of people, but seldom is one so desperately foolish as to allow things to develop into premature marriage.

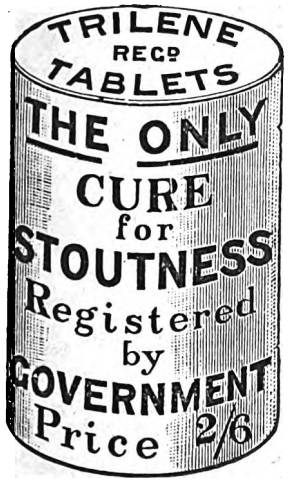
Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ALL FAT PEOPLE

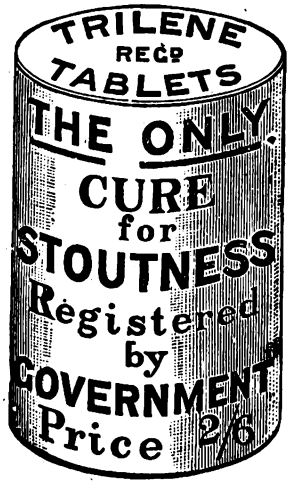
Can be CURED by taking

TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."



Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION
66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risebolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18.b. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagilit, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest value. I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

Digitized by Google

CADBURY'S COCOA

Points from the Press:

"We are glad to find that Messrs. Cadbury draw attention to the fact that there are strong grounds for objection to the addition to Cocoa of certain foreign substances. This resource is quite unnecessary, and indeed, pernicious, especially having regard to the fact that Cocoa alone is an excellent food as well as a stimulant, having a salutary action upon the nerve centres."—*The Lancet.*

CADBURY'S is COCOA and the BEST COCOA only

BEECHAM'S PILLS

are

THE REMEDY FOR THE PEOPLE.

RECOMMENDED BY FRIENDS TO FRIENDS.

NOT PUSHED BY DOUBTFUL METHODS.

DESERVING OF THEIR POPULARITY.

NOW ENJOYING A GREATER SUCCESS THAN EVER.

STILL WORTH A GUINEA A BOX.

Some Good Reasons for Using

BIRD'S CUSTARD POWDER

BECAUSE it is

So Rich and Creamy, yet will not disagree.
So pure and Delicious,
So Wholesome and Nutritious,

BECAUSE it is

So little Trouble, and so Economical,
And makes the simplest Meal a Dainty Repast.

As an article of Food BIRD'S CUSTARD is unrivalled for Nutriment and Delicacy of Flavour. Practical housewives always keep a supply ready at hand.

NO EGGS! NO RISK! NO TROUBLE!

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE! SEE INSIDE.

Short Stories.

No. 734.] Week ending January 24th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

Suddenly the door burst open, and before her stood the man who had so nearly killed her husband. "Hide me—hide me!" he gasped in despair.

(A Powerful Incident from our Story, "To Forgive is Divine." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR **HEADACHE** AND **Neuralgia.**

Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is compos d of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY p eparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

C. E. POPPLESTON, Esq., B.A., Mus. Doc., writing from Exeter College, Oxford, says:

"I have suffered continually from severe Headache. A medical friend advised me to try Kaputine. I did so, and in a few minutes my Headache had left me. It is a splendid remedy."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,

of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from

KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield,

for 12 stamps.

'Let's Talk of Graves' Drapery

.. THE .. **'ECONOMIC'**

BALE

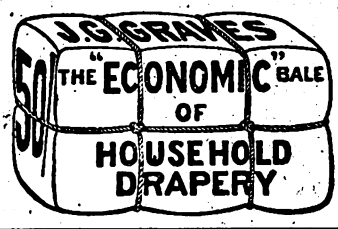
OF HOUSEHOLD DRAPERY.

£2 10s.

CONTAINS: Pair very Best Quality Twilled Sheets, Pair Heavy Blankets with white whipped edges (full size), Superior Quality Red and White or Blue and White Alhambra Quilt (large size), Pair Fine Quality Pillow Slips, 1 Bolster Case, Set of 5 Handsomely Embroidered Toilet Mats, 2 Turkish Towels, Best Quality Glass Cloth, Scouring Cloth, 6 Netted Dusters, Pair Special Design Lace Curtains, 1 Woven Turkey Table Cloth, 1 Embroidered Table Cover 36 in. square, and 1 Full Size White Table Cloth of Fine Quality.

TERMS.

Send only 8/-, the Bale will then be sent to your address (carriage paid), and, if you are satisfied, complete the purchase in six more monthly payments of 7s. each. If not satisfied, return the parcel, and your deposit will be refunded in full.



Send for No. 5 Catalogue of Drapery, Costumes, etc., etc., Post Free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. No Risk. Good Commission.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay; Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints, etc.

For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 9), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PACES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas AND 15 Guineas Or from a Guinea per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.

TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.

& 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester

3/- THE WORLD'S WONDER. 3/-

OUR BEST CHEAPEST WATCH. With a guarantee to keep correct time for 3 years, will be sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value 3/- and three stamps extra for postage. For accurate time-keeping equal to any Lady's or Gent's watch costing 5 gs. All we ask of you is to show the Watch to your friends, as by so doing you advertise our business.—SWISS WATCH IMPORTERS, 12, Goswell Road, London, E.C.

Mention "Short Stories."

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

Order E. & T. PINK'S JAM

Undoubtedly the Best.

PURE.

No Artificial Colouring or Chemical Preservative.

SPLENDID SERIAL STORY STARTS SHORTLY.

Short Stories.

No. 734.] For the Week Ending January 24th, 1903. [ONE PENNY.

To Forgive is Divine.

Containing the Incident Depicted on our Cover.

RALPH JACKSON and Bernard Mason were fellow clerks in the bank of Mason and Mason, whose imposing buildings occupied a large share of the tiny High Street of Tamerton.

The bank buildings were indeed a source of great pride to the inhabitants of that small Devonshire town, and Mr. Mason, the leading partner in the firm, was also the leading person in the place, dominating the rest of the population as his beautiful house dominated the town from the rising moorland beyond it.

To be "in the bank" was considered by all the townspeople a signal honour, and Ralph Jackson was envied by more than one of his contemporaries when he was admitted into these sacred precincts at the same time as Bernard Mason, nephew of the senior partner.

Ralph was a general favourite—a handsome Devonian youth, with a dash of devil-may-care audacity about him that appealed mightily to the quieter and more gentle nature of his fellow worker and friend, Bernard Mason.

Bernard's devotion to his cheery and reckless companion was indeed a by-word in the place, and their friendship was frequently compared with the great friendship of old—with that of David and Jonathan—of Damon and Pythias.

As in character, so in face, they presented a great contrast to one another. Ralph's dark complexion—bright dark eyes and vivacious manners, told of some strain in him of other than British blood; whilst Bernard's fair countenance and serene grey eyes proclaimed him, with no uncertain voice, to be Anglo-Saxon through and through.

The two men were constantly together; they shared lodgings in a pretty cottage just outside the town; their free time was always spent in one another's company, and their brief holidays usually consisted of a bicycling or walking tour on the great moor itself—or further afield and—wonderful to relate—the eager, boyish friendship outlived their young days, and when the two men were both close upon thirty, and occupying positions of confidence in the bank, they were still, as ever, the most close and intimate of friends.

Nor was the bond broken when Bernard Mason—now in a position to make a home of his own—asked his cousin Doris to be his wife, and after a very short engagement married her and took her to live in a house at the top of the High Street—a stone's throw away from the bank.

Mason's first wish had been that Ralph should share his and Doris' home, but to this proposition Ralph himself turned an absolutely deaf ear.

"No, no," he said, when both Bernard and his wife pressed him to reconsider his decision; "I am not going to be a disturber of the peace, and no one has any right to live with a newly married pair. Let me be a friend to you both and come in and out occasionally, that is all I ask."

And so it came about that Ralph was a constant guest in the new and happy home, while neither Bernard nor Doris spared any pains to make him feel that he was completely one of themselves—their dearest and best friend! It was the same story when baby Doris came to make a third in that happy household.

All rights reserved.]

Ralph, of course, must be her godfather; she must look upon Ralph as a relation; Ralph must never feel "out of it," because the little family was so complete.

Ralph was still so much to them both—to Bernard and Doris—and they vied with each other in spoiling him and thinking of his welfare until——

* * * * *

"I am a good deal bothered by this—I want to talk it over with you." And James Mason, senior partner in the famous bank, looked up into the face of his son, the junior partner, who stood behind him, and handed him a cheque.

The two men were in the elder Mason's private room, and the younger man took the cheque from his father's hand, and looked at it with a puzzled frown.

"What's the matter with it, dad?" he said, slowly turning it backwards and forwards, "it seems all in order."

"All in order, perhaps," the elder man answered drily "only that does not happen to be my signature!"

"Not your signature?" Richard Mason looked narrowly at the cheque again; "why, dad, I could have sworn to it in a court of law. That queer squiggle in the 'm' is yours down to the ground."

"Hum—yes—very well done—too well done, in fact; it was that which caught the eye of the cashier of our London branch to whom it was presented. He writes, 'Tell me if it is all right.'"

"But he cashed it?"

"Yes—he cashed it at once, seeing my signature, and the cheque not being crossed. But on investigation something about it struck him as unusual, and he sent it off to me post haste."

"Who presented it?"

"That's the terrible part of it, Dick," and the elder Mr. Mason's face grew suddenly pinched and drawn; "this note says, 'the man who cashed the cheque presented also the inclosed note, which further disarmed all suspicion'"—and here—with a little groan, Mr. Mason handed to his son a small, folded piece of paper, on which were written the words:

Please cash inclosed for bearer, who is well known to me.
BERNARD MASON.

"*Bernard!*" Dick Mason staggered back from the table. "Bernard could never have known that——"

"Ah, my dear boy, I have been saying that over and over to myself the whole morning. Bernard could never have guessed that this was an impudent forgery. He must have supposed it was all right; that I really wrote a large cheque for a man called Smith—that——"

"Have you spoken to Bernard?"

"No—no—I could not face it. The elder Mason shuddered a little; "I—you know my dear boy, I have loved Bernard like a son—I cannot bear to think that he—that he——"

"Oh! he couldn't have, you know," said Dick cheerily; "let me call him in and——"

Digitized by Google

His father broke in hurriedly.

"Dick—I wish I could forget that Bernard has had money difficulties lately. I heard it by chance, but on unimpeachable authority. Some investments went wrong; he owes money and I can't get it out of my head that being in a difficulty he—he——"

The old man could not end his sentence, he buried his face in his hands and for a moment a pregnant silence fell over father and son.

The younger man broke it.

"Look here, dad," he said firmly; "we must not let any sentimental feelings interfere with right and justice. If you really think Bernard could have done so incredible a thing—then——but let me call Bernard in," he ended impetuously.

And two minutes later Bernard Mason stood before his uncle and cousin, looking from one to the other, a puzzled inquiry in his eyes.

"Yes," he said gently at last, "did you want me, uncle James? Can I——"

"You can explain *this*," with a strangely dramatic gesture the senior partner swept the cheque from the table, and with it the note signed with Bernard's own name.

"*What—does—this—mean?*"

The words broke at last from Bernard's lips—one by one, and hoarsely—"this is not—could you think——" The hesitating, husky words fell over one another in dreamingless phrases; a sudden and ghastly pallor spread over the speaker's face—his eyes grew wide, startled—to the onlookers they appeared terrified, the cheque and the slip of paper fluttered to the ground, and Bernard's hand went out and grasped at the table.

"My God!" he began; "I——" then something seemed to choke him and he looked at the other two men with a pathetic appeal in his face.

"Do not—do not—be too hard," he whispered; "I—I——" And as he again spoke the monosyllable the pallor on his face became yet more deadly, and with a strange little moan he dropped down like a stone at his listeners' feet.

Over the prostrate form the eyes of father and son met—the anguish and horror on each face reflected on the other.

"Guilty!" the old man murmured brokenly; "guilty! My nephew—the husband of my favourite niece—guilty of forgery—guilty of defrauding *me* who have loved him as a father." And again the white head was bowed upon the clasped hands—through whose fingers there dropped slowly the difficult and painful tears of old age.

On that same afternoon, beside Bernard Mason's bed of sickness his wife sat, silently watching him—her face drawn with agony.

Very pitifully and tenderly her cousin Dick had broken to her the terrible events of the morning—his face growing only more gentle when she cried fiercely:

"And you believe such things of *Bernard?* My Bernard who is the soul of honour! Go—go!" and she pointed indignantly to the door; "and never enter our house again until you can unsay what you have said to me to-day."

Through the long hours since then, Doris had patiently watched beside her husband—who lay, sunk in a deep unconsciousness from which no remedies would rouse him.

Ralph came to and fro, sympathetic, helpful, resourceful—his indignation against those who had accused Bernard, as great as Doris' own.

"Absurd, monstrous!" he repeated many times; "it must be some ghastly mistake!"

"Ah! yes—it must be some ghastly mistake"—that was the thought which repeated itself over and over again in the mind of the faithful wife who sat speechlessly gazing at the face of the man she loved.

The church clock was striking eight when, for the first time during her long watch—Bernard stirred slightly—moaned—and flung out his hand.

"How could you think it was I?" he said quickly, in a strange, monotonous voice. "Am I a cheat—a forger?" Silence for a moment, then the hurried voice began again:

"No—no—you must not question me—I cannot say—I tell you—I cannot say—I must not hurt him. I——" Doris rose and bent over the recumbent form, every pulse in her body beating wildly.

"Tell me, dear?" she said softly; "so you know who forged the cheque.

He opened his eyes at the sound of her voice, but it was plain that he did not recognise her.

"How can I tell of the hurt he has done me?" the rapid voice resumed; "I was never a sneak—not even at school—I can't tell of other chaps. And it was even then—then—ah! I can't remember—why can't I remember?"

Doris sat down again trembling from head to foot, whilst his dim, unseeing eyes looked out across the room.

"Then—then—ah! yes, I have it—then my companion—my guide and mine own familiar friend! Ralph—Ralph—Ralph!"

The cry rang through the room, rang through the house; the sick man—roused perhaps, by the very sound, pulled himself up in bed and looked wildly round him—the fire of delirium in his eyes.

"I knew the hand," he said thickly; "I knew Ralph's hand. We used—to play—at copying letters—for fun—as boys. Mine own——familiar — friend. He forged it—he forged it—and I—I will never tell a soul—not a soul—not a soul"—his voice dropped into indistinct murmurings—he fell back on the pillow again, and then once more cried aloud in a very agony of intreaty: "Ralph—Ralph—Ralph."

There was a step on the stair, the door opened and Ralph Jackson crossed the threshold, a look of profound anxiety on his face. But he was not allowed to enter the room; in the flash of a second Doris barred his way, her eyes bright with anger, a flush upon her cheek—her hands held out as though to push him away.

"How *dare* you come here?" she cried under her breath; "how dare you come to pretend anxiety and sympathy for the man you have struck down. I know all—Ralph Jackson—I know all—and may God forgive you for I never, never will."

Round the little grey house on the top of the moor the wintry wind howled and moaned like myriads of lost souls, as it tore across the uplands. It was a freezingly cold night in the January following the discovery of the forgery at Mason's bank—that discovery which had stricken down Bernard Mason with an illness from which it seemed more than likely he might never recover.

The doctors declared that the shock—due to the discovery of his friend's treachery and crime—had upset a brain already overwrought with work and worry about money matters, and since that fatal morning when he had dropped senseless at his uncle's feet, Bernard had never been himself, although occasional lucid intervals woke hope in the breast of his wife.

By medical advice he had been removed to a house in the most remote part of the moor, where absolute quiet reigned supreme, and in the house Doris sat on that wild January night, listening to the howling tempest without, whilst her thoughts wandered over the past months.

No compunction stirred within her towards the man who had wrought such havoc on her husband's life—only bitter anger surged in her heart and she felt actual gladness in realising that he was expiating his crime in the convict prison not so many miles away. Her information, given to Mr. Mason, and based upon her husband's delirious ravings, led to Ralph Jackson's arrest—and after a stubborn declaration of innocence, lasting throughout his trial, he finally acknowledged his guilt, acknowledging too, that he had intended suspicion to fall upon the friend who loved him—Bernard Mason.

"I never dreamt that Bernard would find me out so

Digitized by Google

quickly," he said to Bernard's wife on the one and only occasion when she visited him, during his trial. "I never meant——"

"Ah!—make no excuses," she had answered bitterly; "criminals *do* mean anything. I can never forgive you for having broken Bernard's heart and life—never."

Thoughts of all this passed through Doris' mind now as she sat in the queer little room of the cottage on the moor. Baby Doris sat beside her. Bernard lay in a bed in the corner because the doctors advised that he should not be carried upstairs—from the kitchen behind came the sounds of a hymn being sung cheerfully and lustily by the kindly woman who did all the work of the house.

A wilder gust of wind rattling the casement roused Doris from her dream; she looked down at the golden head of the child beside her and sighed softly.

"Bedtime, sweetheart," she said, touching the child's soft curls tenderly.

"Doesn't the wind make a ugly great noise, mummy?" The child shrank closer to her mother; "and it's awful cold out there, isn't it? When I say my prayers to-night I'll ask God to take care of everybody out on the moor."

"Oh, I hope nobody is out there to-night, darling," Doris shuddered; "it is snowing hard, and the wind must cut like a knife. I hope nobody is out on the wild moor."

"Please, mummy, may I say my prayers in here?" The child said after a moment; "here, in the warm, where you and daddy are?" and she glanced towards the bed; "then I'll go upstairs with Mrs. Widdecombe like a lamb."

Doris smiled an assent, and the little one, after kissing her mother, knelt down beside a great armchair and clasped her tiny hands. She had finished her customary prayer and paused for a moment, then said, very softly:

"And oh! please, dear God, take care of all the poor people out in the wind and cold—and bring them safe home, and——"

Her innocent words were cut short—a terrific blast shook the house to its very foundation, and at the same instant a knock sounded at the door, making Doris leap round suddenly, a great terror on her face.

"Who is there?" she cried; advancing timidly to the door and lifting the latch, "who——"

The door was flung back, a rush of icy air, a torrent of snowflakes poured into the room, and with them came a man at sight of whom a cry of horror rose to Doris' lips and froze there into silent dismay.

The child knelt on; the sick man on the bed never stirred; the man at the door, and the woman looked at one another silently. Then Doris spoke.

"You?" she cried, "you—and here? How dare you? How could you——"

The man advanced into the room and shut and locked the door behind him, and then little Doris rose from her knees, looking at him with round, amazed eyes.

"Was you out on the moor in the snow?" she asked; "I asked God to bring everybody safely home—so He's brought you here; but why do you wear such funny clothes all covered with arrows?"

A harsh laugh broke from the man, the woman shivered and caught the child against her heart.

"Hush, dear, this man is a bad man," she said bitterly; "he was in prison; that is a prison dress—he has got away, I suppose!"

The scathing scorn in her tones made her listener writhe.

"Doris, forgive me, forgive me," he said coming nearer to her, a pitiful expression on his dark face, now so haggard and worn, so unlike the bright Ralph Jackson of the past—"God knows I have repented; God knows I would give my life to undo the wrong I did to give Bernard back his reason. Forgive me—and—help me—I have been wandering on the moor for two nights and a day," and with a gesture of unutterable fatigue he sank into the arm chair.

Though her soul was brimming over with bitterness against this man, a womanly instinct made Doris bring him a glass of milk from the table and some bread which he devoured ravenously—looking round him the while like a hunted animal.

"Help me to escape, Doris," he said presently; "for the sake of old times, for old friendship forgive me and help me."

The white scorn on the woman's face was terrible to see. For answer she swept back the curtain of the bed and revealed her husband's form sunk in a lethargy that was not sleep; and at the sight the convict bowed his head upon his hands and hot tears dropped between his fingers.

"Poor man," the child whispered, "he's c r y i n g—o h, mummy, please forgive him, 'cos God brought him here."

"Did you know we were here?" Doris turned restlessly upon him. He nodded.

"The last visitor who came to see me told me. I have been creeping over here to you in these weary nights—by day I have hidden where I could—knowing that any moment I might be tracked and caught. Doris—forgive me—save me!"

He slipped from the chair upon his knees in a very agony of appeal, and once more baby Doris spoke.

"Oh! mummy, *please* help him, as God really and truly brought him here. Please help him."

"How can I forgive you? How can I?" Doris moaned; "you have spoilt my life—and his—and yet——"

She looked at the white face on the pillow; "Bernard has so often spoken in his wanderings—and always with love—always wanting to shield you—I—I——"

Breaking off her sentence abruptly she suddenly threw open a door into a tiny inner room.

"Go in there—Bernard's clothes are in the cupboard; change quickly, quickly—lest I should repent. Bernard talks of you still—as if he loved you!"

She turned away with a sob as Ralph vanished into the inner room, to emerge presently, dressed in Bernard's clothes.

"Let me touch his hand just once," he said huskily; "I—have repented. I did what I did in a moment of mad folly, when debts pressed. Let me touch his hand."

Doris bowed her head, she could not speak, and the convict approaching the bed, took the thin hand in his own.

"Forgive me, Bernard," he almost sobbed. At the touch of his hand, the sound of his voice, the sick man's eyes opened in a look of full recognition.

"Why, Ralph," he said. "Ralph, old chap! I never told a soul, old man—I will gladly bear the penalty for you."

"God bless you," the convict's voice was choked and hoarse, "but—there is no penalty to pay, dear old man. You are the best friend a man ever had—but there is no penalty to pay. I—am I going right away—and your uncle and wife know the truth—but there's no penalty—to pay."

A smile flashed over the white face.

"Ah! that's right. I'm glad—you owned up for I should never have told of you. I've been a bit queer, I think, but seeing you has made me well! Good-bye, old chap, good luck to you, and I'm glad you told the truth, and cleared me!"

From that day Bernard Mason slowly recovered and became himself again, but the actual truth was never told him.

Letters sometimes reach him from a far western land where Ralph is carving out a new career for himself; they are the letters of a man who is striving after right.

And Doris whispers to herself sometimes:

"Thank God I helped him that night; thank God I forgave. It has given Bernard back to me."

H. Templeton.

£5 A Week for Life!

This is the

HUGE PRIZE OFFERED BY *PEARSON'S WEEKLY.*

(*For particulars, see page* 117.)

Digitized by Google

Which Shall Have Her?

Telling of Two Men's Love for a Woman.

"WHATEVER is the matter with you two fellows?" asked Dick Grayling cheerily, addressing his question to two young men about his own age, which was twenty. "You seem to be scowling at each other every opportunity you get, and you used to be the best of chums."

Ralph Connor and Val Ewing looked at him with the same scowl as they were, according to him, bestowing on one another, but they made no reply. All three lodged in the same house, in the general sitting-room of which they were now assembled; Connor and Ewing were telegraph operators, while Grayling was in a solicitor's office.

"If you fellows have had a quarrel," continued Grayling calmly, "the best thing you can do is to let me be arbitrator and square it up. I'll be absolutely impartial, for I don't like one more than the other—I mean, I like you both equally well. Now, out with it, Connor!" he concluded, turning to that young man, because a faint smile had crossed his face at the doubtful compliment of the remark about not liking one any more than the other.

"Well," said Connor slowly, with a sidelong glance at Ewing, "I don't see why we should not settle it that way, if Ewing is agreeable. One has got to give way, that's certain!"

"Of course!" assented Grayling, speaking with the confidence of a man who knows nothing about the matter. "Val will agree!"

"I don't see how you can decide," objected Ewing. "It's *she* who must do that."

"Oh, rivals, eh?!" queried Grayling. "Still, you might just as well permit me to be mediator, so far as possible, for you can't get out of the difficulty by one swallowing the other, which is what you would both like to do, if appearances count for anything!"

Connor and Ewing glanced at one another, and gradually a smile stole over their faces, ending in a laugh. They both appreciated the humorous side of the affair.

"We will put the matter before you, Dick," observed Ewing, straightening himself in his chair, "and perhaps you can advise as to the best way to act. You ought to know something, being a solicitor."

"You see," said Connor, getting to business at once, "I fell in love with her first!"

"Oh, tell that to someone else!" interrupted Ewing wrathfully. "I fell in love with her when I saw her at the soirée, and that was the evening before you——"

"Excuse me!" broke in Connor, stiffly.

Before he could say more, Grayling intervened.

"I'm to be the judge, and I may as well direct the course of proceedings. I gather from the evidence that you are both in love with the same girl; that doesn't require much inspiration to perceive. I don't think it matters an atom who fell in love with her first; the all-important point, in my opinion, is—Does she favour either of you?"

"That's just where the difficulty comes in!" pronounced Ewing. "I am convinced that she would favour me if Connor were out of the way, but while he will push himself forward the girl hasn't a chance to show preference. She's a very tender-hearted, sensitive, good-natured, generous, loving——"

"We'll take the rest of that evidence as read!" declared Grayling judiciously. "But I suspect that Connor thinks she prefers him, but doesn't care to show it in front of you—or, perhaps I ought to say, while you are also a candidate for her favours!"

"Precisely!" agreed Connor admiringly. "You'll make a splendid judge one day, old man!"

"Oh, one gets accustomed to seeing through things quickly in a lawyer's office," remarked Grayling, with pretended nonchalance, although he was really flattered. "I think we ought to adjourn the further hearing of this case till I have been to one or two of these Institute meetings and have seen how she treats you both."

"Won't do!" asserted Connor and Ewing in a breath.

"You must take it for granted," continued the latter, "that she would have one if the other were out of the way, and it is your business to decide how we are to determine which of us shall withdraw."

"I agree that the lady ought to decide that," said Dick reflectively, "and I ought to suggest a way of making her do it that will be fair to each of you and yet not embarrass her. It's a tough case, and we must adjourn for half an hour or so, while I smoke and think it out!"

Rather more than half an hour later he resumed his judicial capacity, but as there was a fourth occupant of the room by that time, the three friends drew their chairs together and Dick whispered his judgment, or plan, in a very unjudicial style, between puffs of smoke and smothered ejaculations. In the end, the two litigants assented, and the case was concluded.

Two evenings later there was a social gathering for young men and women at the Goldhurst Institute. This institute was intended to afford a meeting-place for recreation and amusement, reading and study for the district in which it was situated, and the ruling spirit of the undertaking was Mr. Dalgleish. The place was kept going chiefly by philanthropic persons, and Mr. Dalgleish occasionally organised concerts and lectures for the express purpose of adding to the funds. It was a good work, and he was well assisted by his daughter, a charming girl of nineteen.

This social gathering was an ordinary occurrence, so that there was every chance of obtaining a little chat with Miss Constance Dalgleish. Connor and Ewing sauntered to the entrance together; it was what they had done many times previously, and only a keen observer would have noticed that they looked anxious.

"We had better wait till we see that she is in a position where she will see us as we enter—see us both at once," said Connor. "That will be the fair way. We must do that, or the one she sees first may get the advantage."

"I don't think so, although I have no objection to that proposition," answered Ewing. "I fancy that if we went in separately it would give her the opportunity of asking the one she prefers to help her to transcribe the message. However, let us go in together; she will take the first chance of getting one of us aside, because she will be curious to know what it

Digitized by Google

says, and then the fortunate one seizes his opportunity and the other withdraws."

"Withdraws for the time," corrected the other. "You forget that she may select as interpreter the one she likes least, because she would feel less embarrassed. If Dick put a heart in the corner, as agreed, why that will tell her it is a love message!"

"It's very perplexing," said Connor.

They waited outside the inner door with the glass panels, waiting for the psychological moment; twice they were upon the point of entering, but they drew back because Miss Dalgleish turned her back and became much occupied with a guest. At last they saw the object of their affections gazing steadily at the door and they entered.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Constance Dalgleish in a pleasant tone and with an amiable smile. "I thought you were not coming. Do you know, I want your help."

"Mine?" queried both the young men simultaneously.

Then they felt small and were vexed. Each had thought to make a point, but the simultaneity of the exclamation had made them appear like parrots.

"I will be with you again in a minute! Will you take a seat over there?" And Constance flitted to another part of the room to set a new member at ease, returning quickly to the young men.

"I have an extraordinary communication," she explained, taking a letter from her pocket. "It seems to be written in a kind of shorthand, but it's all dots and dashes, and I've been told that it is the telegraph alphabet. So I thought you could help me."

"Certainly," exclaimed Connor quickly, thus gaining a point over his rival.

"Grayling is an ass!" thought Ewing. "Here's a pretty pickle we are in. She has both of us to tell her, which spoils the idea. No, it isn't Grayling exactly; it's Connor. We ought to have come in separately. I wish I'd had nothing to do with it, but had worked on my own account."

Constance unfolded the paper and disclosed the letter written in the Morse characters. A neatly-drawn heart, with a ring underneath, was designed at the top left-hand corner.

"What is it?" asked Constance innocently.

"Looks like a love letter!" said Ewing boldly, determined not to lose ground. Constance flushed slightly and appeared somewhat uneasy. Ewing took this for a sign that she had a preference for him, and this time he said hard things under his breath about Grayling. How could the girl show any preference while Connor was there?

"I think you must be mistaken," she answered. "I don't think that anyone—— Now, what is the meaning of this first hieroglyphic, a dot and a dash?"

"That is A. And the next, which begins a word, is B; it's a dash and three dots, you see. The letter begins 'A beautiful young lady.' The next sign is W. It seems to be very complimentary, Miss Dalgleish!"

Constance appeared perplexed, but the flush left her cheeks a moment later, and she sat staring at the letter. Connor and Ewing, eager to make points, alternately deciphered a word or two of the missive, oblivious of the fact that she was paying no attention.

The letter was to the effect that the beautiful young lady had captured the hearts of two men, and it besought her to make a selection promptly in order to dissipate the suspense and anxiety of the aspirants for her heart and hand. She was requested to return the letter, with her initials at the foot, to the one who was dearest to her.

"That's a peculiar billet-doux!" remarked Ewing, when the process of deciphering was completed and Constance made no sign.

"Very strange," chimed in Connor.

The young fellows felt decidedly uncomfortable. They had expected that Constance, suspecting the nature of the communication and its source, would select one of them to explain it, and that one would have been able, circumstances being favourable, to press his suit. But what could they do together? They glanced at one another sheepishly at first, but fiercely as the seconds sped away and Miss Dalgleish did not speak.

"I think that someone—that is, two persons—must have made a mistake," she said at last, looking up with a worried expression on her face, which had grown quite pale. "I must think this over. I am greatly indebted to you for helping me to find out what it means, and now you must excuse me as I have to see how they are getting on."

"What does that mean?" asked Connor, staring at Ewing. "A mistake?"

"Maidenly shyness, that's all," cried Ewing jubilantly. "You could hardly expect the girl to declare herself to one in the presence of the other, and she didn't wish to hurt the feelings of the unfortunate by as good as telling him to his face that he was rejected. That's a little stratagem to postpone matters. Look here, old fellow, you might as well go home and leave the field to me! It's a dead certainty that I'm the lucky beggar! Didn't you see the glance she gave me?"

"You!" exclaimed Connor sarcastically. "Whatever made you think she wanted you? I expect she will send that letter to me, but I hope to goodness she doesn't muddle our names!"

They waited for Constance to come and have another chat with them; they parted company, and tried to join in the merriment of others, but they found the social gathering very flat without her, and she did not seek them out. At half-past ten the entertainment was over and the visitors began to leave. Connor and Ewing lingered till the last, and then they walked up to Mr. Dalgliesh and his daughter to bid them good night.

"Good night, Mr. Connor. Good night, Mr. Ewing," said Constance, forcing a smile and making an effort to speak easily.

She did not hold herself with her usual grace and suppleness of figure; there was an effort to attract attention, quite uncommon with her. She raised her left hand to her throat as she shook hands with them, and this was clearly done so that they should look at it. They could not fail to observe it, and their hearts seemed to stand still as they did so. On the third finger of that left hand was an engagement ring!

The two young fellows did not speak a word till they found themselves in the sitting-room of their lodgings. Connor was the first to break the silence.

"She never wore it before this evening, Val, so the engagement must be new.

"No!" assented Ewing moodily. "And all the time we thought that she was falling in love with us, because she looked pretty and confused when we were gallant, and because her natural sweetness of disposition prompted her to be amiable, why, she was thinking of the other fellow! That was what made her confused when we paid her certain compliments and attentions. I am inclined to think that she never guessed that we were hit, or she would have said something to stop it."

"Yes," agreed Connor. "But she told us the truth in a neat way. Spared our feelings. Is Dick in bed? I think I should like to punch him for suggesting that silly plan. If we had waited we should have learnt the truth without betraying ourselves. I shall emigrate!"

"I shall try for a job in the country!" growled the other. "We shall appear pretty foolish!"

However, while they were awaiting the desired transfer to another post, their annoyance wore off, and they were able to see the humorous side.

As a result they were present at the marriage of Constance three months later, and wished her happiness in all sincerity.

George Day.

Digitized by Google

A JEWEL ROBBERY AND A BOOK.

The Tale of a Deep-Laid Scheme.

Although I broke into my friend Jackson's room in a manner that was not remarkable for its gentleness, it did not seem to disturb him in the least, for he continued calmly reading the book that he held in his hand, in which he appeared deeply engrossed.

This fact was suspicious in itself, for Jackson is not a man to take up a novel in the small hours of the morning. It seemed evident to me that he had recognised my step on the stairs, and having a history prepared about the book, he had taken it up as an excuse for telling the tale.

I hesitated a moment whether to advance or retire. Then I thought that the day was yet young, and Jackson's stories were worth hearing, and his cigars were very good.

So I ventured on a cough. Jackson continued reading. I tried again to attract his attention.

"Well, old man," I said heartily, "good evening. I thought I would just look in as I was passing."

Still it pleased Jackson's plans to ignore my presence, and it was not until I had crossed the room and stood directly between him and the light that he deigned to look up with a very well feigned start of surprise.

"Well," he said, springing to his feet, and shaking hands heartily, "I declare I never saw you come in. Why didn't you speak? Sit down, man, and make yourself at home."

He turned down the leaf he was reading of his precious book with much ostentation, and with a sigh laid it regretfully on the floor.

"Studying?" I suggested.

"No," he replied, "just peeping into a little book that has been unopened on my shelf for about five years. It was a most extraordinary thing altogether," he continued, gazing meditatively at the fire.

"What," I inquired, "was extraordinary?"

"Why," said Jackson, "that I should meet the author of this book this evening as he was coming down the steps of the Empire. A man, mind you, that one has not heard of for five years, although at one time his reputation was world-wide. You know him by name, no doubt. Job Roy, the man who wrote 'Stones of Great Value.'"

"Job Roy? I don't know him," said I.

"You don't know Job Roy?" cried Jackson. "You have never heard of 'Stones of Great Value'?" He sprang to his feet, and his voice fairly shrieked with excitement. He took up the book, and showed me the number of editions it had run into, then threw it on the floor, and would have raved about the ignorance of the modern man of letters for the rest of the night, had I not calmed him.

"You must remember," I said, "that we are not all so well up in men and things as you are, and that we journalists have to discuss so many subjects in the course of the year, that it is not surprising that we forget about them all. Now sit down and calm yourself, and tell me all about it from beginning to end."

"It's a long story," said Jackson, sinking back in his chair, "but when a journalist comes to me, and tells me he has never heard of Job Roy, I certainly think it is time that I should refresh his memory for his own good. Besides," he continued, gradually getting under weigh, "it's a story of your own trade; the story of a great 'boom;' the first boom in literature of modern days. For it is only quite recently, you understand, that men took to making little wars on their own account, and exploring out-of-the-way lands, and writing books on subjects, and making their fortunes in this way.

"The beginning of Job Roy's literary career, then," went on Jackson, while I was feeling for my note-book and pencil, "was the orthodox beginning of famous writers. He threw up a good trade, invested in a garret, a ream of foolscap, and a shilling's-worth of ink and pens, and proceeded to waste them as fast as human hands could work. His stories went the orthodox round of publishing houses, and returned to him in the orthodox way, having gained nothing but a vast accumulation of dirt. He came to the end of his resources, starved for a day, and was just giving up in despair when an idea suddenly took birth in his mind, which he immediately put on paper and sent out on its travels. It returned to him, of course, and, after living for half a year on his landlady's money, he took it to the last publisher he could think of, who gave more hope than the other—all in the orthodox way.

"This publisher, you must know, had just set up business when Job Roy called on him, and had plenty of time in which to read stories by unknown authors, and plenty of knowledge in his trade to recognise a good investment when it came his way.

"He promised to read Job Roy's novel, and let him hear in a day or two what he thought of it. He read through the story, and, having satisfied himself that it might make a book under certain conditions, and that those conditions would never be realised, he sent round for its author.

"'This book,' he said, smiling sweetly at Job Roy as he stood expectantly before him, thus raising his hopes to the utmost, 'is a very good book, but,' he continued, dashing all hopes to the ground, 'would probably, under the ordinary conditions, have no sale at all.'

"Job Roy's face turned pale.

"'What do you say?' he stammered. 'It is a good book, and yet it would have no sale? How can that be?'

"'It's a book, you see,' replied the publisher, 'that people would take no notice of unless it were forced under their eyes. In fact, it is a book that must be 'boomed' to go. It must be forced along, shoved, hurried into attention, have some scandal raised about it, so that it can't be disregarded. Unless we can do that, all that remains for your book is this'—and the publisher kicked a new wastepaper basket in which he had invested, and Job Roy groaned aloud.

"When he had gone the publisher lit a cigarette, and fell to considering again the manuscript that lay before him. And the more he thought about it the more he was determined that there was merit in the book, and merit, properly applied, that would not only make its author's fortune, but make him, the publisher, both rich and famous. Then he wavered again, and determined that it was too risky a venture for a new publisher to undertake, and he threw away his cigarette, put the book aside, and began reading the morning paper.

"As he glanced down the columns a certain little paragraph caught his eye. It ran as follows: 'The Duchess of Lesborough's jewels are not only the most beautiful, but among the most valuable in London at the present time. They are valued at £50,000, although the Duchess would not part with them for more than twice that sum. They have been in the family for a long while, and she looks upon them as sacred heirlooms.'

"Now, Job Roy's novel, 'Stones of Great Value,' was entirely founded on the idea of a great jewel robbery, and it was for this reason that the paragraph I have quoted caught the publisher's eye. And the stones of great value of Job Roy's estimation were set down as being worth about the

Digitized by Google

same amount as the Duchess of Lesborough's jewels—and the jewels of the story also belonged to a duchess. All that was required to complete the resemblance between fiction and reality was for the genuine duchess to be robbed of her stones.

"The thought that it would be rather curious if this should happen by any strange chance occurred to the publisher. And as he was thinking an idea came to him.

"He leant back in a chair and closed his eyes, and the possibilities of the idea passed before him. Never for an instant did it leave his mind for the remainder of the day. He took it away with him at night, and thought of it, and dreamt of it—this great idea.

"On the following day he went through all the daily and weekly papers on which he could lay his hands, and every now and again he came across a little paragraph about the Duchess of Lesborough's jewels. It was evident that these paragraphs, praising the beauty of the stones, estimating their great value, and declaring them to be the sacred heirlooms of an old family, were, one and all, written by one hand, and that hand, a woman's; none other, in fact, than that of the Duchess of Lesborough herself.

"Having satisfied himself that her Grace was striving very hard to advertise her jewels, for what purpose she alone knew, and always with his great idea in his mind, the publisher set about finding out all that he could concerning the stones in question.

"It was not long before he discovered that her Grace had purchased them from a leading merchant only a few months previously.

"He also discovered that the Duchess herself was an American heiress, who had followed the fashion of marrying a Duke for his title, and that now that he was dead she was trying her utmost to make her way into Society.

"All this fitted in very well with the plans that the publisher had devised.

"Having come to this conclusion, he sent again for his friend the author—for in their mutual lack of money, and their mutual desire to gain it, a kind of friendship had sprung up between them.

"Job Roy came—in a cab.

"For three hours the two men remained closeted, with their heads together, talking. Then Job Roy went out and ordered an oyster supper, while the publisher swung round on his pivot chair, and wrote the smartest business letter that he had ever penned—a letter so forcible, cunning, and clearly put, that it could not fail to carry effect. Having read this through and satisfied himself that it lacked nothing, he put it in an envelope, and addressed it to 'Her Grace the Duchess of Lesborough.'

"The reply came by return of post in a scented, heavily-crested letter.

"'Dear Mr. Publisher,' it ran, 'Your letter to hand, What a funny idea! You had better come and have tea, and tell me all about it.—Yours sincerely, Dolly Lesborough.'

"Accordingly, the publisher went to tea that afternoon.

"He found the Duchess in a room that seemed literally to teem with silver, every other object seemed plated with gold. He trod on a carpet that sank like a bed of feathers beneath his feet. A large, American-looking hand, almost covered with rings, was held out to him. He took it mechanically, and found a pretty, merry face above—a very jolly face for a Duchess.

"The publisher recovered himself quickly. He immediately let off the compliment with which he had prepared himself on the way.

"'I am delighted to note,' he muttered, bowing low, 'by your letter that I received to-day, that the business qualities of the Duchess of Lesborough are not less deserving of praise than her beauty.'

"Her Grace laughed merrily, and clapped her hands.

"'Now, that's real nice of you,' she replied, 'for I have always reckoned that I am about as smart a business woman as they make. Didn't I hook the Duke and his title within a fortnight, in spite of all the bets that were made at the clubs? Now he, poor fellow, has been carried off by his gout, I am thrown on my own resources to get along as best I may.'

"'I notice,' said the publisher, 'that your jewels have already become famous.'

"'That's so. When the Duke died I bought all the jewels and trinkets that I could find. That's what you English seem to admire more than anything else. A woman with jewels is bound to succeed. Though, somehow,' added her Grace, with a sigh, 'your Society ladies don't exactly seem to rush to me with open arms.'

"'You must remember,' said the publisher, 'that, famous as they are, everyone has not yet heard of your jewels.'

"That's quite true. Say, Mr. Publisher, how am I to get them known?"

"The Duchess sipped her tea from a priceless little blue china cup, and looked meditatively over the rim at the publisher.

"'It was for the purpose of telling you how to do that,' replied he, 'that I called this afternoon. If you will leave everything to me I will guarantee that within three weeks the Duchess of Lesborough's jewels will be more talked about than any other jewels in London.'

"'La!' cried the Duchess, executing a *pas de seul*, 'and how much do you want for doing that?'

"'Only two little things. First, that you will promise not to allow your jewels to be seen by anyone until I tell you you may; second, that you will procure a dummy set before to-morrow.'

"'Done,' cried the Duchess. 'Anything else?'

"'In the afternoon I shall ask you to go for a drive. Before you go, I want you to tell your secretary, steward, butler, anyone you like, that you are going to take your jewels to the bankers. Circulate it among your household, so that everyone is talking about it. Do you think you are good enough actress to do all that without arousing suspicion?'

"'Rather!' The Duchess elevated her toe, and contemplated it. 'First an actress, then a millionairess, then a widow, then a Duchess——'

"'Then,' added the publisher, 'the first lady in British society, second only to the Queen herself.'

"'When will the fun begin?' she asked eagerly.

"'To-morrow evening,' said the other. 'But you must be very careful. How do you think these headings will look in the papers?'

"The publisher produced some carefully written manuscripts and laid them before the Duchess. The headlines were startling enough: 'The Duchess of Lesborough's Jewels—Stolen—Valued at £50,000—The Duchess Inconsolable — Clever Robbery—No Trace of the Thief—Scotland Yard Baffled.' Following these were several striking accounts of the robbery, of the jewels, and the Duchess, sufficiently exciting to produce a flutter among the evening papers, to which they would be dispatched.

"The Duchess was delighted.

"'But what am I to do with my diamonds?' she inquired.

"'Bury them,' said the publisher, 'or hide them somewhere where no one will find them. If anyone suspects it is a trick we shall be ruined for ever. I implore you to be careful.'

"'You may trust me. Now, is there anything else I can do for you? A thousand or two don't make such odds to me, you know!'

"'Thanks. I certainly have a little scheme on hand that requires financing. I am going to

Digitized by Google

publish my first book very shortly. As I told you in my letter, it's all part of my scheme. The book deals entirely with a jewel robbery, and the jewels are supposed to be yours. When all the excitement is over, the book will be published, and everyone will read it. The whole affair, your Grace, is a gigantic boom, first for a Duchess, then for an author, and, lastly, for a publisher. And it all requires financing.'

"'Well, how much do you want?'

"The publisher named a modest sum. The Duchess promised to forward it, on receiving security that the publisher would carry out his part of the bargain. After going through the scheme carefully once more he took up his hat and said good-bye.

"On the day following the one on which the publisher called on the Duchess of Lesborough, her Grace procured a dummy set of diamonds from a small jeweller.

"Having given her order she returned home, and gradually made it generally known among her household that in the afternoon she would take her jewels to the bankers.

"About one o'clock the imitation stones arrived, and her Grace sat down to as hearty a luncheon as ever a Duchess consumed. She ordered her carriage for half-past two.

"'Tell them to drive to the bank," she said, as she stood on the steps. 'I am going to leave my jewel-box there.'

"'To the bank,' whispered the butler to the footman.

"'To the bank,' said the footman to the coachman, 'Her Grace is going to lock up her jewels.'

"And the carriage drove away.

"Apparently, however, the Duchess changed her mind, for she gave orders to be driven first to an outlying district, where it was imperative that she should pay some early calls.

"'I will go to the bank on my way home,' said she.

"In the meanwhile an incident occurred at the Duchess of Lesborough's residence. It seemed that the carriage had barely turned the corner of the street, when Her Grace discovered that she had left her jewel-box behind. She had, apparently, sent her footman running back to bring her the precious box, for a man, who, it afterwards transpired, was disguised in every particular as her footman, requested the butler to give him Her Grace's case, which, as he declared, she had left on her dressing-table.

"The butler ran upstairs and found the box, and hastened with it to the footman, who hurriedly carried it away down the street.

"That, however, was the last that was ever seen of the rascal.

"About four o'clock the Duchess had finished her calls, and ordered 'Home.'

"She was reminded by her servant that she had wished to call at the bank.

"'Oh, yes, to the bank,' she replied, and then, 'Why, dear me, I must have left my jewel-box behind. How careless! Well, I will take it to-morrow.'

"The Duchess had come a long way out to pay her calls, and it was nearly six before the carriage neared home.

"It was then she heard the newsboys calling her name in the street. 'The Duchess of Lesborough's jewels,' they cried, 'Stolen!—Valued at £50,000—Clever Robbery!—Evening paper!'

"She procured a copy, and the coachman, with a white face, galloped the horses homewards.

"Holding the paper as best she could with the jolting of the carriage, her Grace read the account of the imaginary robbery of her jewels, which, in reality, as she well knew, were snugly stowed away in the family safe. She smiled as she thought how smartly the publisher had done his work.

"Her secretary met her at the door of the house, and hastily began explaining things. A man, disguised as her footman, had discovered—how, Heaven alone knows—'although,' said the secretary, 'suspicion pointed to the butler as having helped him,' that her Grace had left her jewel-box behind her. He had received the box from the butler and had gone off with the stones. Another mystery—an account of the whole affair had appeared in the evening newspapers.

"Never, even in her ballet-girl days, had the Duchess acted so brilliantly as when she ordered her whole household up before her and questioned them as to the robbery of her jewels. All, however, to no effect. The mystery was as unexplainable as ever, and the Duchess left it to the public and to the press to discover what they could.

"The latter took up the matter eagerly. It had come at a time when news was scarce, and the public seemed deeply interested in the jewel robbery. On the next day the papers that claimed to have discovered a clue sold like wild-fire. Some accused the butler, some the footman, others her Grace's secretary, of having stolen the jewels. Their movements were carefully watched by the police, but all with no result. The whole affair was as pretty a mystery as had ever puzzled the public, and the press made the most of it. The Duchess' jewels were being 'boomed' as jewels were never 'boomed' before.

"Three days later public interest was beginning to flag, for nothing new turned up.

"On the evening of the third day the Publisher and the Author met together over a little dinner in the former's rooms.

"Over the wine the Publisher remarked: 'To-morrow, I think I shall arrest you.'

"For a man about to be arrested, however, the Author appeared to take the matter very coolly.

"'You think it is the best time?' he remarked, flicking the ask from his cigarette.

"'I think so. Public interest is beginning to flag a little. I will come about twelve, if you will be up by then. I want you to be gazing meditatively down the muzzle of a revolver and to babble like a baby about a jewel robbery and a confession and suicide. Think you can manage all that?'

"'Easily,' said Job Roy. 'Every author is three-parts actor.'

"'Good! I shall judge whether your arrest causes a sensation or not. If so, I shall leave things for a day or two before I have you released. Or if the magistrates are too sharp for us, and begin to suspect that it is all a put-up affair, I shall hurry things on to a crisis. Anyway, you may rest assured that they won't keep you more than a day or two, for it wouldn't be safe to let them. By the way, you might as well copy out this confession now.'

"The Publisher took a new book, uncut, and looking as though it had come straight from the press, called 'Stones of Great Value,' by Job Roy, and, opening it at a certain page, handed it to the author.

"On this page the principal character in the story confessed to having stolen the stones of the fictitious Duchess. 'Dear friend,' ran the confession, 'I can no longer live while another man is suspected of having committed a crime of which I am guilty. I have decided to solve two mysteries by blowing out my brains. For it was I who stole the Duchess' jewels. When this reaches you I shall be dead.' There was much more of the same kind, and at the foot of the confession were the initials 'J.R.,' which, should the page be found lying about loose, might be taken for the name of either the hero of the story or for Job Roy, the name of the author of the book. It might, indeed, be rather awkward for Job Roy if the confession of the hero in 'Stones of Great Value,' written in the author's own handwriting, and signed with his initials, should fall into the hands of the police at a time when the genuine Duchess of Lesborough had really lost her diamonds.

"He began to copy out the confession on a piece of foolscap, so that it began at the top of the page, and ended with his

Digitized by Google

initials at the bottom. When he had finished it he handed it over to the publisher, who put it safely away.

"'To-morrow,' he cried, 'our plans will be reaching their fulfilment. We have boomed the Duchess' diamonds, and to-morrow you will be boomed, and three days later your book. Let us drink to unqualified success.'

"On the following day a man, dishevelled, waving a paper, rushed wildly into the nearest police station from Job Roy's lodgings.

"'See,' he cried, 'here is a confession of the man who stole the Duchess of Lesborough's jewels. Come and take him quick before he blows out his brains. A friend of mine, Job Roy by name, a bit of an author,' and before the astonished constables had time to realise the state of affairs, they found themselves being hurried along in a cab to Job Roy's rooms.

"The door was locked. A policeman put his shoulder to it, and burst it open. At a table, muttering incoherently to himself, was the author of 'Stones of Great Value.' To knock down the pistol and to handcuff him was the work of a moment.

"That evening the whole report of the thief's arrest appeared in the papers. Public excitement was again roused to its utmost. When the Job Roy trial came on the court was crowded.

"Nothing could be gained from the prisoner, for he could only mutter senseless words about a book and a confession. This confession was the sole evidence that there was against him. As the magistrates remarked, it seemed much more likely that either the butler or the secretary had done the deed. The magistrates were about to remand the prisoner for a week in order that the police might make inquiries about the confession, the people were rising from their seats to leave the court, when something happened that drew every eye from the prisoner to the figure of a man who now appeared in court, and caused a sensation that has not yet been forgotten by the police.

"'Your worships,' said a police inspector, stepping forward, 'I wish to make an important statement. This gentleman, a book publisher, informs me that the confession, on the strength of which the prisoner was arrested, is *merely this stray leaf out of a novel he was writing.* The poor gentleman, thinking no doubt that the publisher had refused his work, had temporarily lost his mind, and this accounts for the reason why he was not able to clear himself from the ridiculous charge of robbery. The book, your worship, deals entirely with a jewel robbery, and is called "Stones of Great Value."'

"And that," said Jackson, "is the end of my story. The plot has gradually unfolded itself. The Publisher's great idea has worked itself out to the end. He had boomed the Duchess of Lesborough's jewels; the Author's name was in every mouth; thousands of copies of the book were sold. Author, Publisher, and Duchess were made famous.

"As I told you, I met Job Roy to-day on the steps of the Empire, fat and well-fed. And what seems the most remarkable part of the whole affair to me is that this book, 'Stones of Great Value,' was once world-famous, and is now almost totally forgotten."

It occurred to me as a crept out of Jackson's rooms at the break of day, that even this fact was not so remarkable as Jackson's imagination.

Maud Tinwell.

BOY: "I want to buy some paper." Dealer: "What kind of paper?" Boy: "You'd better give me fly paper. I want to make a kite."

"THAT was a pretty hat that Mrs. Jones wore last night," he suggested. "Pretty?" she exclaimed with infinite scorn. "Why, I happen to know that that hat only cost fifteen shillings."

POET: "I hope you have received the little volume of poems I ventured to send you." Baroness: "Oh, yes, I have—it is charming—I wonder where I have put it." Little Karl: "Under the leg of the table, mamma, to make it steady."

Your Editor Chats.

IN a few weeks' time I shall be starting yet another powerful serial story. The name of the author is familiar to readers of *Short Stories*, and the reputation which he has gained for tales of remarkable power is fully maintained in this new one.

Meanwhile, I am preparing a further series of articles to follow the adventures of Belinda, and I don't think that you will be disappointed when you read them. I may say that they will differ considerably from Cynthia or Belinda, and in this way we shall obtain a freshness of style and of ideas that will be, I hope, much appreciated.

The offer made by "Dayton," the reader of *Short Stories* who made his fortune, has been very much appreciated, and a huge number of readers have sent in to justify their claim to the sums of £10. The result of the first competition will be announced next week. Those readers who have not already written in to give a reason why they should receive the £10 should do so at once. If they are not personally in want of the £10, then they would be doing a good turn to some needy friend to whom the cash would prove a boon and a blessing. On page 111 you will find another coupon which is the last one that will appear.

A correspondent wants to know why we do not put more illustrations in *Short Stories*, as he is very fond of looking at pictures, and thinks that more sketches would help to make the paper more popular. This, of course, at first glance is quite a reasonable view to take of the matter, but there are two very great objections.

One is that unless a story contains incidents which lend themselves to strong and vigorous pictures, it is not worth while illustrating. The ordinary man-and-woman-facing-each-other class of illustration is of no interest whatever to anybody and is better left out altogether. The stories in this little paper are full of powerful incidents, but these are described verbally, and a verbal description of a strong incident does not always lend itself to illustration.

The second objection is that every illustration displaces a certain amount of reading matter, and, after all, readers of *Short Stories* buy the paper for the sake of the stories, and although an occasional bright illustration is very much appreciated, I am sure that to fill the paper with a lot of big sketches at the expense of a number of words would not be liked.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

ASTOUNDING SOCIETY REVELATIONS.

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. A celebrated French artist in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman and friend of Lady Peggy.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

Belinda Comes to England.

SUDDENLY there was a terrific thundering at the door and the next instant Stanley Forbes stood before the Duke.

I had always admired Stanley Forbes, always thought him one of the strongest and bravest of men, but never did I realise just how strong he was until that night. He dwarfed Eastacres mentally and morally and physically. Before him the Duke collapsed literally and absolutely. He seemed to shrink visibly, and I felt a touch of apprehension as I marked how Stanley towered above him.

It was all over in a moment. A short, sharp struggle, and his Grace, the Duke of Eastacres, was lying in an undistinguished heap upon the floor, with Stanley standing over him, shaking with passion. As to my feelings at that moment they were very varied. Relief at Belinda's escape—I verily believe Eastacres meant to kill her—mortification at the collapse of the scheme, admiration for Forbes warred one against the other.

"Get up," said Stanley at last. "Get up and clear off before I kill you. It is like you," he went on with a bitter sneer, "to match yourself against a girl. With me you were afraid to try conclusions. You only dared to plot against me in the dark. And even then you failed. You killed poor Adams certainly, but you failed in your attempt to ruin me. My horse won the race. I have won my money and you"—he jeered as Eastacres staggered to his feet—"you are beaten at all points. What," as the Duke glanced savagely round the room seeking for a weapon of attack. "Are you going to try that sort of game? No use, my friend, no use." As he spoke he threw back the door and motioned the Duke to go.

Eastacres slowly walked across the room. "And Miss North," he sneered, "she will remain here with you?"

"Miss North will accompany me to where her friends await her," Stanley replied.

"Those friends will be gratified to learn where she has spent the evening," said Eastacres. "Paris generally will be amused."

"I think not," said Stanley calmly. "I think you are too astute a scoundrel not to hold your tongue, when I inform you that at the first word of slander from your lips about Miss North, I charge you openly with an attempt to murder Adams. I mean it, and—I shall prove my case. Only on that condition do I let you go. You hear me?"

The Duke made no answer, but with a look of concentrated venom, hate, and bitterness, passed from the room.

I did not wait to hear the explanation that ensued between Belinda and her rescuer, but hastily made my way downstairs, and waiting till the figure of the Duke had become absorbed in the darkness, made my way in the direction of Paris, stopping the first *fiacre* that I met.

I arrived at the Hotel D'Auteuil to find the place in an uproar. The Marquise in hysterics, Rolla in a state of mind bordering on distraction, while Paul, very white about the mouth, walked to and fro in an excited state.

"What has happened?" I asked. "Has Belinda been found? Has anything been heard or discovered? I am half distracted with anxiety."

Paul seemed relieved at my arrival. Drawing me aside, he told me how matters stood.

"Rolla has made the most careful and discreet inquiries at the British Embassy," he said, "but he has been assured that no one answering to Carr's description has been there. In desperation and alarm I went to Stanley Forbes and asked him what was to be done. He told me that he knew where Belinda was, that in fact she had gone shopping with his wife, and he promised to bring her here within the hour. That hour is now all but past," and he glanced anxiously at his watch, "they have not yet come."

Even as he spoke the wheels of a carriage sounded on the asphalt outside. A minute later Belinda entered, followed by Stanley and his wife.

A little pale, perhaps, and a trifle self-conscious, but otherwise she showed no trace of all she had gone through.

"I'm afraid you've been quite anxious, Lady Peggy," she said sweetly. "I suppose I have behaved rather badly. It certainly wasn't a right thing to go off without a word of explanation. But you see I saw Sheila just after the race, and she was so upset at poor Adams' accident that I felt obliged to try to comfort her. To make a long story short, we went and had some tea together, took a turn in the Luxembourg, and went for a drive in the Bois to finish up with. I went home with her for a late, a very late dinner, and found Mr. Forbes waiting for me. He was terribly cross, and vowed I should get a fearful scolding. You don't look very forbidding all the same," and with that the girl kissed the Marquise, smiled on me, and sat down as self-possessed as possible.

Digitized by Google

Her account of the evening's procedure gained credence from the Marquise, and, I think, Baron Rolla. Paul was more sceptical; whether or no Belinda told him the truth I cannot say; he made no mention of the matter to me.

Belinda, inspired by Stanley, most astute of lawyers, did not confide in me—the one person to whom she should have confessed. Early next morning, however, Stanley called at the hotel, and in a short but spirited interview, told me that if I continued to countenance the Duke's attentions to Belinda—if, in short, I tolerated his society or acknowledged him as friend, he would then and there write such an account of my chaperonage of Belinda as would cause her father to remove his daughter on the instant from my care.

"There's no need for me to go more minutely into the matter," he said in conclusion, "you and I understand each other, Lady Peggy. At least I hope we do—for your sake." And with a curious smile he departed, leaving me with years added to my age!

Only on one point could I take comfort. Belinda, at all events, did not suspect me of connivance with the Duke. Of that I was quite sure; otherwise, so honest was this child of nature, that she would have left me, and gone straight to her Australian home. This being so, I might still gain my end, still win my £20,000. Beaten at one point, I could re-form and carry the day at another.

I hoped and prayed for better luck at my next venture in marrying Belinda!

We left Paris the last day in May, *en route* for an old friend's place in Hampshire. We were going to stay at Lady Haviland's, a charming old manor house dating back to the reign of Charles I. The London season was late that year, and about the middle of June Belinda and I were booked for a short stay with the Duchess of Staunton in Brook Street. Till then, however, we were going to recuperate at Havilands Manor.

We arrived at the little country station about five. There was a small knot of people already on the platform bound like ourselves for Havilands. I recognised Hugh, Lord Farringdon, Lady Molly Vansittart, and the Marquis of Towchester. The rest of our fellow guests were of the usual kind, smart, up-to-date, ready to flirt with anybody's husband or anyone's wife but their own. Not that one is troubled much with one's legitimate partner nowadays. It is in fact bad form to ask married couples to the same house party. No one realised this more fully than Lady Haviland. Her parties were always arranged with the utmost tact. Her week-ends were simply delightful; many an *affaire* commenced at the Manor.

I daresay you who read these articles will like to know something of the life in a country house among our set. I will do my best to satisfy your curiosity. To begin with, the usual hour to arrive is between five and six. You go straight to your room, where tea is brought you, unless you are young and beautiful enough to defy the ravages a railway journey makes in one's appearance, in which case you go downstairs to tea, usually served in the library or study or smoking-room. Tea is at hand from five to seven, and most of us go in for caviare, anchovy sandwiches, with an accompaniment of Kümmel, *deux doigts de Madère;* some, however, still cling to the beverage beloved of our grandmother—in public, that is to say. No Society woman can go on without a pick-me-up in private.

Belinda solemnly ate large pieces of rich cake, and strawberries and cream. The women did not take to my charge; Englishwomen have not the large-mindedness that characterises the Parisian. The men, however, as usual, crowded round her—Lord Farringdon deliberately absenting himself from Lady Molly, much to that little woman's rage.

Tea at Havilands is always served in the smaller library adjacent to the famous room which holds a priceless collection of volumes. The smaller library is filled with modern volumes, and is a gay room with beautiful pictures, and every variety of couch and of lounging chair. "Reading made easy," Belinda observed contemptuously, but there is little reading done either in it or in the big library. Nowadays we neither read literature nor write letters. The Society journal and the typewriter supply all our needs.

The big library is a charming room, panelled with inlaid woods; the bookcases are built into the wall, so that the books seem at home, not mere visitors or lodgers. Oriel windows look on to the grounds, stately with yew trees fashioned into wonderful shapes, under whose shade peacocks proudly strut, dragging their beautiful trains over the smooth-shaven grass.

Belinda fell in love with the house, and openly coveted it.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't have quite as beautiful a place," I said discreetly. "Farringdon has a most delightful castle in the next county, and Towchester's place, as you know, is almost as famous as Havilands."

"Do you mean that either of these gentlemen will *sell* their houses?" she asked ingenuously.

I was too annoyed to answer, save with a sneer. "My dear Belinda," I said sweetly, "your innocence is quite Arcadian. I am unequal to the task of enlightening you."

She gazed at me with clear and untroubled eyes, thanked me gravely—for what I don't know—and retired to dress.

Dinner at the Manor was at nine o'clock. It was then but little after seven, and I was glad of the rest and quiet; it gave me time to form my plans. Towchester and Farringdon were both very eligible. One had already showed symptoms of admiration for Belinda; the other, I made no doubt, would shortly follow suit. The question I had to consider was how to induce the girl to encourage their attentions, in the first place, and accept their offers—one or both—of marriage in the second. Hitherto all attempts to undermine her constancy to that absurd person David Carr had failed; reason told me all further attempts would fail also.

What then could be done?

With a flash of inspiration the solution of the problem came to me. Belinda was impregnable to flattery, threats, or bribes. David Carr, being a man, would prove far more susceptible. Somehow or other his affection for Belinda must be undermined. He must be engaged in an intrigue with another woman—a clever, unscrupulous woman, in whose hands he would be as clay. The fact that Carr was at that moment in Petersburg did not trouble me. He could, without doubt, obtain leave of absence if representations were made in the proper quarter, and that leave of absence I decided he should spend in England, if possible quite close to Havilands.

I sprang to my feet with a cry of triumph.

The Dean of Wilborough would gladly ask the young man to his house—the Dean and I were old friends—I had helped him to marry his sister—he would do much for me in a small way.

I hurriedly wrote a note to my old friend reminding him that the arches of his beloved Cathedral were suspected of unsound foundation, and hinting that a young friend of mine, a clever engineer, would shortly be in the neighbourhood, and would, if asked, gladly give an opinion as to their security.

The letter I knew would bring an invitation back post haste, which I decided to inclose to David with a cordial invitation.

So far so good; the campaign was well and carefully thought out, but there was one thing yet to be found—the woman. Had I been ten or even five years younger I might have attempted the *rôle* myself, but as things were it was impossible. Hurriedly I ran over the list of my acquaintances. Midge, too frivolous; Lady Saxby, too masculine; Molly Vansittart, too mercenary. None of them possessed the charm, the beauty requisite to displace Belinda in a man's heart.

Once more I thought of all my friends, even my enemies. Once more I had rejected all and each, when there came a knock at my door.

Digitized by Google

The next minute I was embracing—delicately, and with a due regard for the niceties of one's complexion, but quite cordially—the Princess Zouloff, the wonderful Russian beauty.

"My sweet Peggy—younger than ever, I declare. What an age since we met. I was delighted when I heard from Havilands that you were here. I came at once to see you."

The Princess smiled as she spoke, and walked with an indolent but perfect grace towards the fire, sinking into the most comfortable chair—*my* chair—the room boasted.

Vera, Princess of Zouloff, is one of the most beautiful women of the day. There is not a plain woman amongst the guests at Havilands Manor; some are even far beyond the average for good looks, and all have that *chic* which lends in itself a kind of beauty to the woman of the world. But the handsomest of them pales beside the wonderful bewitchery of the Russian lady, with her velvety white skin in such contrast to the splendour of her jewels, the rose red of her lips, and the darkness of her eyelashes and eyes.

And Belinda?

Well, she is always beautiful, but for once she had to yield the palm.

Vera's visit somewhat surprised me. We had always been quite civil to each other in Society, but beyond that our feelings had not gone. What then had been her motive for this visit, and for her protestations of regard?

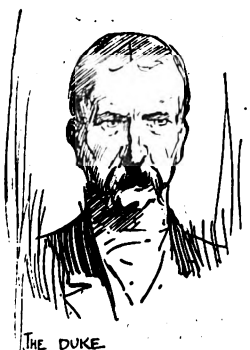
She quickly gave the explanation.

"You are looking well, dear Peggy," she said sweetly, "wonderfully well, considering all you have undergone. Imagine! To chaperon a little savage! What courage, what energy! Marvellous!"

"Not quite a savage, Vera, dearest. At any rate a very lovely and a very wealthy one. Paris went mad over her face and her millions. Eastacres, as you have heard, I suppose, is ready to die with vexation at her refusal. Paul de Sonnaz," I watched the Princess closely, "Baron Rolla, the Marquis de Belamont, all our friends, in fact, are in the same plight, and," I bent forward, "Alphonse Hervé is infatuated. He fought a duel on her behalf and was nearly killed. He——" I paused. Vera was looking at me scornfully, dangerously, from her dark, sombre eyes.

I had spoken the name of Alphonse with great deliberation and of intent. Alphonse had been the friend of the Russian beauty ever since they had met at a studio in Florence. She was a mere girl then, barely twenty, married to a man double her age and a brute. Alphonse had painted her portrait and won her heart. Society, of course, declared he was her lover, and for a time discriminating hostesses took care that where one was asked the other also should be invited. Some three years ago, however, there had come a change. The Princess had returned to her husband's estates in the north of Russia, and Alphonse, returning to Paris, immersed himself in art—until he met Belinda!

Why Vera and the handsome artist had parted I never knew! Gossip said he was tired of her violent temper and also herself, but if he had tired of his beautiful Princess, one thing was very certain. She still loved him; the more thought that another woman held her place in his heart roused all the fierce instincts of her nature—a nature which, outwardly cold as the snow fields of her country, was at heart hot and passionate.



THE DUKE OF EASTACRES

For a moment I gazed at the Princess, smiling quietly to myself. I had looked for a woman—a dangerous and fascinating woman—I had found her.

"Continue," she said with a laugh. "It affords me much amusement, my friend, to hear of Hervé's infatuation, as you call it, for a little school girl. And she—she loves him?"

I shook my head.

"Not a bit. She is obstinate as one of your own moujiks, and will not look at anyone, but a ridiculous young man named David Carr. A penniless person of neither birth nor fortune—a mere engineer."

"So!" The Princess lowered her white lids, a soft smile playing round her mouth. "Where is he, this estimable David?" she asked.

"At present in Petersburg, engaged on the bridge across the Neva. Soon"—I looked at her significantly—"he will be here in England. I fancy he will be staying with my friend the Dean of Wilborough."

She bent forward and kissed me, Russian fashion, on both cheeks.

"Clever Peggy," she said, with a mocking little smile, "adorable Peggy. What will you give me, my friend, if I remove this objectionable David Carr, this impossible, whom Belinda so adores?"

"Vera," I answered solemnly, "when you like you are the most sensible woman in the world. You will do as you like with the young man and I shall be eternally grateful."

I went to dinner in the best of spirits.

Vera was gorgeous in a wonderful combination of yellow and orange, with a necklace of big amber beads and a wonderful girdle of amber and gold. Belinda, more like a Greek nymph than ever, in a dress of white silk cut square, loosely hanging sleeves, sat near to her. Vera smiled sweetly at her girlish rival, and to my amusement, though not to my surprise, before the evening was over had completely won her heart. Belinda was ready to worship the beautiful woman who had smiled and talked so sweetly. As a rule, women did not smile or talk to Belinda.

On going to my room that night, I found one or two things to interest me. At a house like Havilands everything is done that can conduce to the comfort and happiness of the guests. Their rooms are full of little attentions for one's well-being, amongst which there is a printed paper which is laid on the dressing-table in every bedroom in the house; it contains the latest telegrams of public news, which come every afternoon and evening from a London news-agency.

Among the other items of interest that evening was the announcement of the illness of the Duchess of Eastacres. Her Grace was so seriously indisposed that her son, the Duke, had been sent for, also Lady Honoria. That, of course, meant that Eastacres would shortly arrive in town, and that sooner or later we should run across him. It was vexatious, very. His re-appearance might, very possibly would, prejudice Belinda against her other suitors.

For the present, however, there was nothing to be done. Eastacres would not, at any rate, turn up at Havilands Manor.

I received the dear Dean's answer to my letter in the course of the afternoon. He expressed himself delighted to entertain any friend of mine, especially an expert in regard to Cathedral arches! So far, so good. The next thing was to write to David and at the same time drop a line to a friend in a high place at Petersburg in regard to giving the young engineer a short leave of absence.

A letter from my faithful Crawley Drummond caused me to revise my plan of action. I decided that Crawley, in a spirit of middle-aged friendliness, should write to Carr, and tell him of the welcome awaiting him at Wilborough. It was far better that I should not appear on the scene. Crawley, with his usual good-nature, took the thing off my hands, and some four days after our arrival at the Manor he strolled in—Crawley knows everybody and goes everywhere—and announced that Carr was *en route* for England, Hampshire—and Belinda!

"I wired, don't you know," said Crawley. "Save time and trouble, I thought. And the young man wired his reply. And now, Peggy, if I might be permitted to ask—what is your game?"

For answer I motioned to where Princess Zouloff and Belinda were in close conversation with Farringdon and Towchester.

Digitized by Google

"I'm carrying the war into the enemy's country," I said. "I'm going to hand David over to the tender mercies of the Princess!"

Crawley twirled his moustache, fixed his glass firmly in his eye, and murmured:

"Happy David!"

It was quite clear that Farringdon and Towchester were hard hit by Belinda, for they openly and flagrantly neglected the ladies who claimed their service—Lady Molly and Mrs. Shilier Le Hay. Molly consoled herself with the Duke of Sulstone, a vacuous but wealthy young man with a penchant for ladies of the ballet. Mrs. Le Hay, however, did not so easily resign her Marquis. "Towzer" was the sobriquet his friends bestowed upon him, and "Towzer" had his work cut out to free himself from pretty Nancy's clutches. Scenes, tears, hysterics, were showered upon him—and us. But for once the Marquis was obdurate, and Mrs. Shilier Le Hay, unable to bear the mortification of his defection, finally departed.

"Very foolish woman," observed Crawley. "Why will women make scenes? Had she taken the thing quietly he would have been everlastingly grateful—and have settled her gaming debts up-to-date. As it is, she's made him loathe the sight of her. As for her bills"—Crawley shrugged his shoulders—"Le Hay can't pay them," he observed.

Belinda meantime was enjoying herself extremely. Farringdon, an excellent tennis and croquet player, spent his mornings in her company, passing delicious hours on the smooth, velvety lawns of the Manor gardens.

After dinner Towzer had his turn. He possessed a fine baritone voice, and by inducing Belinda to play his accompaniments—which she did indifferently well—secured her companionship for at least an hour every evening. And in an hour, as I think I have before remarked, much can be done—especially in a house like Havilands.

One night, after a moonlight stroll in the rose-walk, Belinda sought me out.

"Lady Peggy," she said a little hurriedly, "I want you to do me a favour; I want you to tell——" She paused, evidently at a loss how to proceed. "It is like this," she cried impetuously. "I can't help knowing that Hugh—Lord Farringdon, I mean," she hastily corrected herself, "likes me. I'm half afraid he likes me very much, and perhaps he may ask me to marry him. Somehow it doesn't seem fair to let him do that. I can't very well speak to him myself of David, but if you would tell him, it would save a lot of trouble."

"Tell him what?" I said coldly.

"That, that—— Oh, Lady Peggy," she said desperately, "tell him that David and I are going to get married."

"That," I said, "would be a deliberate untruth, unless you intend to set your father at defiance."

"I shall never marry anyone but David," she repeated.

"Upon my word, Belinda, you don't give the young man much option," I exclaimed. "David Carr is a good-looking and a clever fellow. Does it never strike you that it is rather hard lines on him to be bound—as you say he is bound—to you, a girl he never sees? You must understand," I continued, "that it would be a considerable sacrifice for him to marry you. You would go to him without a penny; you would be unable to help him in his profession, indeed you would retard him. Consider how many clever, wealthy women he is likely to meet, any one of whom he might easily make his wife!"

Belinda turned very white.

"I never thought of that," she murmured.

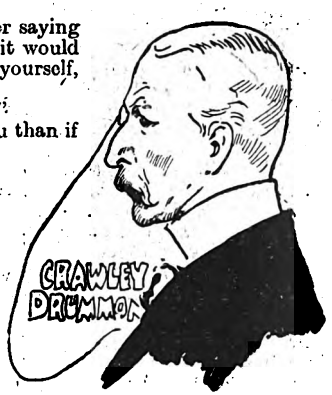
"Of course not," I answered satirically, "you were too pleasantly occupied with your admirers—none of whom, by-the-bye, would marry you without your fortune—except, perhaps, Lord Farringdon. David Carr is debarred from such pleasant companionship as you enjoy with the opposite sex. He is tied to you. You have bound him by a promise, which it will cost him dearly to keep."

"What ought I to do, Lady Peggy?" said the poor child, gazing at me with horror-stricken eyes.

"Write a nice little letter saying for the present you think it would be better that he, like yourself, should be free."

"But he will think——"

"Far more highly of you than if his freedom was curtailed," I interrupted. "The wider you open the door, the less a man wants to get out. Shut them up, and they'll break down the house to get free."



Belinda looked distressed, but evidently felt convinced of my wisdom. She brought me a note the next day couched in the terms I had suggested. I kissed her warmly, congratulated her on her strength of mind, and forwarded the letter to my dear friend, the Dean.

The first thing that David received on entering the hospitable walls of Wilborough was the aforesaid letter—written in ignorance of the fact that he was in England—within a few miles!

With masculine stupidity he put the worst possible interpretation on the missive, and imagined that Belinda had sent it to protect herself from the advances of a poor and undistinguished lover.

Smarting from fancied slight, his pride in arms, his ardour baffled, and his fond imaginings destroyed, David Carr went down to dinner at the Deanery in as moody a frame of mind as can well be imagined.

And at the dinner he found fate awaiting him—fate in the person of the most beautiful and sympathetic woman he had ever met.

Vera, the Russian Princess!

(The result of his new acquaintanceship will be told next Tuesday.)

TOM: "Didn't the encore unnerve Miss Twitter?" JESS: "Not a bit; she's used to having the neighbours hammer on the wall when she sings."

"PAPA, I know what I'm going to buy for your next birthday." "Well, what?" "A nice painted shaving mug." "But I've got a good one now." "Oh, I've just broken that."

LITTLE CHARLIE (age ten): "You have insulted my cousin Emmie." Little Bobby (age nine): "I'm ready to give you satisfaction." Little Charley: "Then give me half of your apple."

"MY dear Baron, what are you doing? Smoking two cigars at one and the same time?" "Well, you see, my dear fellow, in this beastly hole you can't get sixpenny cigars, such as I am in the habit of smoking, so I have to make shift with a couple of threepenny ones."

Result of the "Face" Competition.

THE Gramophone prizes have been awarded as follows:

H. Lay, "Cader Idris," Dynevor Road, Grosvenor Road, Tunbridge Wells.
E. Barnes, 68 Lydford, Paddington, W.
H. Smith, 50 Devonshire Street, Keighley.
Miss Ethel Hornsby, c.o. Mrs. Prosser, 67 Belgrave Road, Walthamstow.
J. Baker, 10 Broughton Street, Darwen.
W. H. Walter, 1 Danbury Street, St. Peter's Street, Islington, N.
E. A. Hancock, 5 Vernon Place, Birkenhead.
W. Cleaver, 15 Station Road, Port Talbot, South Wales.
Master W. Burnham, New Row, Thurlston, nr. Penistone.
R. L. Edwards, Sea View, St. Leonard's Avenue, Hove.

Digitized by Google

TWO GIRLS AND A SCARF-PIN.

The Story of a Boy and Girl Courtship with the Usual Ending.

"OH, Connie, you *must* come to us for Christmas. You surely can't refuse *me*." And little Lady Towers clasped her hands, and looked imploringly at her old friend and playmate.

"I have no heart for gaiety, and no suitable dress," replied Constance Carlisle, rather curtly.

"But, dear, there will be no gaiety. Roland's mother is so recently dead that gaiety is out of the question. There will be the pater and all the boys. You would like to see the boys again, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I should like to meet your brothers again," admitted Constance. "And if there really will be no other guests——"

"Well, Mabel Huntley invited herself, and I couldn't refuse her. The boys will be furious."

"We all disliked her as children," remarked Constance. "The boys always called her a coward and a sneak. I didn't like her any better when she grew up. I saw a great deal of her two years ago, just before—before—you know, Flossie."

Flossie nodded. She knew Constance referred to her father's death, just after the loss of his entire fortune. The two years which had passed since then had exactly reversed the positions of the two friends. Flossie, the doctor's penniless daughter, and general servant to her seven brothers, was now the petted wife of the wealthy Sir Roland Towers, and the mother of his heir. Constance, the idolised only child and heiress of a merchant prince, now earned her bread as typist in a merchant's office.

"What a lovely girl Miss Carlisle is!" remarked Sir Roland Towers to a large, handsome blonde, as they stood looking over some views together.

"Do you think so?" she drawled. "She has no colour, you know. Do you admire that dead-white skin, Mr. Leigh?"

The young man was staring intently at the group round the fire, Constance in a plain black evening dress, with white roses at her breast.

"She always looks to me like a pure white rose," he said, dreamily, and Mabel tossed her head, an angry light in her blue eyes.

The evening passed like a happy dream to Constance. All was so different from her lonely evenings in her dreary lodgings. Flossie went with her to her room when bed-time came.

"It is lovely to have you, darling," she exclaimed. "But how serious you look. Has Mabel been disagreeable?"

"Flossie," said Constance, abruptly, "why did you not tell me that Vincent Leigh was to be here?"

"Because I didn't know," was the prompt reply. "Roland asked him this morning. But why should you mind? You were always such friends. Do you——?" Flossie stopped, for her friend was weeping bitterly.

"Oh, let me cry," she gasped, as Flossie overwhelmed her with caresses and questions, "let me cry, or my heart will break."

Flossie stood helplessly by while Constance sobbed and moaned, as if indeed her heart were broken. At last the girl raised her head from the couch, where she had flung herself in her outburst of grief.

"I will tell you about it, Flossie," she whispered. "Only do not look at me. I feel so deadly, *deadly* ashamed of myself."

"I am quite sure there is nothing to be ashamed about," said Flossie, briskly. "Have you quarrelled with Vincent? You were so cold to him to-night. Two years ago, I thought——"

Constance checked her by a gesture.

"So did I," she said, in a choked voice, "and that is just what is torturing me. I—I had hoped never to see Vincent Leigh again."

"But he adored you as a child," cried Flossie.

"As a child, yes. And that was what misled me. He petted and played with me, and I worshipped him. When I was twelve and he seventeen I gave him a scarf-pin as a Christmas gift. I had it made to my own design. He used to call me his little white rose-bud, and I had a silver pin made, a rose-bud with a tiny pearl set in it forming the head. The words 'I love you' were engraved on it. We quarrelled on Christmas Day, and I snatched the pin out of his tie, crying, 'I do not love you now, and you shall not have it back till I love you again.' Next day he was called away by his father's sudden death, and we did not meet again till seven years later, when he came to spend Christmas with us."

"I remember," nodded Flossie.

"Mabel Huntley was with us too, and I saw he admired her, but I thought—oh, fool that I was!—that he really loved *me*, and was trying to make me jealous. On Christmas Eve we were to have a dance——"

"Yes, it was there Roland proposed," Flossie interrupted.

"I know. That morning Vincent and I were alone in the conservatory, and he seemed so kind and loving to me. We were talking over old childish days, and he reminded me of the scarf-pin. He laughed at me for a little vixen, and then he added, so tenderly—at least, there seemed to me a world of love and wistful tenderness in his voice and eyes—'Constance, may I not have the pin again?' I was too agitated to speak, and he went on to remind me that I used always to give him a button-hole to wear every evening when he used to stay with us long ago, and to ask me to do so again. Then he said again, 'May I not have the pin again? You know you promised——' Just then Mabel Huntley interrupted us, but I thought—oh, fool, *fool* that I was," and Connie's slender body writhed with shame—"I thought he was serious, and Flossie, Flossie, I did give him the pin."

"Well?" cried Flossie, eagerly.

"I made him a button-hole of a white rose and spray of maidenhair fern, stuck the pin through it, slipped into his dressing room, and put it on his table. When we went into the ball-room Mabel wore it."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Flossie.

"She did," Constance went on, tears streaming down her cheeks. "I asked her where she got the pin, and she said from Vincent. She said he laughed very much over it, and said a little simpleton had fallen in love with him, and given him that as a love-token, so he passed it on to her."

"But I don't understand——" began Flossie.

"Oh, it's plain enough. He had not meant anything, and was quite scared when he saw I took it seriously. He knew if he gave Mabel the pin, I should understand. Fancy accepting the man before he asked me." And Constance laughed feebly.

"I believe there is something under this," remarked Flossie. "That was a caddish thing to do, and not like Vincent. He does not even like Mabel, though she is always running after him. And one thing I noticed to-night, she never allowed him to speak to you unless she was at your elbow. She seemed afraid of what you might tell him."

Digitized by Google

If Lady Towers noticed Mabel's efforts to keep the one-time lovers apart that evening, she observed them even more clearly next day. It was Christmas Eve, and real Christmas weather. All day the snow had been falling, and the cold was piercing. No one could go out. Mabel had perseveringly stuck to Constance all day. Even when their hostess asked Vincent to show Constance the priest's room, as the secret chamber was called, Mabel instantly begged leave to accompany them, although she was a notorious coward, and had declined to go with the others on a previous visit, on the ground that she "hated dark and uncanny places." For the priest's room was said to be haunted. So Lady Towers decided to make the fourth. The secret-room was in the picture gallery, and Vincent held back the heavy sliding panel, while the ladies stepped daintily within, holding their skirts from the dust and cobwebs. They had hardly made two steps forward when Mabel, with a loud scream of "The monk! The monk's ghost!" fell heavily to the ground.

Vincent rushed to her help, and the panel sliding to, they were imprisoned in the darkness. Mabel's screams grew frantic.

"Don't be silly," said Flossie, disgusted. "Roland and the boys know where we are, and when we don't turn up in a reasonable time they'll soon look us up."

"Not in time to save my life!" moaned Mabel. "I've cut my head open, falling, and I'm bleeding to death."

"It does seem a bad cut," said Vincent, in an alarmed tone. "I can feel the blood soaking my coat as I hold her."

"I'm dying, I know I am," gasped Mabel. "The ghost of the monk came to warn me. I can't die without confessing. Constance, Vincent didn't give me the scarf-pin you gave him. I heard what he said to you that day in the conservatory, and I saw you put the button-hole on his table. I took it, and I told him you gave it to me because you wanted the man who gave it to you to understand you didn't care for him. And I told you he gave it to me. I thought he would turn to me and grow to love me, but he didn't, and I'm bleeding to death, and I can't die with a guilty conscience. And oh, the monk! the monk!"

Here Mabel went off into a series of piercing yells, which relieved her hearers' fears as to the danger of her dying from exhaustion, and speedily procured their release.

Mabel was led off by her hostess to have her wound, which turned out to be a mere flesh cut, attended to, and Vincent turned to Constance, and took both her hands in his.

"Is that true, Connie? Did you mean to give me back my pin?"

The dark, soulful eyes met his steadfastly.

"I did, and when I thought you despised me, and had given it to Mabel, it nearly broke my heart."

"And she told me you had laughed at me, and loved another fellow. My darling, when you were a child, you said, 'I will give you the pin back when I love you again.' If you had it still, would you give it me now?"

The love-light shone in the beautiful eyes still raised to his, and the sweet, tremulous voice thrilled him with rapture as she answered:

"I gave it you back two years ago, Vincent. I would give it to you again now. For I love you, dear."

And as he clasped her to his breast, he could only murmur in his deep joy, "My little white rosebud."

Vera Serkoff.

£50 FROM ONE READER TO THE REST.

A reader of SHORT STORIES won a prize of £10 in 1894, and with the help of this money emigrated to America, making a fortune out of the cycle boom of 1897 and 1898. He recently wrote a letter, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Dayton," to the Editor of SHORT STORIES, inclosing dollar bills to the value of £50, and asking that this money may be offered as prizes in five sums of £10 each.

The Editor has given the matter very careful consideration, and has arrived at the conclusion that, as his anonymous correspondent was in great want when he won his prize, the most satisfactory manner of distributing his gifts of £50 would be to offer them to those who can give the best reasons for receiving them.

You may be wanting to emigrate to one of our Colonies. You may want £10 to buy something you have needed for a long time. You may want to clear off some small debts that have been worrying you. Or you may want to trade with the £10 and, like "Dayton," turn it into a fortune.

Whatever your reason for wanting it may be, write it down in the space below, and send it to "The Competition Editor of SHORT STORIES," Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "Dayton 5," so as to arrive not later than Tuesday, January 27th.

Readers may send as many reasons as they like, provided each is written on a separate coupon. The Editor's decision is final, and competitors may enter only on this understanding.

→ **CUT OFF THE COUPON HERE.** ←

FINAL COUPON.

My reason for wanting £10 is.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name..... **Address**.....

Digitized by Google

A Woman of a Thousand.

A Fateful Episode in the Lives of Two Very Clever People.

"THAT'S all I know about it, sir. There's the 'call' hanging up behind you."

"But I can't make it out, Summers! The new piece going so strong, money being turned away, and now, without a word of warning, and for no earthly reason, that I can see—Shakespeare! It's beyond me! Anyone on the stage?"

"Miss O'Brien, sir!"

Summers, the veteran, and, therefore, privileged stage-door-keeper, smiled ever so slightly as he spoke the lady's name.

Hartley Reeve didn't notice it, for he had turned on his heel in order to read the managerial notice once again before going through on to the stage.

"Strikes me," said Summers to himself musingly, as he watched the tall, erect figure disappear through the swing doors, "as there's going to be trouble over this bit of business. To take off *My Lady Violet*, as is paying hand over fist, and put on *Hamlet* in scratch style, as, perhaps, will only run a fortnight, ain't common sense in the guv'nor, as worships the shekels almost, and if Miss Molly O'Brien ain't at the bottom of it, I'll eat my hat!"

Meanwhile Hartley Reeve had reached the semi-dark stage. The T-piece had not yet been lighted, and he could for the moment see nobody. Then, from under an old Elizabethan archway—part of the first "set" in *My Lady Violet*—he saw approaching him a vision in silvery grey and furs.

"I know what you are going to say," she said, holding out both her hands, which he took eagerly, and dropped reluctantly, "and all about it. Fancy Willoughby North as Hamlet!—for he has cast himself for the Royal Dane, and you for Laertes—why, I would engage to find a better prince among the panto. supers at the Lane!"

"It isn't so much that, Molly; it is what is he doing it for?" replied the actor. "As sure as his name's North, he will have to close the theatre within three weeks. But never mind 'shop,' dear, have you thought about what I said to you yesterday?"

"Thought about it?—Yes."

"Well, dear—well?"

"I have done more, I have come to a conclusion, and——"

"Yes, darling!"

She saw that upon the next words that she should speak depended the life-happiness of this man, and, as she loved him, as such a woman could love such a man, she would not delay that happiness for so much even as a moment of time.

"Just let it be as you wish," she said, without a trace of that affectation, which is seen far oftener off the stage than upon it.

"Molly! My own Molly, now!" he whispered. "That for Willoughby North and all his works—snapping his fingers excitedly—we——"

"Sh!" interrupted Molly, pressing his arm warningly.

"Hullo, Reeve, you're betimes!" said a loud, grating voice behind the young actor. "But I see how it is, it is a case of killing two birds with one shot, eh?"

The speaker was a man of average height, but of a cast of countenance repellent in its downright ugliness. Even this might have been pardoned him, as, naturally he couldn't help it, but the evil expression of his eyes, the ever-present sneer, the overbearing hectoring manner, were things that had come by self-cultivation, and witnessed the nature of the man.

Hartley Reeve, though a leading member of his company, had a righteous contempt — amounting almost to hatred — for manager Willoughby North, which that gentleman was not slow to detect, and to appreciate—resentfully. The latter had seen, too, the evident attachment existing between Molly O'Brien and his leading man, and, for reasons of his own, had determined upon a policy, having for its object the professional ruin of Hartley Reeve.

In his own way, also, North himself was in love with Molly O'Brien, and thus had two items—each strong enough to influence the spirit that was in him—upon which to found a scheme for satisfaction and revenge.

Very curiously Reeve had failed altogether to notice the other's admiration for Molly, never imagining for a moment that there was any danger in that direction. The faintest suspicion of such a thing would not only have precipitated his own declaration, but would have led him to seek another engagement for both himself and the girl of his heart.

It was Willoughby North's remark on this particular morning that first opened Hartley Reeve's eyes and put him on his guard.

"Here early?" he said quietly, in reply to the manager's double-edged gibe. "Your wire first thing this morning startled me so that I couldn't sleep afterwards."

"Well—er—as a matter of fact, I began to have my doubts of a run for *My Lady Violet*, and, as one or two of the other West-end houses are doing well with Shakespeare, I didn't see why I shouldn't share in the boom."

Both his listeners knew that this was a lie, but were as far as ever from the reading of the riddle.

"I shall expect you to understudy my Hamlet," North went on, "though I don't think that you will have the opportunity of playing the part. As for you, my dear, Ophelia will be just the chance for you."

"I don't know," said Molly. "Ophelia is not a favourite part of mine. Why don't you put *The Merchant* up, Mr. North, I have always wanted to play Portia in London."

"Sorry, I'm sure, but the announcements are out, and—and *Hamlet* suits me."

Had Hartley Reeve known that this especial play had been deliberately selected for a dastardly and even criminal purpose, he would then and there have come to an issue with the coward who had schemed and planned for a man's undoing, and a woman's sorrow. But he did not; he certainly suspected North of some underhand juggling, but of what sort or seriousness he was as yet unable to determine.

For years the manager of the "Queen's" had posed as a bachelor, no man denying him, so that had he openly wooed the clever little lady who headed his company, not a soul would have thought of gainsaying his right to do so.

But he was a man with a reputation for secret methods, and was, therefore, a person to be suspected upon very short notice.

Right through the rehearsal, which lasted, with intervals, all day, up to curtain-rise almost, Willoughby North paid more than usual attention to Molly O'Brien, though Hartley Reeve's faith in his promised wife was such that it didn't trouble him to any great extent.

Ophelia's presence not being required after the fourth act, Molly whispering *au revoir* to her lover, slipped quietly from

Digitized by Google

the stage. Passing through the swing doors into the outer passage, she both saw and heard Summers the doorkeeper, and a shabbily-dressed woman in high argument.

"You must see Mr. North? Well, you can't and won't see him, for he's busy!"

"Let me go through to him; that's all I want!"

"I daresay you do. But you don't if I know it. What's your name?"

"Never mind my name; I——"

"Haven't got one, perhaps. Leastways one you can give without being ashamed of it."

"Who is it? What is it?" said a sweet voice at the open door of the little glass office.

"That's just what I don't know, miss," replied the old commissionaire, flushed with angry irritation. "She wants to see Mr. North, and she won't tell her name or her business."

Something in the white, pinched face of the woman appealed to Molly's tenderness of heart and sympathy.

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked. "Shall I speak to Mr. North for you?"

"No, no! Not you! Not you! And yet I must see him or I shall starve—and die!"

"Well, come with me! I am going to a hotel close by here to dinner, and you shall have some with me; I am all alone, and you will be company for me. Then, too, you will, perhaps, be able to say how I can further serve you."

"Is your name O'Brien—Molly O'Brien?" queried the woman with sudden insistence.

"Yes, that is my name."

"I have heard that you were beautiful, and clever, and good, and the last I would not believe. But I do believe it now, and—and I will go with you."

"Excuse me, miss," said Summers in a low voice behind his hand, "but you'd better be careful!"

"That's all right, Summers, I can look after myself, and the poor creature doesn't look so very formidable. Whistle for a hansom for me!"

In two minutes Molly followed her guest into the cab, and was driven rapidly to a certain old-fashioned hotel in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, where she was well known.

Acting upon Molly's tip-supported instructions before she left the theatre with the stranger, Summers did not acquaint the manager with the fact of what had taken place. Molly could not exactly have given a reason for this shutting of the doorkeeper's mouth, she merely wished to first hear the woman's story, so that she could, if necessary, and possible, help forward her object.

Thus it happened that the whole fortnight during which the *Hamlet* rehearsals lasted, North's attention to the beautiful actress grew in fervour and intensity, so much so, indeed, that Hartley Reeve was more than once on the point of forcible expostulation. Noticing this, Molly took the first opportunity of speaking to him on the subject.

"But I can't bear to see the brute talking to you in this style," said Hartley. "The next thing will be his asking you to marry him!"

"Well, I hope he will!"

"You hope he will," he gasped. "Why, Molly, you must be mad!"

"Not even a little bit, dear. If you will only do as I ask you, to hear, see, and say nothing, as well as to trust me, you will find by-and-bye that the end justifies the means."

"It's very hard, Molly, and I don't think you ought to push me so close, and if I didn't know that you were a woman of a thousand, I wouldn't consent to it."

"There's a dear boy!" she replied, smiling bewitchingly up into his face. "It will soon be over for you, to-morrow night—Hamlet's first night—will end it all, so far as you and I are concerned—while I just want you to remember one thing, and that is, that guile must sometimes be met with guile, if it is to be successfully checkmated."

"Well, thank goodness, it hasn't to last much longer, for I verily believe that much more of it would make me want to kill somebody—Willoughby North, by preference."

"Silly boy, have patience! Good-night."

As for the shabbily-dressed woman, she came no more to the stage-door of the "Queen's" to inquire for its manager.

* * * * *

The revival of *Hamlet* at the Queen's Theatre, will long be remembered by those interested in matters theatrical, by reason of the strange events attending the first performance of the play, which was also destined to be the last.

So far as the male characters were concerned, interest seemed to be centred in the Laertes, Hamlet's ranting and mouthing, at the hands of Willoughby North, being received with severe silence, and the derisive booing of the "gods."

This was more marked before Ophelia's entrance in the second act, Molly O'Brien being the darling of everybody, from galleryite to stall-holder.

In one of the stage-boxes a lady, attended by a young gentleman of particularly youthful appearance, sat, so hidden by the amber satin curtain, that her face was only indistinctly visible. Each time that Ophelia was upon the stage, it might have been noticed that the lady bent more forward, and never took her eyes off the actress till the latter made her exit.

When, in act four, Ophelia enters mad, with her basket of flowers for distribution, she cast a quick glance up at the box in question, and placed, for just a second, two fingers upon her lips. It appeared to be some pre-arranged signal, for the lady immediately answered it by a similar placing of two fingers upon her lips. Then she leant back again in the shadow of the curtain, and, for the rest of the evening,

"Hullo, Reeve, you're betimes. Killing two birds with one shot, eh?"

Digitized by Google

up to the final duel between Hamlet and Laertes, gave no sign of interest in the proceedings.

* * * * *

Molly O'Brien, looking lovely in her robe of creamy white, and not in any wise disfigured by the tangle of weeds and wild flowers in her hair, stood at the wing on the *O. P.* side, waiting her cue.

For the moment there was nobody in the immediate neighbourhood of where she was, the stage hands, with the players who were not required, being assembled in the two first entrances to watch Molly O'Brien's great scene.

"I want an answer to a question I am going to ask you," suddenly said a voice at her side.

It was Hamlet.

"Mr. North," replied Molly, involuntarily shrinking away from him, "this is a strange time in which to ask questions."

"Yes, I know, but the five minutes you yet have are ample in which to do as I ask you."

She saw by his excited manner that the thing which she had been expecting was now to be, and nerved herself for the inevitable.

"Do you know that I love you—that I have determined in my own mind that, here and now, you shall make of me a happy man or a fiend?"

"Mr. North, you forget yourself!"

"I do not. Your answer, will you be my wife?"

"I have no answer for that question."

"By Heaven, you shall have!"

"I said you had forgotten yourself; it seems I spoke the truth."

"Will you be my wife?"

"No!"

"You love Hartley Reeve?"

"I do!"

"You shall never marry him!"

"I do not heed your threats, sir!"

"Why will you not marry me? I have fifty times as much money as your beggarly sweetheart!"

"Perhaps. You ask why I will not marry you; before curtain-fall I will tell you. Pardon me, there is my cue."

Then, walking out on to the stage, her flower-basket in her hand, she spoke in plaintive questioning, "Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?"

Upon leaving the stage after the mad scene, a note was handed to Molly by her dresser. It was in pencil, and ran:

"I have seen your signal. Send round for me to your room a few minutes before the end. I will bring your brother with me. I saw Willoughby North's eyes as they followed you on to the stage. He means mischief, either to you or to Laertes. Be warned and watch."

After Ophelia's death it was with but scant patience that the audience sat out the rest of the play.

Then was reached the last scene of all.

The rapiers were handed to Hamlet and Laertes by Osric, the former suddenly reaching forward his hand and snatching one.

With a deep groan Hartley Reeve sank down.

"Another hit! What say you?" cries Hamlet, lunging heavily.

Then all was confusion. With a deep groan Hartley Reeve sank down, blood welling out of a wound in his shoulder, Hamlet's sword having passed completely through, and been withdrawn.

At the same moment two ladies, one in walking costume, the other in evening dress, hurried on to the stage, the latter stooping rapidly and picking up the rapier which, by the jerk of the withdrawal, had fallen out of Hamlet's hand.

The uproar and consternation in the front of the house was such as has never been seen in a London theatre before or since. Ladies shrieked, people called "Murder" and "Police!" while some adventurous pittites made their way over stalls and orchestra on to the stage. No one behind seemed to know what to do, even to the extent of lowering the curtain.

Meanwhile, Molly O'Brien on her knees upon the ground, supported the unconscious form of her lover, his head upon her lap. Medical aid was at once summoned.

When at last a doctor having arrived, the unfortunate man was removed to Charing Cross Hospital, Molly accompanied him there in the cab.

Someone sent for the police, but when they arrived it was to find the bird flown. Mr. Willoughby North, murderer and bigamist in intent, had fled during the confusion.

One glance at the lady in evening-dress—now Molly O'Brien's companion—was sufficient; while the incriminating weapon in her hand—*the button removed*—gave promise of what he must expect if he remained.

He was never caught; for a man with money can flee and hide, where a poor man will certainly fall a sure prey to the law.

Hilda Willoughby, the wife whom he had cruelly treated, and deserted, told Molly how for eight years she had lived a life of want and misery, and that accidentally finding out her husband, under his assumed name of North, she had endeavoured, in sheer desperation, to see him, for the purpose of getting the means of subsistence from him.

There was something about her which attracted the generous heart of Molly, and from the day that the latter took her to that Covent Garden Hotel, and put new life and spirit into her with the food which she sat before her, she had never loosed hold of her.

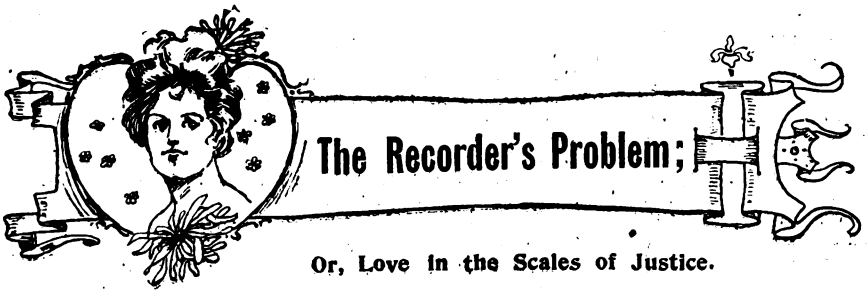
They seemed to take to each other at once. Molly was always of a sympathetic nature, and Mrs. Willoughby's sufferings, caused by the way in which she had been treated by her scoundrel of a husband, struck a tender chord in her heart.

Hartley Reeve, now that he has recovered from the wound, which with surer aim might have cost him his life, fully indorses his wife's action in the matter, and Hilda Willoughby is sure of a home with the great actor and actress, for the rest of her days.

"My dear!" she will sometimes say confidentially to a friend, "if there is one thing more than another upon which Mr. Reeve and I are agreed, it is, that his Molly is for us "a woman of a thousand."

Arthur Gunter.

Digitized by Google



The Recorder's Problem;

Or, Love in the Scales of Justice.

SIR HENRY BRISTOWE stepped into the cab which had drawn up outside the Sessions House and was driven away to his residential flat a little way out of town. The onlookers said that he appeared to be deep in thought, and that they were not surprised thereby, for the case which he was trying was a very serious one, and the evidence required careful consideration and discrimination on the part of the judge.

Some of the older people told the younger ones that they had known Bristowe as a young man; they related how he had gone up to London to study law, and they briefly traced his brilliant career at the Bar as a barrister on the Northern Circuit, and concluded with the remark: "And then he was made Recorder of this city, his own birth-place, where his father built up a big business, which is still carried on by his brother; and then he was knighted."

A man was being tried for his life, arraigned on the charge of having murdered his partner. The case should have been tried by a judge from London, but he had fallen ill in the middle of his round, the influenza had stricken three other judges of the High Court, and, consequently, the Lord Chancellor had been compelled to make provision for the uninterrupted running of legal business and Sir Henry Bristowe, as Recorder, found heavier responsibilities laid upon him.

There were many who envied Bristowe, for he had risen rapidly, and was now but little over forty. There were a few unkind and ignorant critics who said that he was not old enough to be a man of experience, but his ability was not doubted by the majority. Bristowe was unmarried, a fact that procured him many invitations to social gatherings and private parties.

Dismissing the cab with an extra gratuity to the driver, Sir Henry Bristowe slowly passed along the wide hall of the building and up the first flight of stone steps to his own flat, letting himself in and pressing an electric button inside the door to let his housekeeper know that he had returned. He went straight to his study and threw himself into a chair near the window. He gazed through the glass into the road, but he saw nothing of it, for his thoughts were far away.

"Alfred Pearse is doomed unless his counsel can shake the evidence of Basil Hurst to-morrow," murmured the Recorder. "The evidence against Pearse is circumstantial, but Hurst's testimony is clear, and it will be convincing unless Douglas can shake it. That will require all Douglas' skill, though! It is amazing to think that Hurst withstood all the ability of one of the cleverest counsel in the country. I think that Douglas himself was nettled!"

A knock at the door interrupted the reverie. In response to his "Come in," the door was opened by his housekeeper, an elderly woman, who had been nursemaid in his father's household and had remained with one or other member of the family all her life. Should she bring in his tea?

"Yes, Mrs. Oakley," he answered absently. "Yes, bring it in here. Oh, and let me have the evening paper as soon as it arrives," he added, rousing for a moment.

The housekeeper, as he termed her, although his "house" was a flat, departed and Bristowe resumed his train of thought.

"She was in Court and I watched her all the time. Does she still hold the same opinion as when she wrote that note?"

He rose from his chair and went to a writing-table; unlocking one drawer, he took from it a small packet of papers and letters, and one of the latter was selected by him. Another rap at his door caused him to thrust the packet into the drawer hurriedly, and he waited till Mrs. Oakley had deposited the tray on the table and left the room. Then he drew the packet out again and opened the selected letter.

"I am sorry that it cannot be. I cannot accept your offer, because my heart would not go with my hand; it is given to another. Let us not be estranged by this, but when we meet, as meet we must, let us press each other's hand in friendship and be really friends."

"Friends!" he repeated. "Friends! It is always the same when a woman rejects you. I love that woman as a man loves only once in a lifetime; how is it possible for me to regard her as merely a friend and see her as the wife of another?"

Replacing the letter in the packet and the packet in the drawer, he turned mechanically to his tea.

"Given to another." And this other man was Alfred Pearse whom he, Bristowe, was trying on the capital charge! If Pearse were proved guilty, then Edith Northcote——Sir Henry Bristowe lowered the cup from which he was about to drink and sat rigid as the haunting thought overpowered him once more. Yes, if Pearse suffered the extreme penalty, the Recorder's rival in love would be removed!

"And he will suffer unless some strong influence is brought to bear on the jury, some strong moral suasion." Sir Henry uttered the thought almost aloud, and he started and shivered as the sound of his own voice struck his ear.

He tried the expedient of reading the newspaper, which had been laid on the table with the tea, but he could not keep his thoughts from the trial, Edith Northcote and Alfred Pearse. In the present state of the case, the Recorder would have scarcely any difficulty in so completely convincing the jury of Pearse's guilt that the removal of his rival was certain. And then he might hope to approach Edith!

He knew not how long he sat there, but he started from his chair, stiff through having sat for a long time in one position, as he saw a woman's form before him.

"Edith!" The name came involuntarily from his lips.

Edith Northcote was a woman of commanding presence, strikingly beautiful, with that beauty which is partly made up of queenly dignity. As she stood in front of her rejected lover, the dignity of the face was slightly relaxed and an expression of intreaty was upon it.

"Why are you here? Pray be seated!" said the Recorder, motioning her to a chair with a dignified gesture. He had recovered from his surprise and had assumed his wonted bearing.

Edith Northcote sank into the chair, but rose immediately.

"I have come to ask for your assistance," she said, in a low voice of mingled intreaty and anxiety, slightly stretching out her hands as she spoke. "You are his judge, and you said that you loved me; I love him, and I ask you to save him that I may be happy!"

"I do not understand you," he returned gravely. "As the judge, I have my duty to perform, and I shall perform it impartially. *I* cannot save him! It is the jury with whom the decision rests, and they will decide in accordance with the evidence."

"The jurymen will decide in accordance with the moral influence brought to bear upon them," returned the visitor significantly, passionately, clasping her hands nervously. "The counsel for the prosecution will use all his influence to persuade them that the accused is guilty; the counsel for the defence will exert his powers to prove that the accused is innocent; but the jurymen will listen to and be chiefly influenced by the judge! Everyone is saying that the issue

Digitized by Google

of the trial depends entirely upon you, for the evidence is circumstantial. You are one of themselves, one of their own townsmen; they honour and admire you, and they will go by what you say!"

"And I shall say that which is right according to the evidence!" declared Bristowe, his face very pale, and his hands trembling slightly. "You should not come to me—to me, the judge!—to tempt me to be false to my trust! You must go at once; I cannot listen!"

He moved towards the door to show her out, but she only turned in order to face him, and did not move one step nearer the exit.

"The evidence is against him, but he is innocent!" she cried wildly. "My heart would turn instinctively from him if he were guilty. It all rests with you in your summing up, to deliver him to the gallows or—or to me! They will decide as you suggest, and there is enough difference in the evidence for you to suggest——"

"Madam, I must ask you to retire!" said the Recorder sternly, although his whole frame was quivering with the torture which her words inflicted upon him. "If anyone saw you enter here, my reputation as an impartial and incorruptible dispenser of justice would be gone!"

He opened the door and walked to the outer door, followed by Edith Northcote. He saw how it was that she had been able to gain access to him without being announced; Mrs. Oakley had slipped out and left the outer door ajar. She did that occasionally when she found that she had not got the key handy in her pocket, and she intended to be absent only a short time. It was a bad habit which he had rebuked several times, but it is hard not to be indulgent to an old servant.

Several persons noticed that there was a light in one of the rooms of Sir Henry Bristowe's flat very late at night, but they paid no heed to the fact. Only one person, a servant in a house on the opposite side of the road, spoke to Mrs. Oakley about it; she was friendly with the elderly dame, and on the following morning she mentioned it.

"Sir Henry must have been very worried about that case, Mrs. Oakley," she said confidentially. "I was up most of the night with the toothache, and I saw a light in his private room nearly all night. And he was walking up and down the room, too, for I saw his shadow on the blind every now and then—regular-like, just as it would be when he got to the window-end of the room and got between the light and the blind somehow, you know."

Mrs. Oakley looked concerned, and said that she hoped he was not ill, and dismissed the subject.

The trial was resumed at ten o'clock, and Douglas, the eminent counsel, took up his cross-examination of the Treasury witness, Hurst, but failed to shake his evidence. There were some witnesses for the defence, but, when the prosecuting counsel began his concluding speech it was commonly thought that the accused was doomed if the judge's summing-up was in the least degree against the prisoner. Douglas' concluding speech was a masterly one; he had never surpassed the level attained on that occasion, and he contrived to throw enough doubt into the case to cause everyone to look to the Recorder. How had he viewed the evidence?

Sir Henry Bristowe placed his notes in order and prepared to sum up. His face was white and haggard, and this impressed the spectators with the feeling that he was acting with the highest sense of the duties of his office, and that the case had caused him the greatest anxiety.

The Recorder sent another glance round the crowded Court in search of Edith Northcote. She had not been present during the day's proceedings so far, but he fancied that she might appear to hear the summing-up. She was not there, and he concluded that she thought the case hopeless after his reception of her appeal last night, and that she could not endure to witness the last scene in the Court, and see and hear her lover sentenced to an ignominious death by his rival.

Sir Henry Bristowe began his speech, speaking slowly, and with an effort; the people crowded together in Court listened with feverish anxiety and the prisoner watched the judge with strained eyes. By degrees the Recorder's voice grew stronger and his tones firmer till they rang through the building. He dissected the evidence in the most skilful manner, while Douglas, Hurst, and the accused listened in wonderment.

"It's a defence of the prisoner!" thought Douglas. "A masterly defence; better than I could possibly have made, for it is done by an impartial person, and is—seemingly—so impartial! It carries conviction with it! If he keeps on like that, my man is safe!"

"If people take that seriously," muttered Hurst, "I may expect to be had up on a charge of perjury!"

The speech was finished just before six o'clock, the Court having arranged to sit till the case was terminated. There was a buzz of excitement as the Recorder ceased speaking: many thought that the verdict would be given without the jury leaving the box, and, as a matter of fact, it was as a mere form than otherwise that the jury retired. The interval afforded a breathing time and a relief from the tension of the day's experience. The prisoner was removed, the Recorder left the Court, and the public passed the time in energetic chatter. The jury returned in twenty minutes, the prisoner was brought back, and the Recorder resumed his seat. The usual formal questions were asked by the clerk, and the jury returned a verdict of "Not guilty."

"The Scottish verdict of 'Not proven' would have been more appropriate from my point of view," said a solicitor to a friend as he left the Court. "I myself would hardly like to say that the accused was innocent, but the Recorder seemed convinced of it."

"They knew each other, which is significant," returned the other, "yet I would not accuse Bristowe of partiality."

"They were rivals in a love affair," said the first, "if the rumour I have heard is true, and Bristowe lost!"

"H'm! That disposes of the partiality theory," rejoined the second man. "The partiality would have been the other way about!"

Sir Henry Bristowe returned to his residential flat, and asked that a light supper might be brought to him.

"You can leave the things, Mrs. Oakley," he said to her. "I shall not want to be disturbed, so you can clear them away in the morning."

Mrs. Oakley sat in her own little chamber reading the evening paper, when a ring at the outer door disturbed her. On answering the ring she saw Edith Northcote, whom she did not know.

"Sir Henry Bristowe is at home, ma'am," she replied in response to Edith's inquiry, "but he is in his study, and does not wish to be disturbed."

"Ah, yes, that is to the ordinary caller!" said Edith. "I am an old friend, and he won't mind my going in. You need not trouble to announce me!"

Before Mrs. Oakley could say anything to the contrary, the visitor had passed her and hurried to the door of the study. Knocking gently and receiving no reply, she went in and saw the Recorder sitting in front of the fire, his elbow resting on the arm of the chair, and his head supported on his hand. He was gazing steadily at the fire, by the glow of which she could see that his face was deathly white.

A pang shot through her; it had cost the upright judge a great deal to make that summing-up!

"I have come to thank you for what you did for me to-day!" she said gently.

But Sir Henry made no movement. She raised her voice slightly.

"You saved the life of the man I loved and restored him to me. I shall regard you as my greatest friend as long as I live. How can I ever thank you sufficiently?"

Still no movement. With a sudden chill at her heart, she approached him and bent over him; she recoiled with a cry at the moment Mrs. Oakley entered.

"He is dead!" she cried.

It was true. Sir Henry Bristowe, the Recorder, had gone to stand before another Judge and had taken with him the true story of the struggle between love and duty and the method in which he had solved the problem.

Orme Lewi

Digitized by Google

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

In Addition to £1,000 in Cash.

THE MOST LIBERAL PRIZE EVER OFFERED BY ANY PERIODICAL IN THE WORLD.

THIS prize is so huge that it is almost impossible for one to realise at first thought what it really means. Therefore the following hints will probably enable you to grasp the full value of such a regular income:

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE means, unless you are extravagant, absolute freedom from money troubles as long as you live.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE is an insurance against depression and mental worry.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will enable you to dispense charity with a liberal hand.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy you a bigger house and enable you to live in better style.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will cover the cost of taking a cottage in the country and living there in comfort for the rest [of your days.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will pay the expenses of months of foreign travel.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy anything you can possibly want, from a piano to a motor-car.

In fact, there is no limit to the things you can do with **£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.**

THE prize will be paid to the person (perhaps you) who correctly solves the pictures which appear below, together with other pictures which will appear in PEARSON'S WEEKLY under the conditions printed in that paper.

Each picture consists of certain objects, the names of which represent the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom. For example, the hull of a ship would mean "Hull." Every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

A further sum of **£1,000 in cash** will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:—

FIRST CONSOLATION GIFT, £100.

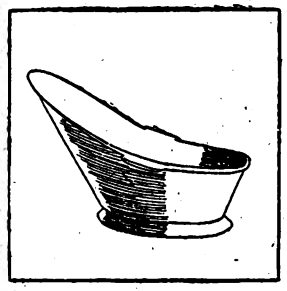
2nd Cash Gift ...	£50	6th Cash Gift ...	£25
3rd ,, ...	£50	7th ,, ...	£25
4th ,, ...	£25	8th to 57th Cash Gifts ...	£10 each
5th ,, ...	£25	58th to 97th ,, ...	£5 each

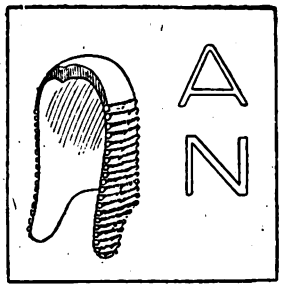
So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of £5 a week for life (*which will be paid under any circumstances*), you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash gifts.

If you find out the names of the railway stations represented by the pictures shown here, you should write down the name under each, put your name and address at the foot, and then

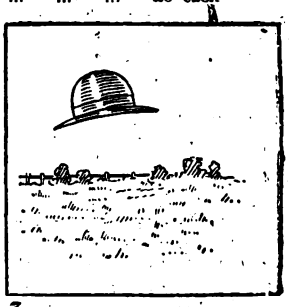
Get a Copy of Next Week's "Pearson's Weekly."

☛ If you are unable to secure a copy of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, drop a reply post-card to the Publisher, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, Henrietta St., London, W.C., and he will get you out of your difficulty. ☚


1.



2.


3.

4.

5.

6.

Write your Name and Address here .....

Digitized by Google

Didn't Like to Resist.

MRS. MCBRIDE (entering the kitchen): "Bridget, didn't I see that policeman kiss you?" Bridget: "Well, mum, sure an' yez wouldn't hev me lay mesilf opin to arrist for resistin' an officer, mum."

Prepared for Emergencies.

HE: "If you loved me why did you at first refuse me?" She: "I wanted to see what you would do." He: "But I might have rushed off without waiting for an explanation." She: "I had the door locked."

Then He Wouldn't Stay Long.

SHE: "Papa says that when coming to see me you must not come in a 'bus any more." He: "Really! Does he expect me to walk all this distance?" She: "Of course not. He says all he asks is that you will come in a carriage, hired by the hour."

A Permanent Cheek.

HER head had dropped upon his shoulder. "If only," he whispered, "thy cheek could remain there for ever." Little thought he what was to be. Little thought he until he got home and tried to remove her cheek from his dress coat with ammonia and alcohol.

She Could Teach Him.

MAY: "It is strange you have never learnt to waltz. Have you tried?" Jack: "Oh, yes; but I could never get past the first stage." May: "The first stage? What is that?" Jack: "To put my arm round the girl's waist." May (coyly): "I think I could teach you."

Father Understood.

"WHAT did you say that young man's name is?" asked Mabel's father. "Mr. Isaac Oliver Upton," was the reply. "H'm! I begin to understand." "To understand what?" "A remark that was made about Mr. Upton. I was told that he seldom wrote his name in full; that he nearly always used his initials."

A Hint.

HE was a lively fellow, and fond of her, but it didn't occur to him that a girl expected something else besides going to places and having fun all the time. "Anything on hand this evening?" he asked, coming breezily in, for the sixth time that week. "Well, no," she replied hesitatingly as she looked down at her empty fingers.

The Parrot Gave Her Away.

"I GAVE you that parrot as a birthday present, did I not, Matilda?" he asked. "Yes; but surely, Albert, you are not going to speak of your gifts as if——" "It was young and speechless at the time?" "Yes," with increasing wonder; "and it has never been out of this parlour." "There are no other young ladies in this house?" "No, there are not." "Then why—why when I kissed your photograph in yonder album, while waiting for you, did that wretched bird imitate your voice, and say, 'Don't do that, Charlie; please don't'?"

She Hesitated No Longer.

JUDGE: "What is your age?" (Female witness hesitates.) Judge: "Don't hesitate in answering the question. The longer you hesitate the older you'll be."

A Handy Substitute.

KINGSLEY: "Don't you think it retards digestion to read a newspaper at mealtimes?" Bingo: "On the contrary I find it a great help. When the breakfast is a failure devour the paper."

Still Aristocratic.

NEIGHBOUR: "How did your daughter's marriage with that foreign count turn out?" Mrs. Brickrow: "Her last letter states that he has spent all her money, and she is taking in washing; but then I presume she washes only for the nobility."

Wasn't Certain.

ETHEL: "So Arthur proposed last night?" Maud: "Yes." Ethel: "And did you accept him?" Maud: "I was so awfully excited I don't know whether I accepted him or not. If he comes to-night I did, and if he doesn't I didn't."

Curing Him.

"MY dear," said Mr. Bunker to his wife, "what has become of that box of cigars you gave me on my birthday?" "It is upstairs." "Well, get it, please. Jimmy wants to smoke, and I think we can give him all he wants in about three seconds."

How he Kept Baby Quiet.

MR. NOOPOP: "My baby cries all night. I don't know what to do with it." Mr. Knowitt: "I'll tell you what I did. As soon as our baby commenced to cry, I used to turn on all the gas. That fooled him. He thought it was broad daylight, and went to sleep."

Afraid of a Mistake.

BRIDEGROOM (about to marry the youngest of three sisters): "My dear friend, I want you to stand immediately behind me during the ceremony, and keep your eyes open. I am very near-sighted, and I'm afraid they may substitute the oldest sister at the critical moment."

A Landlord in Gloom.

WIFE: "Who was that who called?" Husband: "One of my tenants to pay me his rent." "Did he pay it?" "Yes." "Then why do you look so gloomy?" "He didn't say anything about wanting fifty or sixty pounds' worth of repairs." "What of it?" "That shows he's going to leave."

Before and After.

MRS. F.: "You write such short letters when you are away. I don't see why you couldn't write me nice long ones, as you did when we were engaged." Mr. F.: "Honestly, my dear, I didn't suppose you would have any time to read them. In the days when we were engaged you had no housekeeping to attend to."

Why She was Unworthy.

SHE: "It cannot be. I am not worthy of you." He: "Nonsense." "It is true." "Impossible. You are an angel." "No, no, you are wrong. I am an idle, silly girl, utterly unfit to become your companion through life." "This is madness. What sort of a wife do you think I ought to have?" "A careful, calculating, practical woman who can live on your small salary."

Best to Begin Early.

"SHALL I have to get married when I grow up?" asked little Flossie one day of her mother. "Just as you please, dear," answered her mother with a smile. "Most women do, however." "Yes, I suppose so," continued the little girl musingly, "and I think I'd better start and look out for a husband now. They say that Aunt Jane has been at it for twenty years, and hasn't caught one yet."

Digitized by Google

The Gift of Roses.

The Love Story of the Second Violin.

DICKY AUBER had often read of cases like his own—with this important difference; the stories usually ended happily, whereas he knew that for himself it would be madness to hope for anything save disappointment.

He was in love, desperately, madly in love with Nella Renshaw, a clever and popular actress, the admired of all admirers.

He enshrined her in his heart the very first time he saw her, which was the day on which he commenced his engagement as violinist in the orchestra of the London theatre at which she was playing a leading part.

He made no effort to check this hopeless love which grew and grew as he watched her night after night.

He could only see her when the action of the piece brought her well forward upon the stage; but he soon learnt to know when these places came, and was always ready for her so as not to lose a single second of the time that she was in his view.

Once her eyes met his upturned gaze. That night he walked to his poor lodgings with his head among the stars. After that he found her look turned towards him on several occasions. On those nights he lay awake for hours asking himself whether the smile in those beautiful eyes could possibly have been for him; but by morning he had called himself a fool for imagining for one instant that what was obviously an accident in her acting, could have any significance for him. Yet, for all his wise reasonings, those glances made him absurdly happy.

Then came a blow that hurt him cruelly. Nella was to tour in America. Even the pleasure of looking at her was now to be denied him. He would not see her for a long time—perhaps never again.

A farewell performance was announced, and, sad at heart, Dicky took his accustomed place. Before then he had always felt a thrill of pleasure and pride when came the thunders of applause in acknowledgment of Nella's superb art, but on this night it filled his heart with sadness and a great lump came to his throat. This was the last time that he would see the triumph of the woman he loved—the last time.

Then, as the curtain fell, he did a thing that he had never dared before to do. He quickly made his way to the stage door and waited there to watch her departure. As she passed him the fragrance of her dainty silks and laces seemed to hold his whole soul in bondage, and when her rustling skirt brushed him he nearly swooned.

She carried a magnificent bouquet that had been presented to her, and when she was half way to her carriage a rose dropped from it on to the pavement. Dicky darted forward and picked it up. Murmuring something, he knew not what, he stepped to the side of the carriage, and handed it to her.

As she took it she looked straight into his eyes. Then, quickly drawing another blossom from among its lovely fellows, she smilingly thrust it with the other back into his hands.

"Keep them, and—and—thank you," she said.

As the carriage drove off Dicky was staring in wonder at the exquisite flowers. Because of this he did not see that which would have filled his heart with an even greater joy. Her eyes had filled with tears.

Every now and again, during the year that followed, audacious thoughts filled Dicky's mind as he gazed on his most cherished possessions—two withered roses. Soon after, however, he usually read in some newspaper one of the numerous accounts of Nella's trans-Atlantic successes. Then his splendid hopes collapsed dismally. Yet they were always there, and though he did not know it, grew stronger and stronger until they became part of his life.

At last Nella came back. She was to open the Autumn season at her old theatre and once more Dicky could see her every night. He played first instead of second violin now and his position had been altered to one from which he had a far better view of the stage.

It was not that thought, however, which set his heart pounding with excitement as he went towards the theatre that day—the day on which he was to behold her again after a year. In his heart there was a great hope that she would recognise him in some way or another. Surely she *must*. Then he would wait at the stage door, and perhaps she would speak to him again.

Bitter and terrible was his disappointment. Not even a glance came his way.

The next day he was not at his place in the orchestra. Instead he sat at home in his room before a table covered with manuscript songs. They were those which he had written out of his great love.

Slowly, almost mechanically, he took them up and scanned every note. Then, having seen that all were as perfect as he could make them he gathered them together in a heap.

He was going away—where he did not know or care. During the last year he had so lived on the almost unconscious hope born in him by the gift of roses, that the realisation that it had been founded on nothing had dazed his every faculty. It was as though he had fallen from the clouds.

At first, when the wish to leave the place of his sorrow had come to him, he had determined to burn his songs; but they were his children—the only children of his love—and he could not. Then came a wild desire that she should know of his heart's longing, and, after examining them all to make sure that they, at least, were worthy of her attention, he gathered them together to send them to her.

He took the withered roses from his breast. She should have them too. Pressing them passionately to his lips he laid them tenderly on the top of the pile.

Then the stupor that had dulled his understanding went, and in its place an awful despair seized him. He laid his head on his arms and sobbed—sobbed as only can the man from whom is taken his only hold on life.

For a long while he lay. Then there came a tap at the door. He did not hear it. The door opened gently, and a woman entered. It was Nella. Quietly she stepped to the table. Her eyes rested on the roses. She read her name on the dedication of the song on which they rested and a great sob, half of sorrow, half of joy rose in her throat. Very tenderly she touched the bowed head.

Dicky started up and stared at her without comprehension. Then a light came into his eyes. "You?" he said, huskily.

"Yes, I," she answered, smiling.

"But—but—I——"

"Tell me," she said, stopping him; "why you kept those flowers?"

Though her voice was without emotion Dicky saw something in her face that sent the blood leaping in his veins. He rose, and drew her to him.

"Because I love you," he whispered, his voice almost fierce with joy.

It was Nella who wept now.

"Dicky," she sobbed, "when I didn't see you in the orchestra, I fancied all sorts of dreadful things, so I asked your address from the door-keeper—I knew your name from the very first—and came here to find out what had happened to you. Why didn't you write to me while I was away, Dicky? I thought you would understand when I gave you the flowers. Oh, Dicky, Dicky, I have loved you ever since I looked down into your eyes that night. I thought that you loved me until I went away and you did not write. Then I was miserable, Dicky. But it doesn't matter now!"

"Nothing matters now," said Dicky, and he kissed her on the lips.

Ernest Herbert.

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY,

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Mr. Brett's Quest.

A NUMBER of priceless diamonds having been most mysteriously stolen from an Albert Gate Mansion, and four of the custodians of the jewels murdered, Mr. Brett, barrister and detective, in conjunction with the police, is called upon to help clear up the mystery.

The diamonds, it appears, were sent over by the Sultan of Turkey in charge of a number of Turkish officials, and, being of political importance, the mission was placed by the British Government in the care of Mr. Jack Talbot, of the Foreign Office. Upon the night of the robbery and murder, Mr. Talbot disappears.

The Earl of Fairholme, being engaged to be married to Talbot's sister, intrusts Brett with the finding of Talbot.

Brett's first clue is the statement of Mr. Winter, a Scotland Yard detective, that Mr. Talbot and a lady have been seen in Paris, Talbot having signed his name in a hotel register. Brett goes to Paris to see if the signature is genuine.

On his way he falls in with Captain Gaultier, a King's messenger, from whom he learns that Hussein ul Mulk, the Sultan of Turkey's nephew, who had fled from Turkey, is in Paris. Gaultier promises Brett an introduction. Meanwhile Brett has discovered that the signature in the hotel register is not in Talbot's handwriting.

Brett now wires to Fairholme to join him in Paris.

He suspects Hussein of having caused the diamonds to be stolen, and with a view to eliciting information regarding Talbot's whereabouts, pays a visit to the Turk.

Hussein admits complicity, and even allows Brett to see the diamonds which his agent had just brought in.

No sooner does Brett see them than he discovers that the stones are imitations, and immediately tells Hussein so. The agent is furious, but Brett proves his assertions by crushing one of the gems under his heel.

The agent, seeing that the game is up, decamps, but his destination is ascertained by Fairholme, whom Brett had stationed outside the door.

Subsequently Brett and Fairholme together visit the Cabaret Noir, to which the agent had retreated.

They discover nothing definite, Brett however suspects that Jean Beaucaire, the proprietor, and his daughter, who is known as La Belle Chasseuse, are implicated in the mystery. He therefore decides to visit the place alone, disguised as a wine sodden and decrepit old man.

This Week's Instalment.

What the Police Did.

MONTMARTRE by day and Montmartre by night are two very different places.

This Parisian playground, perched high upon the eminence that overlooks the Ville Lumière, does not wake to its real life until its repose is disturbed by the lamplighter. Then the Moulin Rouge, festooned with lamps of gorgeous red, flares forth upon an expectant world. The Café de l'Enfers opens its demoniac mouth to swallow ten minutes' audiences and vomit them forth again, amused or bored, as the case may be, by the delusions provided in the interior, whilst other questionable resorts shout forth their attractions and seek to beguile a certain number of sous from the pockets of sightseers.

The whole district is a place of light and shade. It is artificial in every brick and stone, in the very pose of every stall, the lettering of every advertisement. And so it flourishes by gaslight, but by day it is garish and forlorn.

Prominent among the regular houses of entertainment was the Cabaret Noir, which, between the hours of 9 p.m. and 1 a.m., usually drove a roaring trade. Situated as it was, in the very heart of a mountebank district, its patrons embraced all classes of society, from the American tourist with his quick eyes fastened upon the vagaries of demi-mondaines, to the sharp-witted Parisian idler, on the alert for an easy and dishonest means of obtaining money which might present itself.

Among such a crowd a wine-sodden and decrepit old man was not likely to attract particular attention.

He sprawled over the table close to one of the windows which commanded a view of the side passage that led to the rear of the building. Although none of the noisy crowd which occupied the café could suspect the fact, the half-closed eyes of this elderly drunkard noted the form and features of every individual who entered or left by the main door, whilst at the same time he paid the utmost possible attention to the comings and goings of any person who used the passage by the window.

To facilitate his observations in this direction he querulously complained to the waiter that the atmosphere was stuffy, and prevailed upon the man to raise the window a few inches, thus admitting a breath of clear, cold air.

Brett had previously ascertained from his agent that Gros Jean and his daughter were still in the private part of the building. No other visitor had put in an appearance, and so the time passed until the clock in the café marked eleven, without any incident occurring which could be construed as having even a remote bearing upon his quest.

Brett began to feel that his diligence that night would not be rewarded.

At five minutes past eleven, however, a pink-and-white Frenchman, neatly attired, unobtrusive both in manner and deportment, entered the café and seated

Digitized by Google

himself quietly near the door. He ordered some coffee and cognac, and lighted a cigarette.

The barrister, of course, took heed of him as of all others, and he would soon have placed him in the general category that merited no special attention, had he not noticed that the new-comer more than once glanced at the clock and then towards the corner bar, whence, it will be remembered, a small door led towards the billiard saloon in which La Belle Chasseuse had displayed her prowess with the pistol.

In such a community the stranger's self-possession and reticence were distinguishable characteristics. So Brett watched him, largely for want of better occupation.

"That is a man of unusual power," was his summing up. "He is elegant, fascinating, unscrupulous. Although apparently out of his natural element in this neighbourhood, he has some purpose in putting in an appearance in such a place as this at a late hour. Perhaps he is one of mademoiselle's lovers, though he looks the sort of person who would be singularly cool in conducting affairs of the heart, and most unlikely to wait many minutes beyond the time fixed for an appointment. His hands are large and sinewy, his wrists square, and, although slight in physique, I should credit him with possessing considerable strength. Being a Frenchman, he should be an expert with the foils. The effeminate aspect given to his face by his remarkable complexion might easily deceive one as to his real character. As a matter of fact, he is the only unusual man I have seen during my two hours' lounge in this corner."

Brett had hardly concluded this casual analysis of the person who had enlisted his close observation, when the private door into the bar opened and Mlle. Beaucaire entered.

Without taking the least heed of any of the numerous occupants of the café she turned her back upon them, and apparently busied herself in checking the contents of the cash register. Beyond this useful instrument was a mirror, and Brett at once perceived that from the point where she stood she could command a distinct reflection of the pink-and-white Frenchman.

The latter was gazing at the clock, and whilst doing so stroked his chin three times with his right hand. Immediately afterwards La Belle Chasseuse three times rang the bell of the register, and then, having apparently concluded her inspection, quitted the bar as unceremoniously as she had entered. Half a minute later the Frenchman finished the remains of his cognac, lit another cigarette, and passed into the street.

It was with difficulty that Brett restrained himself from following him, but he was certain that no one could leave the residential portion of the building without using the passage—a view of which he commanded from his window—and he resolutely resolved to devote himself for that night to shadowing the movements of the ex-circus lady.

His patience and self-denial were soon rewarded. A light, quick step sounded in the passage, and a shrouded female form shot past the open window.

Then the inebriated individual, now hopelessly muddled by drink, staggered towards the door and lurched wildly round the corner, just in time to see mademoiselle cross the Boulevard and daintily make her way between the rows of stalls.

The air seemed, however, to have a surprising effect upon the old gentleman, for the simple reason that to simulate drunkenness and at the same time keep pace with the lady's rapid strides was out of the question.

La Belle Chasseuse was evidently in a hurry, for she sped along at a surprising pace, until she reached a crossing where the rows of stalls and booths were temporarily suspended. At one corner stood a cab, and towards this vehicle she directed her steps. Before Brett quite realised what was happening, the door of the

BOVRIL

REPELS

INFLUENZA.

Digitized by Google

cab opened, Mademoiselle jumped inside, and, as if he had been waiting for her appearance, the driver whipped up his horse and drove off at a furious pace.

At that instant a small victoria with a sturdy pony in the shafts, which had just deposited a lively fare in the vicinity of the Moulin Rouge, drove along the street.

Brett sprang into it and said eagerly to the driver:

"Whip up your horse and keep that cab in sight. I will pay you double fare."

The man tightened his reins and raised his whip in prompt obedience to the order, when suddenly two men jumped into the vehicle from opposite sides, seized Brett and forced him down on to the seat, whilst one of them said in stern tones to the astonished cabby:

"Take us at once to the Central Prefecture of Police."

The man recognised that these new-comers were not to be trifled with. Without a word or a question, he rattled his horse across the stone pavement, and Brett, choking with rage at this interference at a supreme moment, realised that for some extraordinary reason he was a prisoner, and in the hands of a couple of detectives.

By this time the cab that contained the lady had vanished, but the barrister made one despairing effort.

"For Heaven's sake," he said to his captors, "take me where you will, but first follow that cab and ascertain its destination."

"What cab?" said one of his guards sarcastically.

"The cab which I wished our driver to overtake at the moment when you pounced upon me."

"This is a mere trick," broke in the other. "Don't bother about his cab. We have got him safe enough, and let the commissaire deal with him now."

"Listen to me," cried Brett. "You are making a frightful mistake. Your action at this moment may cause irretrievable delay and loss. If you will only do as I tell you ——"

"Shut up," growled the first man, "or it will be the worse for you. Your best plan, my good fellow, is to keep a quiet tongue in your head."

It was not often that Brett lost his temper, but most certainly he did so on this occasion. He was physically a well-developed man, and for an instant the wild notion came into his head that he might perhaps succeed in throwing the two detectives into the roadway and then overpower the driver, taking charge of the vehicle himself and trusting to luck to again catch sight of the vanished lady and her companion, who, he doubted not, had awaited her arrival at the quiet corner, where she joined him.

Unconsciously he must have given some physical premonition of this desperate scheme, for the two policemen tightened their grasp upon him, forced his hands higher up his back, and bent his head forward until he was in danger of having either his neck or his shoulder dislocated.

"Will you keep quiet?" murmured the chief detective. "You cannot escape, and you are only making your affair more disastrous to yourself."

Then Brett realised that further resistance was hopeless. He managed to gurgle out that if they would allow him to assume a more comfortable attitude he would not trouble them any further.

Gingerly and cautiously the two men somewhat relaxed the strain upon him, and he was able to breathe freely once more.

Then he laughed, almost hysterically, but he could not help saying in English:

"The shadow of Scotland Yard falls upon me even here. Poor old Winter, how I will roast him over this adventure!"

"What are you talking about?" demanded one of the men.

"I was only thinking aloud," replied Brett.

"And what were your thoughts?"

"Simply this, that the sooner I meet your remarkably astute commissary the better I shall be pleased."

A Disconcerted Commissary.

THE journey across Paris proceeded without further incident, until they reached the prefecture.

The two detectives hurried their prisoner into a large general office, where he was surveyed with some curiosity by the subordinates lounging about a huge fire, whilst one of their number reported his arrival. After a brief interval he was taken into an inner office. Behind a green baize-covered table was seated a sharp-looking man, whose face was chiefly composed of eyebrows, pince-nez, a hooked nose, and a furious imperial.

This individual turned the shade of the lamp so that the light fell in its full radiance upon the face and figure of the prisoner. He produced a huge volume, and turned over its leaves until he reached the first vacant space, ruled and numbered for the description of all persons brought before him.

"Your name?" he said sharply.

"Reginald Brett," was the reply.

The Frenchman required this to be spelt for him.

"Age?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Nationality?"

"English."

"Profession?"

"Barrister-at-law."

The official consulted a type-written document, which he selected from a mass of papers fastened by an indiarubber band. Then he looked curiously at the prisoner.

"Are you sure this is the man?" he said to the senior detective.

"Quite positive, monsieur."

"Then take off his wig and get a towel, so that he may remove some of his make-up. The rascal should be an actor. I never saw a better disguise in my life."

Brett knew it was hopeless to attempt explanations at this stage, so he readily fell in with their directions, and in a few seconds he stood revealed in something akin to his ordinary appearance.

Now the French Commissary of Police was no fool. He was an adept in reading character, but he was certainly puzzled after a sharp scrutiny of Brett's clear-cut, intelligent features. Nevertheless, he knew that the criminal instinct is often allied with the most deceptive external appearances. So he turned to the detective, and said:

"Tell me, briefly, what happened?"

"In accordance with instructions, monsieur," the man replied, "Philippe and I ascertained the movements of the prisoner at the Grand Hotel. During the afternoon he received messages from London and from some persons in Paris, which documents are now probably upon his person. He quitted the hotel at eight o'clock, disguised as you have seen. He called for a moment at a house in the Rue du Chaussée d'Antin, the number of which we noted, and then made his way to the Café Noir in Montmartre. There we watched him from the door for nearly three hours. He feigned drunkenness, but held communication with no person."

Digitized by Google

"Ha!" cried the commissary. This struck him as an important point, as he made a memorandum of it.

"Soon after eleven o'clock he rose hastily and quitted the café, crossed the boulevard, and hailed a cab. We would have followed him, but there was no other vehicle in sight. As our instructions were to arrest him at any moment he seemed likely to elude us, we seized him. He struggled violently and told us some story about his desire to follow another cab, which he said had disappeared. We saw no cab such as he described, and we treated his words as a mere device to abstract attention. We were right. A moment later he made an attempt to escape, and we were compelled to use considerable force to prevent him from being successful."

The commissary turned his eyes upon the prisoner and was seemingly about to question him when Brett said with a smile:

"Perhaps, monsieur, you will allow me to say a word or two."

"Certainly," said the official, who knew that criminals generally implicated themselves when they commenced explaining matters.

"You are acting, I presume," said the barrister, "in obedience to reports received from the London police with reference to the murder of four Turkish subjects at Albert-gate, and the theft of some valuable diamonds belonging to the Sultan."

This calm summary of the facts seemed to disconcert the Frenchman. It astonished him considerably to find his prisoner thus indicating so clearly the nature of the charge to be brought against him.

"That may be so," he admitted.

"It is so," went on Brett, "and in this matter you are even more hopelessly idiotic than I took you to be. I have told you my name and profession. I am a friend of Mr. Talbot, the English gentleman who has been spirited away in connection with this crime, and I have in my pocket at this moment a letter from the British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs authorising me to use my best efforts towards elucidating the mystery and tracking the real criminals. Here is the letter," he continued, producing a document and laying it before the amazed official.

"I was on the point of making an important discovery with reference to this case when these too zealous agents of yours seized me and absolutely refused, even whilst I was a prisoner in their hands, to follow up the definite clue I had obtained. It is an easy matter to verify my statements. The authenticitv of this letter will be proved at the British Embassy, whilst a telegram to Scotland Yard will place beyond doubt not only my identity, but my bonâ-fides in acting for Mr. Talbot's relatives and the Foreign Office. Further, an inquiry made at the Grand Hotel will produce unquestionable testimony from the manager, who knows me, and from my friend, Lord Fairholme, who occupies rooms there at this moment."

"Lord Fairholme," stuttered the official. "Why, that is the name given by the other prisoner."

"Do you mean to say you have arrested the Earl of Fairholme?" gasped Brett, struggling with an irresistible desire to laugh.

The Frenchman covered his confusion by growling an unintelligible order, and bent over the letter which Brett had given to him. In half a minute one of the detectives returned, and with him was Fairholme, upon whose honest face indignation and astonishment were struggling for the mastery.

"Oh, surely that cannot be you, Brett!" cried his lordship the moment he entered the room. "Well, of all the silly fools that ever lived, these French Johnnies take the cake. I suppose that they have spoilt the whole business! If the brutes had not taken me by surprise I would have knocked over a dozen of them before they arrested me."

Living Skeletons.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM LIFE.

WE are all familiar with the living skeleton or professional lean man of the side show, whose leanness is due partly to bad nutrition, and partly to the fact that by means of purgatives he expels the food from his system before it has time to be fully absorbed.

In his case the emaciation is intentional, but there are scores of cases where it is quite the reverse, and brought about entirely by imperfect digestion and general ill-health. In such cases Bile Beans for Biliousness will be found a sure and speedy remedy, as the following plain statement of fact goes to prove. The story comes from Mr. George Blanchard, of Morley Street, Kettering, and was told by him to a "Kettering Guardian" reporter. He said: "For seventeen years I suffered from acute indigestion, which steadily became worse till at last my doctor gave me up as incurable, and I came to be looked upon as dying. I had violent pains in my sides and stomach, which latter was always distended with wind; and though I belched incessantly I found no relief, for the simple reason that the wind kept forming as fast as I could get rid of it. Every morsel of solid food I swallowed seemed to turn to wind, and also brought on severe fits of vomiting, which shook my whole system.

I had to leave off taking solid food altogether, and subsist entirely on liquids. As a consequence I became so weak that I could hardly drag one foot after the other, while my limbs wasted away till they were no thicker than those of an infant! To add to my misery, I suffered also from dizziness and profuse sweats. As I have said, I had medical advice, but derived no benefit and after a time was told by my doctor that he could do nothing more for me, and that I should never again be well. At this I abandoned hope and made up my mind for death. "I was in this pitiable condition when my wife chanced to read of the marvellous cures effected by Bile Beans for Biliousness and we got a box. I began taking them, and soon realised that I had at last found the right thing. The stomach pains ceased gradually as did also the vomiting. The flatulence and dizziness disappeared, and I began to regain strength. All this time I had been taking Bile Beans regularly, and continued to do so, till now I am well and strong again and feel better than I have done for twenty years. I can strongly recommend Bile Beans for Biliousness to anyone suffering as I did from indigestion, dizziness, stomach pains, vomiting, or weakness. Their effect is truly wonderful."

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED.)

Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids.

½lb. 1s. 4d., 1lb. 2s. 4d., 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free.

Supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, &c., by

MRS. CONYERS,

Morchard-Bishop, Devon.

Digitized by Google

"Silence," shrieked the commissary, upon whose mind was dawning the consciousness that he had committed an outrageous blunder.

"What did you say your name was?" he demanded fiercely.

"I told you my name an hour ago," said his lordship haughtily, "and if you had not been so beastly clever you would have believed me. I am the Earl of Fairholme, a fact that can be readily substantiated by dozens of people here in Paris, and this is Mr. Reginald Brett, a friend of mine, who would have probably discovered the mystery of my friend's disappearance and the whereabouts of those diamonds by this time if you had not so stupidly interfered."

His lordship was hardly coherent with annoyance, but the cute official had now convinced himself that a stupid mistake had been committed by his department.

He became apologetic and suave. He explained that their mysterious proceedings had to some extent committed them in the eyes of the police to secret knowledge of the crime which had so thoroughly aroused the detective departments in both London and Paris.

Evidently Scotland Yard had not advised the French police of Mr Brett's official connection with the hunt for the murderers. The agents of the Paris Bureau had watched Brett's coming and going during the whole day, and the detectives' suspicions, once aroused, were intensified when his friend, Lord Fairholme, sought the aid of two uniformed policemen to break in the door of the Turkish residents in the Rue Barbette.

Even now, politely concluded the commissary, he would regretfully be compelled to detain them for a little while, until he verified their statements. Meanwhile, they would not be subject to any further indignities, and might procure such refreshments as they desired. They would probably be set at liberty within a couple of hours.

At 1.30 a.m. Brett and Fairholme were ushered forth from the doors of the prefecture, and stood in freedom in the street.

"Where now?" said Fairholme.

"To the hotel," replied Brett wearily. "I must have sleep, so I consign the Turks, and the Sultan's diamonds, and everyone concerned with the Albert-gate mystery to perdition for the next eight hours."

Brett Reviews Progress.

NOTWITHSTANDING his weariness, Brett rose early in the morning. His companion slept like a top, and the barrister had to shake the earl soundly by the shoulder before the latter woke into conscious existence and sat up in bed sleepily demanding:

"What's up? Where's the fire?"

"I want you to dress at once," said Brett cheerily, "and join me at breakfast. You must leave for London by the 11.50 train."

"Am I such a nuisance then that I have to be packed off at a moment's notice?" said the earl.

"By no means. Decidedly the contrary in fact. As matters in France evidently require persistent attention on my part for many days, perhaps weeks, I think it is hardly fair to leave Talbot in confinement any longer. Your mission is to restore your prospective brother-in-law to the bosom of his family, and I regret that it is impossible for me to accompany you."

"Are you serious, old chap?" was the startled answer.

"What has happened since one o'clock this morning to make you so confident?"

"Nothing that is not already known to you. Had I succeeded last night in following Mdlle. Beaucaire to her destination, I might have been able to accompany you to London this morning. As it is, Heaven alone knows what sort of dance she may lead me. However, you complete your toilette, my dear fellow. I have ordered breakfast to be served in a quarter of an hour. Then you can eat and listen."

During the first portion of the repast Brett seemed too busily engaged to unburden his mind. It was not until he had lit a cigarette and pushed his chair away from the table, so that he could assume a posture of complete ease, that he commenced:

"You slept so soundly, Fairholme, that you have not had time to review all the circumstances of yesterday's adventures. Otherwise I am sure you would have reached the same conclusions as suggest themselves to me. Curiously enough, although dog-tired when I went to bed, I woke about seven o'clock feeling thoroughly rested both in mind and body. I procured some coffee, took a bath, and went out for a stroll, with the result that I returned and aroused you after reaching finality in some of my conclusions, and deciding upon a definite plan of action for both of us."

"It is really very decent of you, Brett, to constantly assume that I can see as far through a brick wall as you can, especially as you know quite well that, although I am fairly well acquainted with all that happened yesterday the only tangible opinion I can offer is that the Paris police interfered with you at a most inopportune moment."

Brett smiled. "That is because you have not accustomed yourself to analysis," he said. "However, I will summarise my views, and if you can find any flaws in my reasoning I will be glad. The first thing to observe is that the diminutive Frenchman drew upon himself the special vengeance of the Turks when I exposed the attempt to foist upon them a collection of dummy diamonds. Yet he actually had the nerve to return to the Rue Barbette later in the day. He has not been seen since, so the little scoundrel is either dead or a prisoner in Hussein ul Mulk's flat. As I cannot permit myself to participate in a murder or even in illegal imprisonment, I am regretfully compelled this morning to take the police into my confidence and inform them of an obvious fact which escaped their penetration yesterday."

Fairholme whistled.

"I must say," he cried, "I gave a passing thought to the incident myself last evening when your spy reported that the Frenchman remained in No. 11 after the Turks had quitted it."

"Yes," said Brett. "You see all you need to cultivate is the habit of deduction and you will soon become a capital detective."

The Earl laughed. "I hope you will tell that to Edith," he said, "and perhaps you may change her opinion concerning my reasoning capacities. She thinks I am an awfully stupid chap as a rule."

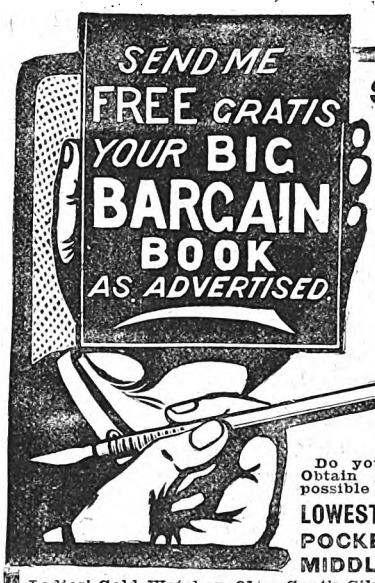
"That is because she is in love with you," said Brett.

"Well, now, that remark puzzles me more than anything else you have said." His lordship darted a quick look at the barrister in the endeavour to learn whether or not he was in a chaffing mood.

Digitized by Google

Curing Catarrh without Operation.

THE editor of the "Journal for the Deaf" and "Review of Diseases of the Ear, Nose and Throat," has been quietly investigating the much-praised method of treating catarrh by burning the inside of the nose with a wire, heated red hot by electricity and by other operative methods. Out of 1,000 cases presented at the Drouet Institute for diagnosis, he found 522 (over one half) had been treated previously and that 38 of these had undergone several operations, the only effect being a depression of the patient's general health, and in some instances an aggravation of the catarrhal ailment. In contrast with this are published in the "Journal" several cases illustrating the cure by the Drouet method, where several operations had failed. Those who wish to read the full details of the cases and the editorial comments on this subject can obtain a free copy of the "Journal" by addressing the editor, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. With the "Journal" is also sent a Patient's Report Form, by means of which anyone can obtain free advice by correspondence and instructions for home treatment. The editor advises patients, however, when possible to visit the Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are, in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultations.



SEE FOR YOURSELF
THE ENORMOUS SAVINGS
that will result from Dealing Direct with
H. SAMUEL
A POSTCARD SENT TO-DAY
will bring you his
BIG FREE GUIDE
200 Pages. Over 3,000 Engravings.
Do your shopping at home. Obtain goods of the highest possible quality at
LOWEST FACTORY PRICES.
POCKET THE MIDDLE PROFITS!
Ladies' Gold Watches, 21/-; Gent's Silver Watches, 8/6; Real Silver Albertis, 3/9; Gold Gem Rings, 3/6; Cutlery, Plate, and all Household Requirements.
A SAVING OF HALF YOUR USUAL OUTLAY.
FREE PRIZES TO ALL BUYERS. SELECT YOURS WHEN ORDERING. SEND A POSTCARD AT ONCE.
H. SAMUEL, Dept. 29, Market St., MANCHESTER.

GIVEN AWAY
with this week's
HOME NOTES
(No. 471.)

PAPER PATTERN of this
Child's Combinations.
Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.
PRICE ONE PENNY.

MACKINTOSH'S
IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*
EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

ESTABLISHED 1851.
BIRKBECK BANK,
Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.
2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%
repayable on demand.
The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

ZOX for Neuralgia at Night.
GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from
THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

Digitized by Google

"Why should a woman seek to depreciate anything she values?"

"Simply because it denotes a secure sense of complete ownership. Miss Talbot would never dream of such a pretence as to your intellectual powers if you were merely a friend."

"Well," said the earl dubiously, "that is a new point of view for me at any rate."

"It is a fact nevertheless. But we have not much time, so we must reserve to another opportunity any further consideration of feminine inconsistency. The fate of the Frenchman must be determined to-day, and to decide the question I must act through the police, so a conversation with our friend the commissary becomes inevitable. And now to return to the hypothetical part of my conclusions. I began by assuming that the individual who planned the Albert-gate outrage and subsequently sought to bamboozle his employers by palming off on them a set of spurious diamonds, is far too acute to attempt to dispose of the real gems for many months yet to come. He obtained sufficient funds from the Turks, in pursuance of what may be termed the legitimate part of his contract, to enable him to live for a considerable period without further excitement. Closely associated with him in the present adventure is La Belle Chasseuse. Neither of them would endeavour to procure safety by flight to a foreign country. They will seek rather to court insignificance by living in a normal and commonplace manner. What more easy, for instance, for Mademoiselle than to return to the life of the circus, whilst her lover—granted that he wished to remain in her company—will obtain some suitable employment in the same circle. There is a suspicion of a joke in the statement, but I am quite serious. The mere consciousness that they have in their possession a vast fortune, which time alone will enable them to realise, will serve as an inducement to undergo the period of hard work which in their case means safety. You remember that the lady's father, Gros Jean, visited the Gare de Lyon yesterday?"

Fairholme nodded.

"I think you will find that he was depositing there the necessary luggage for a contemplated trip into the interior, so that Mademoiselle might slip out late at night quietly and unnoticed and join her lover at some preconcerted rendezvous, a thing which we now know she did. I cannot, of course, be certain whether the Frenchman who signalled to her in the Café Noir was himself the favoured individual. It is possible. By the way, what height is Talbot?"

"About five feet nine."

Brett pondered for a little while.

"Yes," he communed aloud, "I think I am right. That pink-and-white Frenchman is the master mind in this conspiracy. And to think that the unintelligent muscles of a couple of thick-headed French policemen should have crudely interfered with me at such a moment!" He sighed deeply.

"Never mind," he went on, "it cannot be helped. I must keep to the thread of my story. Mademoiselle Beaucaire left the Cabaret shortly after eleven o'clock. We cannot be certain that she went to the Gare de Lyon, but the cab unquestionably set off in that direction. It is a long drive from Montmartre to the Lyons station. We will give her, say, until twelve o'clock to reach there. Now, unless she was journeying to some suburban district—a contingency which upsets the whole of my theory—there was no main line train leaving for the south until 1.5 a.m., and that is a slow train, stopping at nearly every station south of Melun. Let us suppose that they guard against every contingency. She and her companion wish to escape the scrutiny of detectives. It will at once occur to you that they run far more risk of observation if travelling by a fast express than if they elect to journey by the common place trains which only serve the needs of country districts."

"It did not occur to me," said Fairholme candidly. "Still, there is a lot in the idea all the same."

"Very well. To sum up, I imagine that the pair, providing the two travelled together, would break their journey south at some quiet town in the interior early in the morning, and subsequently proceed to their destination by easy stages."

"I am still fogged as to what you mean by their destination?" said Fairholme.

"I mean the circus, the music-hall, the café chantant, or whatever place mademoiselle and her astute adviser may select as a safe haven wherein to avoid police espionage during the many months which must ensue before they dare to make the slightest effort to dispose of the purloined diamonds."

"And how do you propose to follow them up?"

"I cannot tell at present. My movements depend upon the results of the inquiries I shall make to-day in theatrical circles, and particularly at the Gare de Lyon, where I shall not meet with success in any event until the night staff comes on duty."

(A further splendid instalment next week.)

EVERY WOMAN

should have a copy of

ETIQUETTE FOR WOMEN

A Book of Modern Modes and Manners.

By One of the Aristocracy.

Crown 8vo, Cloth. Price 1s.
Post Free 1s. 2d.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To the Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of
"Etiquette for Women." I inclose 1s. 2d.
"Etiquette for Men." ,, ,, 1s. 2d.

Name .....

Address .....

EVERY MAN

should have a copy of

ETIQUETTE FOR MEN.

By F. V. HOWARD.

This volume gives in a simple style full and accurate directions for the due observance of modern etiquette for men.

Crown 8vo, Cloth. Price 1s.
Post Free 1s. 2d.

Digitized by Google

ACTRESS MADE A STAR

—BY—

HYPNOTISM.

Under the Strange Spell She Carried the Audience by Storm—Famous in a Night.

Doctor John D. Quackenbos, professor in Columbia University, New York, astonished his associates of the Medico-Legal Society the other night by telling them how a young actress bounded into fame in a single night under the hypnotic spell. It is the case of a Trilby in real life; not the trick of a charlatan, but a sober, actual accomplishment of latter-day science. The new Trilby is a favourite with theatre goers. Her first appearance on the stage was made at a New York theatre, when, under the hypnotic spell, she carried the audience by storm; she was called before the curtain again and again—at a bound she was famous. The press of the city united in applauding her splendid work. This is only one of the many marvels of this wonderful power. The American College of Sciences of Philadelphia has recently issued a new book by twenty eminent hypnotic specialists, which is being distributed free throughout the country for the purpose of educating and protecting the public. It is one of the most weird and fascinating works ever written. It is richly illustrated with the finest engravings, and its vivid descriptions of the practical uses and possibilities of this marvellous mind-power fill one with awe and amazement. Among the many intensely interesting subjects treated are: How to hypnotise instantaneously; how to influence a person secretly without his knowledge; how to develop Personal Magnetism and use it in business, society, etc.; power of the human will; how to cure the most obstinate diseases and bad habits by magnetic forces without drugs or medicines; how to make people like you; how to win in business, in society, in love; anyone can develop personal magnetism; rules which will absolutely develop this power within a short time; the transmission of thought; the development of soul power; how to make a business man listen to you when he would send anyone else away; how to sell a man goods when he does not want to buy; a legitimate way to double your salary; how to keep people from influencing you; hundreds secretly influenced and controlled in body and mind without their knowledge; how to implant a suggestion or command in a subject's mind that he will carry out a week, month or a year hence, just as the hypnotist may wish; how to hypnotise by mail or by telephone; how to develop within yourself that inward power, that force of character, which instantly gives you a control over people without saying a word or making a single gesture. For the benefit of the public we wish to state that if you will write the American College of Sciences, Dept. W. L. 9, 420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A., a copy of the above book will be sent to you by mail absolutely free of charge. The college guarantees this offer to be absolutely genuine, with no conditions attached. It is proposed to give away several thousands of copies of the book so that the public may learn the wonderful secrets of this marvellous but much misunderstood science.

"Worth a Guinea a Box."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Sick Headache, *Constipation,*

Wind and Pains in Stomach,

Impaired Digestion,

Disordered Liver, and

Female Ailments.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

CONTAINING 56 AND 168 PILLS RESPECTIVELY.

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Non-Love Problems.

YOUR questions, "KNOWLEDGE," though I should be most happy to answer them, do not quite come into my province. You would, I should think, find articles published on the subject of string work, such as the making of hammocks, in some boy's paper. I do not think that there is any paper published devoted entirely to swimming and diving, but you will find that the sporting dailies publish everything of interest on that subject; also those magazines which are devoted to athletics.

* * * *

You ask "Should you raise your hat to a girl each time if you see her several times a day?" No, is it not etiquette to do so. Raise your hat the first time, but if you see her several times later, either, if she gives you encouragement, go up and chat with her, content yourself with a smile of recognition, or turn your head in another direction.

The Baby in Society.

"S. D." is a married woman with an only child, now aged two years, and able to walk and talk a little. "S. D." entertains friends a good deal, particularly on Sundays. Should the child be in the room when the friends are there, or would it be better for it not to appear?

* * * *

I think I should do what many married women in good social circles do. Let the baby enter and leave at a given moment. When the conversation has lagged a little, arrange that the baby, which will have to be dressed in its nicest clothes, shall enter. Let it stay for five or ten minutes, or as long as it interests the company, and then retire again. It is rather annoying to guests to have a baby continually in a room, as even the best of them are apt to be embarrassing, especially if you have any young men visitors. I know a young man who was asked to recite at a little gathering, and the whole time of the performance the baby was making caustic criticisms in an unknown tongue, which so upset him that he never visited the house again.

A Secret Love Affair.

"MAUREEN" is sixteen, and has been meeting a youth for a year and a half without her parents' knowledge. They have now heard of it, and have forbidden her to see him. She asks me if it would be very wrong if they wrote to each other occasionally. She has told him that he must not speak to her for a year, at least.

* * * *

Your parents have evidently not forbidden you to write to him, so, until they do so, I suppose you are at liberty in that respect. I should not say there was anything wrong in your communicating with each other, though a great deal depends on the nature of the young man, and his age. If he is your own age, I can scarcely see why your parents should be so strict in the matter, as boy and girl friendships often lead to the happiest marriages in after life. But as you are only sixteen, it is impossible for me to advise you to disobey your parents. They probably understand how to deal with you rightly far better than I do.

A Case for Patience.

"K. K." is very much in love with a girl, and in their correspondence has concluded that she returned his affection. When he proposed, she answered that she did not love him enough for marriage, but only cared for him as a friend. He pressed her very hard, but she said that, while she did not care for any other man, she had not considered the question of marriage. After more pressure on "K. K.'s" part, she gave him permission to renew his offer in a year's time. He asks, "Can a girl grow to love a man whom she does not meet or hear from?" "K. K." says that at one time he thought she cared a great deal for him, but through his own actions he fears he lessened her good opinion of him.

* * * *

I think the girl is quite right. Evidently she has not made up her mind as to the true state of her own feelings towards you. There are very many people who, while conscious of affection towards others, are not sure whether the sentiment is one to be called love. Some people cannot love in a passionate sense, but can only experience the strong affection associated with brothers and sisters, or great friends. Possibly this is the state of the girl's mind towards you. She is too honourable to pretend to feel what she does not, and wishes to let a year pass before giving you a decided answer. During that year, in which you will be parted from her, she will decide in her own mind whether you are or are not essential to her happiness. If the former case, I think you will hear from her long before the year ends. If she is able to wait as long as this without seeing you, I fear you must conclude that she does not return your affection sufficiently for marriage. Accept her wishes provisionally, and keep to their terms. Send her presents, as you say she wishes you to, but leave it to her to make the next declaration.

An Interfering Mother.

"FLO" met last summer a young man who paid her great attention. When they parted, he wrote to her several letters couched in intimate vein. Then they suddenly ceased. For three months she heard not a word from him, until quite unexpectedly she met him. To her amazement he indignantly asked her why she had ignored his letters. She told him that since the early autumn she had not heard a line from him. The only suspicion "FLO" has, is that her mother, who is known to be opposed to the young man, has intercepted the letters and kept them from her. But "FLO" dare not accuse her mother of so doing. What had she better do?

* * * *

It is certainly not a nice thing to suspect one's mother of doing. I do not think even the best motives on her part would justify such conduct. If she objected to the man it would have been her duty to write to him herself and request him not to pay you attention. As you are not sure, I should advise you to confirm the suspicion before acting. Arrange that the man shall write to you on a definite date. If you do not get the letter, you will understand that it has been intercepted. If so, I should then ask your mother if she knows anything about it; and if she does you will have reason to be very much annoyed. However, do not let that estrange you. After all, she has probably done it out of a desire for your own good.

Cynthia.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

"NO BETTER FOOD."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

Fry's

Pure Concentrated

Cocoa.

300 GOLD MEDALS, ETC.

The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET," "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and "MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its

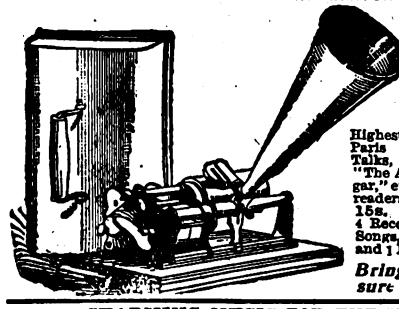
ABSOLUTE PURITY.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.—Sold only in tins with gilt top.

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.

A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

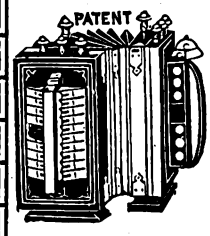


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. No Home should be without one. *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, " 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, " 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, " 16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount. Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.

Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

SONGS COPIED.

Legible as print, **5d.** page; transposed correctly, **6d.** page. MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon. Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Mrs. Conyers,

MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

DON'T COUGH *for* KEATING'S LOZENGES EASILY CURE THE WORST COUGH.

One gives relief. An increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1s 1½d. tins everywhere.

To CURE Drunkards

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietor, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 23lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

A CELEBRATED

NELSON WATCH & CHAIN

FREE FOR ONE DAY'S WORK.

We send this Genuine Nickel-Plated WATCH, Warranted an ACCURATE TIME-KEEPER, with Chain and Pendant, for Selling Seven Beautiful Articles at 1/- each. Sterling Value. Send your full Name and Address (Post-card will do) by Return of Post, and we will at once forward the box of Handsome Goods, Post Paid, and a large Premium List. No Money Required. WE TRUST YOU. We send the Goods at our own risk. Send us the money that you get for them, and we send you the Watch, Chain and Pendant by Registered Post.

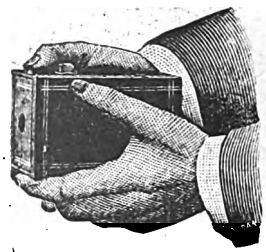
THE NELSON MANUFACTURING CO., 72, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

Digitized by Google

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

A KODAK FOR 5s.

THE NO. 1 BROWNIE.

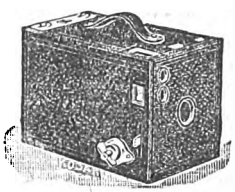


THE No. 1 BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2¼ by 2¼ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 Brownie is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark-room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK.



THE No. 2 BROWNIE.

THE NO. 2 BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2¼ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE. **PRICE 10/- ONLY.**

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK Ltd., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow.

Retail Branches: 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, London, W.C

Digitized by Google

Short Stories.

No. 735.] Week ending January 31st, 1903. [Price One Penny.

So engrossed were they in each other, that they did not hear the sound of a match being drawn sharply across a rough surface, nor see the thin tongue of flame that stole upward from Molly's dress.

(A Powerful Incident from our Story, "The Heiress of Studely Chase." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia.

Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

"Health," the well-known Medical Journal, Edited by Dr. Andrew Wilson, F.R.S.E., says of Kaputine:

"There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ this remedy, and popular experience of its use fully warrants the recommendations with which it is offered."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,

of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from

KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield,

for 12 stamps.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Watches

A SOUND ... INVESTMENT.

APPROVAL. BEFORE PURCHASE TERMS ....

Lady's Sterling Silver Watch and Albert in Case for ... 30/-

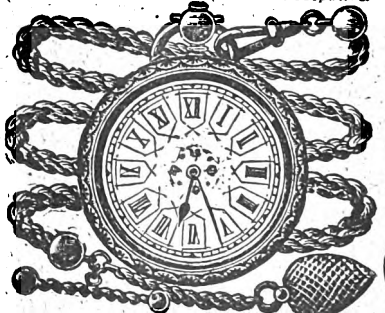
METHOD: Send only 2/- with order, the Watch and Albert will then be forwarded; if satisfied, send 2/- per month until the balance is paid. (Cash Purchasers receive HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT).

The Full Amount of the deposit will be refunded if you are not satisfied.

Description. Sterling Silver Watch with horizontal movement, fitted with all Modern Improvements, and Fully Jewelled; Handsomely Finished Opal Dial, Decorated and Embellished in High-class Style; Artistically Designed Sterling Silver Cases. Warranted 5 Years.

Very Neat Two-row Sterling Silver Albert, with Bar and Drop Piece.

Send for our No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, &c., &c. Post Free.



GOOD AGENTS WANTED.

Persons in regular employment should write for terms and particulars. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division Street, Sheffield.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietor, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 22lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive Free on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU— NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at 2d. each, making 4/- altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Timekeeper or other Presents of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of £2 10s. per week. Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE Delamere Crescent, London, W.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

Distinction in Dress

At Moderate Cost

is the enjoyment of all who shop by post during

NOBLE'S Money-Saving SALE.

Free Gift presented with this Costume.

SALE CATALOGUE Sent Post Free.

MODEL 1592.

Fashionable Coat and Skirt in the J. N. Serge or Costume Coating. Price 12/9, carriage 6d. extra.

JOHN NOBLE LTD., 148 Brook Street Mills, MANCHESTER.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 735. Week Ending Jan. 31st, 1903. One Penny.

The Heiress of Studely Chase.

How a Man Yielded to a Woman's Temptation.

Telling of the Incident shown on the Cover.

"MOLLY!"

No answer.

"Molly!" in a higher key,

Still silence.

"Molly! *Molly Craven!*"—very sharply.

Molly jumped.

"I beg your pardon, Stella. Did you speak to me?"

"I did. Three times. I was about to offer you a penny for your thoughts, but, judging by your deep abstraction and that dreamy smile, they are evidently priceless."

"On the contrary, dear Stella, I offer them to you gratis. I was thinking of—The Ball"—very gleefully and in large capitals.

"Ah, yes, your first ball. You won't think so much of balls when you have been out a few years. But everything is fresh to you," added Miss Fitzgerald rather enviously.

It was the witching hour of twilight, tea had just been brought in, and dishes of bon-bons and cakes such as girls love, stood ready; Molly's aunt and chaperon slumbered peacefully on a distant sofa, and everything invited confidences. The two girls drew closer together and began to chat.

"Isn't it dear of grandfather to give this ball for my birthday?" exclaimed Molly. "I do think I am a lucky girl to have such a grandfather, though, of course, it's sad to be an orphan."

"I don't know," said Stella, thoughtfully, as she nibbled a bon-bon. "I rather wish I were a well-provided-for orphan."

"Oh, Stella!"

"Well, I haven't anything against the pater and mater exactly, except their madness of a quarter of a century ago when they married and brought up a large family on nothing, but the lot of an orphan in your circumstances rather appeals to me."

"Oh, Stella!" repeated Molly.

"My dear, you don't know what it is to be poor," returned Stella. "I do. We haven't enough to pay our way. In fact, we don't pay our way. And if you saw the ridiculous sum which the pater sportively calls my dress allowance, you'd wonder how I manage to appear decently garbed."

"But you dress so very handsomely," observed Molly, looking at her guest's elaborate tea-gown. "Something simpler might——"

"Sweet simplicity and white muslin are all very well for you," snapped Stella; "but they don't suit me."

All rights reserved.]

The two girls were certainly very different in style, yet both possessed no ordinary amount of beauty. Molly was fair, with sunny locks, a roseleaf complexion, and velvety brown eyes, a dainty little creature all softness and fluffy whiteness, fresh and sweet as a moss rosebud.

Stella was tall, and her figure had the full maturity of womanhood. Her eyes were blue, black-fringed, and of extraordinary brilliancy. Her complexion was equally brilliant, her mouth like a scarlet geranium bud, and her hair of midnight darkness, rippled in rich natural waves over her well-shaped head.

"Yes," she continued, after a pause; "it's terrible for people in our position to be poor, and that is why I am so sorry for your cousin Edgar. He is wretchedly poor for a man in his position, and, I suppose, will never be better off, as you are your grandfather's heiress, and Edgar will only inherit the barren title. It seems hard."

"It may seem so," replied Molly coldly; "but you must remember that Edgar is only a very distant cousin, while I am the only child of my grandfather's only child. But, really, this is not a subject——"

"Talk of angels," interrupted Stella, as a strikingly handsome man entered the room; "here he comes. And Sir Gilbert, too. Ah, and Mr. Le Marchant."

Mrs. Verinder woke at this moment, and tea and conversation became general until the party dispersed to dress for dinner.

Molly was the first down, looking very fair and sweet in her simple white gown, and she went into the conservatory where she had a favourite nook sheltered behind a magnificent palm; there she sank down on the luxurious lounge, to indulge in a delicious day dream. A step roused her, and she looked up, her heart thrilling with joy, but it was not Paul Le Marchant; it was her cousin Edgar.

"All alone, Molly?" he said, coolly taking a seat at her side.

"I like to be alone," replied Molly, not very graciously, but at eighteen it is difficult to conceal one's feelings, and Molly wanted that seat left vacant for another man.

Edgar took no notice of the hint, but went on to ask his cousin to promise him the first dance at her birthday ball on the following night, a request she reluctantly granted. A short silence followed.

"I wish," began Edgar after a pause; "I wish, Molly——" and there he stopped.

Digitized by Google

"Yes?" put in Molly abstractedly, listening to some sound in the distance. Surely that was Paul's step.

"We have always been good friends, Molly," Edgar began again. "I have always enjoyed my visits to the Chase, and looked forward to seeing my dear little cousin. Sir Gilbert has always been kind to me, and I am sure he would be pleased if the earnest wish of my heart were granted, and my little cousin became my wife. Do you think, darling, you could learn to love me?"

"I'm quite sure I couldn't," answered Molly heartlessly. "But I'm very much obliged, and all that, of course."

Edgar looked rather taken aback, but urged his suit in impassioned language which left Molly quite unmoved.

"I am very sorry, indeed I am, if you really feel unhappy," she said, with perfect composure; "but I don't love you, and I could not possibly marry you. And I don't believe you love me either, although you say so. I *feel* you don't."

"I do love you, but perhaps I am too late; perhaps that fellow Le Marchant——"

"Not another word," cried Molly, very pale, and with a certain childish dignity that sat oddly on her cherub face. "I will not hear you. I don't love you; I don't even like you; and I don't believe you are a good man." And here her dignity broke down in a burst of tears, and she fled. She stumbled headlong into the arms of Paul Le Marchant, coming to find his little hostess in her favourite nook, behind the palm where he had had many a quiet chat with her already.

"My darling, my own Molly," he exclaimed, losing his head in his distress at her affliction. "Don't cry, my sweet, I can't bear it. Only tell me what is wrong. What has happened? Why were you crying?"

"I don't know at all," answered Molly, looking up radiant through her tears, and Edgar Craven went as completely out of her mind as if he had never existed. "I think—because I'm so happy, dear Paul."

For just as she knew that Edgar did not love her, no matter how strongly he protested his passion, Molly knew that, though he had never told her so, Paul Le Marchant loved her. He pressed her to his heart.

"My darling," he whispered; "I have loved you since I first saw you, but you were so young, just entering society, and I felt I ought not to speak until you had seen the world and learnt to know your own heart. But now—shall I ask your grandfather for you, Molly? I will go now, at once."

"And I will go with you," declared Molly valiantly; "grandfather never refuses *me* anything."

Left alone, Edgar Craven stood stroking his long drooping moustache absently and reflectively.

"Awkward," he murmured; "very awkward. Well, that little scheme's at an end. Little fool! But she wasn't fool enough to believe me. I didn't make love convincingly, I expect. It's uphill work making love to the wrong girl. Ah, if my glorious Stella had been in her place!"

After dinner, Mrs. Verinder and Sir Gilbert sat down to a game at chess, Molly and Paul Le Marchant went boldly to look at a new plant in the conservatory, and Miss Fitzgerald shortly afterwards disappeared. Edgar thought he knew where to find her, and was successful in his search. Stella was pacing up and down the picture-gallery, holding a blue paper in her hand and looking very worried. She smiled as she saw Edgar, and allowed him to join her in her walk.

"It's so cool here," she said, "and I like to walk among all these dead and gone Cravens. They look as if they never had had a care. Oh, to be the heiress of Studely Chase! Oh, to be without care and worry!"

"What is it that worries you so?" he asked.

"Bills; want of money; debts," she said. "I owe—oh, I don't know what I owe. And my dressmaker is pressing me for something on account, at least; and I have nothing. I've been unlucky at cards, too. My only chance is——"

"To marry a rich man," Edgar put in, as she paused. "I love you, Stella, but I am poor."

"I know it," she said quietly, "and I love you, but I can only marry a rich man."

"And Molly, the heiress of Studely Chase, stands between me and riches. I shall never be a rich man."

"If Molly were to die," began Stella softly, "has Sir Gilbert the power to choose another heir?"

"Failing Molly, I am next in succession," he answered shortly, "and Sir Gilbert has no power to leave the estate away from me. And he is seventy-nine."

Their eyes met.

"If we were in a novel," went on Stella, in the same soft voice, "you would manage to get rid of her—*somehow*."

"It would hardly work in real life," returned Edgar lightly. "I don't care to risk the gallows."

"But there are—*accidents!*" came the soft whisper.

Edgar stopped suddenly and the two stood looking at each other.

"For instance?" he asked, after a silence.

"Let us suppose we are writing a novel," Stella answered. "We want to get rid of a woman who stands between the happiness of two of the other characters. It would be easy enough in a novel. She might be thrown from her horse, or catch small-pox, or be drowned skating, or——"

"Yes?" breathlessly.

"I read in the papers some time ago," said Stella, with seeming irrelevance, "of a man who lit his pipe on the top of a 'bus and threw the match, still alight, carelessly away. It fell on a lady's bonnet and set fire to it. Had it not been for the presence of mind of a passer-by, who extinguished it, the woman would have been burnt to death."

"Well?" said Edgar, as Stella again paused.

"We might work that incident—into our novel. The girl to be removed might be at a dance in a dress of filmy chiffon, a most inflammable material. She might be sitting talking to a partner—say, on the stairs—and some man, lighting a cigar, might throw the match aside. It might lodge in her dress, quite by accident, of course, and the way to happiness for the other two is clear."

Edgar was deadly pale.

"Stella, it's too fiendish!" was all he said.

She turned away.

"Well, so let it be," she answered. "I have a headache, and am going to my own room."

But he caught her in his arms.

"Stella, Stella, I can't lose you!" he murmured; and she nestled to him.

"Think of all it means," she whispered, in a voice of beguiling sweetness. "Riches, luxury, beautiful Studely Chase, and *me*. She stands between you and all that. And she will marry Le Marchant, whom you hate, and reign here, mistress of all that might belong to you and me. Think, think, Edgar."

* * * * *

The night of the birthday ball had come. Studely Chase, that grand old mansion, was illuminated brilliantly, masses of flowers hid the walls of the ball-room, and were used profusely in all the rooms. It was a most successful ball, the guests agreed, and the heroine of the occasion, Sir Gilbert's grand-daughter, looked radiantly lovely.

Molly's pale green chiffon robes clung round her lissom form, her pearls, her grandfather's birthday gift, were exactly suited to her innocent childish beauty, her eyes shone like stars, her cheeks were each a lovely rose of happiness

Digitized by Google

and excitement. She looked like some radiant vision from fairyland.

Stella Fitzgerald was as beautiful in a wonderful confection of amber silk, but she lacked the fresh, innocent air which was Molly's greatest charm.

The dance went on. Molly had danced the first, according to promise, with her cousin Edgar, and the next with Paul. There had followed a few duty-dances; and then came Paul's turn again.

"Let us sit this out, darling," he urged. "Let us go to our own little nook behind the great palm. The conservatory is pretty full; but I don't believe anyone has found out *our* seat."

No one had, for the seat was in a secluded corner, not easily found by those who did not know it. But Edgar knew his way to it, and soon followed them.

The young lovers were deep in that happy castle-building for the future, which is so sweet in the first dawn of love. They were too absorbed in each other to notice Edgar's approach.

Had Paul looked up he might have seen the white, set face behind the palm; but his eyes were fixed on Molly's sweet face, and he saw nothing else. He did not even hear the sound of a match drawn sharply across a rough surface, nor see the thin tongue of flame that stole upward from the soft, light material that lay on the ground behind Molly.

Suddenly—and never will Paul forget the sickening horror of that moment—Molly's face of innocent happiness changed to an expression of wild terror, and she sprang to her feet, a mass of flames which seemed to have burst forth as if by some infernal magic.

Maddened by pain and fear, the girl would have rushed past him, but he caught her and threw her down, tearing off his coat to throw over her, and trying to beat out the flames with his bare hands.

There was a great outcry, and the sound of hurrying feet, and women's screams, and the flames seemed mounting higher and higher, and Molly's struggles ceased and she lay very still. Then Paul was conscious that help was rendered and the fire extinguished, and then he staggered to his feet, sick and giddy, and looked down on Molly, lying motionless and unconscious.

"She is dead," he said dully; and then blackness seemed to swallow him up, and he fell forward in a deep swoon.

He had been very badly burnt on arms, shoulders, and hands, but he was not in any danger of losing his life. But Molly—bright, happy, pretty Molly, her grandfather's idol, her *fiancé's* priceless treasure, the worshipped heiress of Studely Chase—lay at the point of death. The house was hushed to solemn silence, while doctors and trained nurses took possession of it.

Stella Fitzgerald fled before the gloom to her own home; and Edgar Craven went abroad, both to await news of the success or failure of their plot with what patience they possessed, and to stifle what feelings of remorse they might chance to experience.

The doctors gave little hope, for the shock to the system had been very great, but though Molly went down to the very jaws of death, she did not die. Perhaps the great love of old Sir Gilbert and of Paul kept her in this world and would not let her go, for slowly, very slowly, she crept back to life, and one glad day the doctors proclaimed her out of danger.

It was a very slow recovery, for months elapsed before she was able to leave her rooms, and it was a warm, sweet day in June when she for the first time walked out in the park with her lover. A very little tired her, and she looked white and fragile as they returned to the house and sat down on the terrace where tea was to be served.

"Sir Gilbert has promised me that I shall carry you off to some more bracing air as soon as the doctors sanction it, my darling," said Paul, as he carefully placed her on the lounge put ready for her. "You are willing, aren't you?"

But Molly only smiled and blushed in answer. Sir Gilbert was just then coming along the terrace looking very grave, and holding some letters in his hand. After carefully preparing Molly for bad news he read aloud one of the letters, which was to the effect that Edgar Craven was dead, found shot through the head at Monte Carlo.

"You see it is thought to be a case of suicide," said Sir Gilbert, "for he had been losing heavily at the tables, and, in fact, was a ruined man. Curiously enough, the letter found on him which led to his identification was the letter from me, in which I told him you were rapidly recovering. Molly, darling, how ghastly you look! I ought not to have told you this."

"It isn't that!" she gasped. "At least, I'm sorry for poor Edgar, but—I never told you before—indeed, it went quite out of my head in all that dreadful illness, but it has come back to me now; it was Edgar set me on fire."

"*What?*" shouted both men.

"It was. As the flames shot up and I sprang to my feet, I half-turned round, and *I saw Edgar*. Even in that awful moment I knew he had done it. Why he did it I don't know at all, but I know he did it, and did it to kill me."

"He was my next heir," observed Sir Gilbert, "but it seems too fiendish to suppose that his motive."

"Yet it is the only conceivable motive," said Paul, as he drew his newly-recovered treasure closer to him, "unless he was mad. It was more like an action of madness than anything else."

But they never knew the part played by Stella Fitzgerald.

"Yes, he must have been mad," continued Paul, "and now that he has gone to his account we must try to forgive him. Let us forget him, my Molly, and think only of our own happiness. Shall you be able to travel in a month, sweetheart? May I have my wife with me by that time? Will you trust yourself to me then?"

And Molly laid her hand in his and answered very sweetly and simply—

"Yes, Paul; then, and always!"

Vera Serkoff.

OUR COMING SERIAL.

In a few weeks we shall start a new serial story of great dramatic power from the pen of Mr. R. Norman Silver, the author of "The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told Off Duty," "The Brains of the Force," and other stories known to readers of this little paper. The new serial is quite the best thing Mr. Silver has yet turned out. Something more about it next week.

£5 a Week for Life!

This is the

HUGE PRIZE OFFERED BY *PEARSON'S WEEKLY.*

(For particulars, see page 143.)

Digitized by Google

Footprints of Fire.

THE STORY OF A LOVE THAT CAME OF SWEET CHARITY.

"I'm very sorry, Lyell, but it's impossible!"

"Impossible, man! Why?"

"I had rather not say, or, to put it another way—you, yourself know why as well as, or even better, than I do."

"A mare's nest, my boy! a mare's nest, and you've found it!"

"That's a matter of opinion; I've expressed mine."

"Well, Pierpoint, of course you are aware that you are throwing away a good thing. The boat is new-built; while, as her skipper, all you would have to do would be to quietly cruise in the neighbourhood of a certain part of the coast of Cuba till, well—till something occurs."

"It is just that something which prevents me from accepting your offer. I am willing to tackle most things, if only they are straight and above board; but when it comes to mixing myself up with shady foreign politics with the main idea of making a big profit out of both sides, why, you must excuse me. I'm not having any!"

"Very well, then! I thought to do you a good turn. With a brand-new master's certificate, it would have been a fine chance for you I should have thought, to have got a command at the start. It's your loss, not mine, that you think otherwise. I'd take the *Queen Mab* out myself if I wasn't tied here by business."

"Didn't know you held a ticket," said the other.

"Ah! you see you don't know everything, my dear Pierpoint. By the way, seen the fair Mabel lately?"

"No."

"Well, I have; and it will be news for you that through the death of that old half French uncle of hers, she has come in for an enormous sugar plantation in Martinique. As her father's heiress she was always prospectively wealthy, but now—there's no knowing what she is worth."

"Miss Stanhope's money is nothing to me," replied Harry Pierpoint hotly.

"*Miss* Stanhope!" said the other, with a provoking smile that was half a sneer. "Things are changed a bit, aren't they? I should think, too, that money would be particularly attractive to you just now, when you haven't overmuch of it to boast of."

"Look here, Lyell!" blazed out Pierpoint. "You're a big shipowner; I'm just a sailorman, without a ship. You're rich—I'm poor; but that doesn't give you the right to insult me!"

"I never supposed that it did."

"We've known each other since we were youngsters," went on the other, ignoring the interruption, "and I suppose that old acquaintance inclined you to give me the refusal of this precious Cuban job of yours. But there was no need to introduce Mabel Stanhope's name into the talk. Still, as you have mentioned it, and in such manner, I will just say that I consider you to have shown your hand with regard to her; and that I shall do my level best to win her, in spite of her money, and in spite of all you may do to prevent me. Good morning!"

"Conceited idiot!" snarled Cuthbert Lyell, as his visitor closed the door behind him; "he may say and do what he likes. I mean to have the handling of that West Indian property and also of Mr. Stanhope's not inconsiderable accumulations! The girl—well, she isn't a patch on that pretty New England Puritan I met at Scarborough two months ago. The rich young shipowner! If they only knew! Only a step from the Bankruptcy Court, and no salvation except in this Cuban privateering business. Once get that through, however, and possession of Mabel Stanhope's money-bags, then, hey for Rhode Island—Lettice Fairfax—and paradise!"

Ringing the hand-bell on his table sharply, the summons resulted in the entrance of the chief clerk.

"Oh, Carter, is the *Queen Mab* ready to out-dock on next tide, if necessary?"

"Yes, sir; and everybody's signed on now except the captain. You said you would arrange that."

"Quite right, Carter! quite right! I have arranged it! The skipper is found; and I am taking steps within the hour to see that my instructions are properly carried out. What is our balance at the bank?"

"About three thousand, sir. But that is wanted, you know, to-morrow, for Simpson's acceptances. You said you would transfer from your private account at Elyn Mills sufficient to replace that."

"So I will, Carter—this afternoon. Meanwhile, make out a cheque for two thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds and bring it to me to sign. I have a payment to make before one o'clock.

"I'll do it! Yes, I'll do it!" Cuthbert Lyell muttered to himself as the door closed on his subordinate. "I'll sail the *Queen Mab* myself! The game is played out here, anyway, and by going I can kill two birds with one stone—make my Cuban profit and be at Martinique when Mabel Stanhope arrives there to take possession of her inheritance!"

* * * * * *

There was much excitement, and indeed, revolutionary agitation in Cuba about this time in connection with the election of a President.

Havana was in a turmoil from end to end; the Creole population and the American whites having very different ideas with regard to a State head. Contraband munitions of war were, therefore, purchased in Britain by the former in preparation for a probable, or at any rate, possible struggle.

Cuthbert Lyell had early intimation of the Creole requirements, and being absolutely destitute of moral principle, and in a hopeless state of financial difficulty, determined to fill his pockets by means at once dishonourable and cowardly.

With rifles and small guns that would burst at the first fire; with cartridges that were guiltless of lead; with swords that would buckle at the first blow, he planned to stow the *Queen Mab* to the Plimsoll line. He was to receive payment on his bills of lading before transhipment, so that, the last case over the side, he could steam away with impunity.

The risk was great, there was no doubt about that; but the gain was so much the greater in proportion that to such a desperate man as Lyell it outweighed all other considerations.

Digitized by Google

The *Queen Mab*, a five hundred ton steam yacht, lay in Tilbury Dock, waiting only her skipper and sailing orders.

Lyell knew that Mabel Stanhope contemplated leaving for the West Indies, with her father's sister as companion, in the course of a few days; but it was only when he had definitely decided to sail his ship himself that something occurred to him which, from his point of view, could he only carry it out, would render his schemes with regard to the young heiress, surely and completely successful.

First dispatching a wire to the chief officer of the *Queen Mab*, he then drove in hot haste to Earl's Court, and asked for Mabel Stanhope.

"Miss Stanhope," he said, "it is in my power, I think, to be of service to you, if you will let me."

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Lyell; but how?"

"You leave almost at once, do you not, for Martinique?"

"Yes, at the end of the week."

"Have you taken your passage?"

"No; but my aunt and I propose doing so to-morrow morning."

"I am glad, because, as I have said, it enables me to be of service to you. For some time past a small steamer has been building for our firm for the West Indian branch of our business. Unable to secure a suitable commander for her, and wishing her to start on her maiden trip before the end of this present week, I have decided to take her out and home myself."

"Are you a sailor, Mr. Lyell? I should never have thought it!"

"Oh, yes; now, if you and Miss Stanhope will so far honour me as to accept a passage in my vessel, I shall be only too delighted, and will land you at St. Pierre as safely and in as good time as would the Royal Mail people."

"Of course it is very good of you, Mr. Lyell, and I should like it very much if I thought we should not inconvenience you in any way."

"How could that be?" he said, drawing a step nearer to her and speaking with an intensity the meaning of which she could not mistake, "seeing that the best that I can offer you would scarce be worthy of your acceptance or even of your consideration!"

Had Mabel Stanhope stopped to think she would probably have declined the proffered service; but, her aunt coming in at that moment, Lyell artfully addressed himself to her.

"Miss Stanhope," he said, with all the suave, respectful gentleness that elderly ladies so much appreciate, "I want to enlist your aid in persuading your niece to agree to a proposal that I have just made her."

The good soul, for the moment, let her thoughts run upon the only one sort of proposal having a supreme interest for her sex. Lyell soon undeceived her, however, his explanation of the position meeting with her unqualified approval.

"My dear," she said to Mabel, "it will be so much more pleasant being on a friend's ship; and as we can have everything ready in twenty-four hours there will be no difficulty."

"I leave the Thames for Harwich to-morrow morning on the ebb tide, and shall expect you to join us there the day after at noon. I shall be at the dock station to meet you."

Although he had succeeded in effecting his object, he could see that Mabel regarded both himself and his proposition with a certain amount of mistrust and hesitation; but he felt pretty sure that the old lady would innocently further his ends, and prevent any backing out, even at the last moment.

"That is all settled, then," he said, as he rose to go. "From Harwich we go to Rotterdam, where I am to take in a few stores, from there making a straight course for Martinique. Good-bye! or rather—*au revoir!* I will give orders at once to the steward to prepare a state room, and to make things as comfortable as we can for you."

"Aunt!" said Mabel. "I wish we were not going in this vessel. I don't like Mr. Lyell, I can't exactly say why, but I don't like him."

"My dear," said Miss Stanhope, with quiet insistence, "this is mere prejudice. Why shouldn't we accept a passage in a friend's ship. I should like to know? I do not say that Mr. Lyell is my idea of a nice sort of man, but that is no reason why you and I should not avail ourselves of his very opportune invitation."

There was nothing more to be said after that, and Mabel resigned herself to the inevitable.

* * * * *

As Cuthbert Lyell stands waiting on the Harwich platform the arrival of the London train, he more than once takes a letter out of his pocket, and reads it with evident disturbance of mind.

The letter was to the following effect—

"LYELL,—*From certain things that I heard at your office, where I called again in the afternoon, I gather that you have yourself gone as skipper of your boat. This, with the fact I have also learnt that Miss Stanhope and her niece are to travel with you to Martinique, is convincing proof to my mind that you have some devilry afoot, which has Mabel Stanhope for its object. Believing this, and knowing you, I hereby warn you that I am on your track, that Simpson's acceptances have this morning been publicly posted against you as forgeries; that you can never show yourself in the city of London again, and that should you seek the coercion of Mabel Stanhope for mercenary purposes, I will follow you step by step till I have linked you hand and foot to justice.* HARRY PIERPOINT."

"Confound the fellow! He hangs on like a bull-dog. But there, he can't by any possibility overhaul us before I have completed my little scheme."

At that moment the London train stood in the station.

"Quartermaster!" said Lyell, to a sailor in attendance. "Look after the ladies' baggage, and see that it is taken on board at once."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Ah, Miss Stanhope! Steam's up, and we haven't any time to lose. Miss Mabel, I have some news for you. You know Pierpoint—Harry Pierpoint?—well, he's had an awful accident! Fell off a gangway plank at the docks, and was crushed between the quay and the ship's side!"

At first he thought he had gone too far, for she stopped short and caught hold convulsively of her aunt's arm.

She did not speak, but looked at him with white face, and lips that trembled violently.

"Mr. Lyell! Is this really so?" said Miss Stanhope, distressfully. "We were so fond of Harry Pierpoint, surely he is not ——?"

"I fear so," replied the arch-liar. "My information has it that he died directly after being brought up out of the water. I feel it deeply myself, for he and I were schoolfellows, though never meeting much in after life."

Judging it best to get Mabel on board as soon as possible, Lyell whispered to Miss Stanhope that the stewardess would be the best one to look after her niece.

The old lady quite agreed with this, and when the *Queen Mab* had received her skipper and his guests, she soon moved out into the stream, and in obedience to the order of "Full steam ahead!" was in full run for the Scheldt and Rotterdam.

* * *

For obvious reasons Lyell had not stopped at Madeira, but had pushed on with all speed for Martinique.

It was on the nineteenth day from Rotterdam that the towering top of Mount Pelée appeared on the horizon.

From its summit rose a steady, fairly large column of smoke, while even at that distance there came on the wind a fine, impalpable grey dust, which settled on everything and everybody.

At any other time Lyell would have wondered, and been disturbed at this evidence of volcanic activity, but now his whole mind was bent on other things

Digitized by Google

His first words to the pilot were significant of his fears.

"Has the Royal Mail come in?"

"Yes," said the pilot, "twenty-four hours ago, and left for Jamacia."

Lyell could only hope that his lucky star would shine for him, and that Pierpoint would not have come across the Atlantic to circumvent his plans.

After dinner he suggested that as soon as all the usual port formalities had been observed he should escort the ladies ashore the next morning before six o'clock, and see them safely bestowed in the Convent of Notre-Dame, at the village of Morne Rouge.

The good sisters were glad to be of service to the two Englishwomen, and Lyell promised to call the next day, and see how they fared.

But that call was fated never to be made.

* * * * *

St. Pierre, the chief town of Martinique, was situated on the lower slopes of the mountain, its tree-dotted streets extending right down to the shores of the bay.

In a small hotel down by the waterside, kept by a middle-aged creole couple, Harry Pierpoint, passenger from Southampton on board the Royal Mail steamer, *Orinoco*, sat watching out of a window a man coming towards the house, from the upper part of the town.

"There he comes! I will meet him and make him tell the truth about Mabel and her aunt."

As he swung out of the doorway into the street Lyell saw him, and saw also that there was no evading the man who, as he had threatened, had followed hard in his very footprints.

It was just about eight o'clock as the two men met face to face, but the words which were ready to spring to Pierpoint's lips were never uttered.

Suddenly the air became dark, a strange rumbling sound coming from the direction of the crater of Mount Pelée.

Faint flashes of flame, too, were visible through the ever-increasing volume of smoke.

"Save yourself!" shrieked Lyell, as the other got within almost touching distance of him. "The mountain has burst, there will not be a creature alive here in an hour!"

Not waiting to hear Pierpoint's reply, the fear-stricken schemer made at a frantic run for where he knew his boat to be waiting for him to take him off to the *Queen Mab*.

"Quick—quick!" he shouted to the two men at the oars.

Then it was that, turning his head, he saw through the gloom and shower of dust, Pierpoint racing to stop the boat from leaving.

"Stop! Lyell! Stop!" was borne on the wind. But it was too late.

As the exhausted pursuer reached the spot Lyell gave a powerful push with the boat-hook, and the two men laying with a will to their oars, the boat was soon well on its way towards the little steamer.

"The *Queen Mab* was lying well in-shore, so that the distance to travel being but small, Lyell was on board in less than ten minutes.

His feet had barely touched the deck when, with a belching roar that shook earth and sea for miles around, the mountain burst on the side nearest the bay, and poured forth a death-dealing cloud of smoke, ashes, flames and dust that in a moment dealt ruin to the town, wiping out, at a stroke, forty thousand human souls.

Nearly every ship in the harbour was sunk at her moorings; the *Queen Mab*, overwhelmed with hundreds of tons of fine dust, being the first to disappear.

The Cubans would not now get their "faked-up" weapons of war, while Cuthbert Lyell would assuredly never receive the reward of his fraudulent scheme.

When the morning broke all that was visible of the yacht *Queen Mab* were the trucks of her topmasts, and the dead body of its owner washed hither and thither between them on the swell.

* * * * *

The nuns at the convent at Morne Rouge did not, as a rule, admit men within their walls, but, at the earnest intreaty of Mabel Stanhope they consented to receive and nurse back to life, Harry Pierpoint, whom Mabel, in company with two of the sisters, had found crushed, burnt, and half dead, in a niche under the walls of the Cathedral.

How he had escaped instant death was a marvel, but, as he related later on to Mabel, the depth of the recess must have protected him from the terrible shower.

Everyone knows that the side of the island where lies the village of Morne Rouge, escaped the devastating hand, so that the nuns were able to go out in parties and succour where succour was needed.

To Mabel was left the bringing back to life of Harry Pierpoint.

It was weeks before he could realise that the gentle, tender-handed vision by his bedside was indeed the one whom at home he had worshipped at a distance.

As for Mabel, she learnt, while ministering to his wants, the true love which comes sometimes with the pitifulness of sweet charity.

Long before he could sit up he had told her all his heart, and she—she gave him that which she had found—the love of her life.

One day she told him that the great inheritance which she had come to see and to take possession of, had, in a moment of time, as it were, been swept away, burnt up, and buried out of sight for ever.

"Don't be angry with me when I say that I am glad," he said. "I am but a poor man, and you were more than rich enough already before this other matter fell to you. You it is that I want, not your money."

"Really me?" she said, smiling down happily upon him.

"Yes, darling, really you, and only you!"

* * * * *

Harry Pierpoint and his wife, Mabel, never by any chance speak of the ill-fated owner of the *Queen Mab*. And it is best so.

The nearest reference to the subject that the former ever permitted himself, was when he once likened the marks he had left in the earth of a certain memory to "footprints of fire."

E. Ralph.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH £5 A WEEK FOR LIFE?

10 Gramophones for S.S. Readers.

IT is not everyone who can afford to buy a piano, or even a musical instrument of any sort, and to such persons a Gramophone—which is another name for a talking and singing machine—would be a much-prized gift.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by stating on the back of a post-card—in not more than fifty words—what you would do with the sum of £5 a Week for Life—which, as everyone now knows, is a prize being offered by *Pearson's Weekly* in a competition.

A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers whose method of using the money is considered best.

Post-cards only must be used, and they should be addressed to the LIFE EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, February 3rd.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Ancient and Modern;

OR,

THE OLD CHEST AND THE YOUNG LADY.

THE chief occupations of Mr. Raymond Spencer were the pursuit of his hobby for collecting antiquities and receiving and reciprocating the attentions of the young ladies of his rather extensive circle of friends and acquaintances.

He had gathered together many curiosities from various parts of the globe and of different periods, and the mere mention of something ancient was sufficient to deprive him of rest till he had seen it and made an attempt to acquire it. Being possessed of a fair income, he could afford to indulge his hobby to a considerable degree.

Raymond Spencer was one of those men who have the power of attracting the other sex. If he were at a county ball, he obtained the best partners, for he was a good dancer and his manner was irresistible; and if he were at any other society function, he was the ladies' man *par excellence*. His detractors said they could see nothing in him but conceit; if there was really nothing in him, then it must have been his very conceit that carried him through so triumphantly. Certainly he had a marvellously good opinion of himself, and never doubted his ability to win over the members of the opposite sex.

"I do not intend to marry yet," he remarked on one occasion confidentially to a friend. "Unless," he added, "a really good chance should offer itself!"

From this it will be seen that he anticipated no difficulty in capturing the heart and the hand of any lady upon whom his critical choice might fall.

At length he met Miss Owen-Williams and his choice fell upon her. She was young, pretty, rich (which was not the least attraction) and she had a liking for antiquities. Raymond Spencer sat down one evening and deliberately thought the matter out; he arrived at the decision that she would suit him and that he would take the necessary steps to secure her.

Miss Owen-Williams, however, was not so easy to conquer as he had imagined, and he was vexed at his progress; he hardly knew whether she encouraged his advances or not. At the end of a month he learnt that she was returning to her married sister's mansion on the Welsh coast, and he resolved to follow her. Without properly considering his words, he announced to her that—by a strange coincidence!—he had been making arrangements for a stay of four or five weeks quite near to the spot she had mentioned, so he hoped to meet her at the houses of mutual friends in the neighbourhood.

He found little difficulty in obtaining rooms at a good hotel, and it was just as easy for him to secure invitations to various houses, for (as already mentioned) he had many friends and acquaintances.

He made many excursions on foot in the vicinity in the hope of meeting Miss Owen-Williams alone, and thus getting an additional chance of making progress in her favour. He succeeded two or three times, and after a fortnight, he congratulated himself on making headway. She was more pleasant when he met her in society, and she seemed even more agreeable when they chanced to meet during a walk.

It was during one of those excursions that he made a discovery which divided his attention. He was passing a small, rather out-of-the-way house—cottage would probably be a more fitting description — when, through an open door, he observed a big, strange-looking chest against the back wall of the room. It was an immense piece of furniture for that dwelling; it was quite out of place there; and it was of very ancient design and manufacture. The collecting instinct impelled him to enter the humble dwelling, to the surprise of the old woman and her daughter, who were seated at the farther side, sewing or knitting.

"I am very tired," he explained apologetically, "and I should be thankful for a cup of water and a rest. Would it be troubling you too much?"

The woman nodded hospitably; the girl looked confused. She was comely of form and not far removed from being pretty of feature, and she was conscious of the appreciative gaze of the newcomer.

"Certainly, good sir!" responded the dame, speaking with a slight accent. Turning to the girl, her mother uttered a few words in Welsh.

Raymond Spencer went to the chest and sat down on it without waiting for a formal invitation. The old dame looked a trifle hurt.

"This is a very old chest, madam," remarked Spencer, who was now able to get a better look at it.

"If you sit on that stool," replied the old woman, pointing to a rough piece of furniture, "you will be able to appreciate the beauty of the chest still more!"

Spencer concluded that she did not like him to sit on the chest, and this was not a good sign from his point of view. She would not be so much inclined to part with it. He did as she suggested, drawing the stool close to the chest and examining it carefully. It was of oak, with heavy metal bindings along the edges and at the corners; the metal parts were ornamented with carvings some of which were undoubtedly heraldic designs. It had no lock, but had evidently been originally fastened by some kind of padlock, now lost.

It was a massive thing; it had clearly existed for centuries and was likely to endure for several more. Raymond Spencer's eyes sparkled at the thought of having found this treasure; it was worth a lot of money, but no doubt the old dame could be tempted into parting with it for five pounds. That sum would be a small fortune to her.

So engrossed was he in the examination of the chest that he did not notice that the girl had brought him a glass of milk. He excused himself in his most courtly fashion, and took the glass with a profusion of thanks, whereat the maiden blushed and looked happy.

"This chest must be quite one hundred years old, madam," he said artfully as he sipped the milk, "and it must be in your way. Would you be willing to dispose of it? I daresay I

could get £5 for it, which would enable you to buy a nice neat piece of furniture to take its place."

"What!" gasped the dame in her native tongue. "You want me to sell *that?* And for £5! Why, it has been n our family for centuries—not for one century, but many!" Then she remembered that her guest could not understand and she replied to his offer in English, but in a milder tone, the first flush of indignation having worked itself out. "No! I cannot sell it! It goes with the family, sir. It has been handed down from father to eldest son all the time, but I have no son, so it will go to Maria when she marries! I cannot sell it!"

"Just as a fancy price," said Raymond Spencer with affected unconcern, "I would give ten pounds, but that is a high figure. Ten pounds! That would buy a lot of things!"

He was pretending to examine the chest as he spoke, but he kept a watch on the woman's face from the corner of his eye. She shook her head determinedly, so he decided to say nothing more for the present. After chatting a while with them, and principally with the girl, he left the cottage, after asking permission to call again to look at the chest.

"It requires a little scheming, that's all!" murmured Raymond Spencer as he trudged along towards his hotel. "Antiquities and girls are much alike; make up your mind to have either the one or the other, and you're sure to win. That is, if you possess the necessary qualities that are demanded in such circumstances, as I do!"

It will be noted from this remark that his conceit had not diminished.

Miss Owen-Williams was not so agreeable that evening, but Raymond was not dismayed; he would win in the end. If he could get hold of that chest, it would help him in his love suit, for Miss Owen-Williams was proud of her descent from the princely families of Wales and this fact, coupled with her love of the ancient, would make the chest an attraction. He pictured to himself how nicely it would fill one nook in the house he intended to furnish lavishly—partly with her money—when he was married to her, and he smiled every few minutes with self-satisfaction.

He made his way to the cottage earlier in the day, on the morrow of his first visit, and found Maria alone. That was a piece of good fortune and he made the most of his opportunity.

"You wish to see the chest again?" asked the girl, and she blushed when he answered: "Yes, the chest and *you!*"

He sat down on the stool and she sat by his side, replying to his questions. They had no papers to prove the authenticity of the age of the chest, Maria told him, but the tradition handed down from generation to generation was to the following effect:

The chest had been the property of Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, the last of the Welsh Princes of Wales, who was killed in a chance encounter with an English knight in 1282. The chest had passed into the possession of a distant relative of Llewelyn, and had changed owners many times since that date, passing through the hands of great Welsh families and finally, about two hundred years ago, into her father's family. The heraldic designs were said to be those of Llewelyn and of other families, but she (Maria) did not know one from another.

Spencer was perfectly satisfied that it was a rare treasure and he intended to possess it; he could not keep away from the cottage, but paid visits whenever he believed that Mrs. Pritchard was out. Maria and he became great friends and he took several tracings and rubbings of the carvings on the wood and metal.

The time he had intended to stay had expired, but he was located at a house in the neighbourhood. Miss Owen-Williams resided there during the greater part of the year, so he could pursue two objects at once time.

They sat side by side on the stool, looking at the chest.

He was passing out of the Pritchard cottage one afternoon when he saw Miss Owen-Williams and a Welsh peasant talking together. They parted as he came in sight, the lady going in the opposite direction and the man walking towards Spencer and the cottage. Raymond was perplexed for a moment, but he returned the man's civil "Good morning" and explained the meeting by telling himself that Miss Owen-Williams doubtless knew the man by reason of his being a tenant on the estate or something of that kind.

He turned and looked back, just in time to see the man enter the Pritchard dwelling, and then an idea struck him. He might be Maria's lover! He, Raymond, had flirted with the silly girl in order to get all possible information out of her, and to win her over to the idea of selling the chest. She might be able to influence her mother in time. Maria herself was not averse to selling it. Now, if that man were her future husband, or likely to be, he must be conciliated.

"I must get on the right side of him, get them married, and then induce both to brave the old lady's anger and sell me the chest! That's the plan. No more flirting with Maria! I must pay a little more attention to the lady over there, for she seemed a bit frigid last night, and I find from Lark and Mark's letter that my finances would be better if supported by her fortune!"

David was the lover's name and he worked at a hotel as a porter. Raymond was very pleasant to him and offered to help him. Maria appeared somewhat embarrassed when Raymond first surprised her in David's company, but he was so genial that her confusion quickly vanished.

Within a fortnight Raymond had completely conquered David, a simple, good-natured fellow, but he made no mention of the chest. David intended to marry as soon as he could get a better situation, and this gave Raymond the opportunity.

"It will be such fun to get Miss Owen-Williams to help me to get David Morgan a better post, and she can do it!" muttered Raymond in high glee. "It will be a regular round, and they will all play my game! She helps him into a situation; he thanks me, because I obtain her help. He lets me have the chest; the chest helps me to win her. Thus, she helps me to win herself! Funny, isn't it?"

Digitized by Google

The ceiling, which he was addressing, did not apparently see the joke, for its stony exterior did not wrinkle. But Raymond was highly pleased.

He spoke to Miss Owen-Williams about David Morgan. Yes, she knew him well, and the rest of his family; she would be happy to assist him, but how did Raymond know him? Raymond had to explain and he told half the story; he really gave himself a lot of trouble to enable David to marry, and the wedding took place very soon afterwards, much to Raymond's delight, for he was getting tired of the waiting.

"Now's my time!" said Spencer to himself, the day after the wedding. "I must approach David while his gratitude is warm. And I must finish my double business in this part of the country, for I've had enough of it."

David and his bride had hired a cottage some three miles away from Mrs. Pritchard, but their home was just as near for Raymond as the dwelling of Mrs. Pritchard. He knew that the coveted chest had been removed there, at his own suggestion. His heart beat high at the prospect of victory. At last!

"Good morning, David!" he saluted. "You seem very happy!"

"Thanks to my good friends, sir!" replied David gratefully.

"Well, David, as you acknowledge that I assisted you to happiness, you will not hesitate to do something that will give me the greatest pleasure."

"Not a moment, sir!" said David sincerely. "What can I do?"

"You have an old chest, given you by Mrs. Pritchard. It is of no use to you, and I should like to place it with my other treasures of that nature. Will you sell it to me for five pounds?" As he spoke he drew from his waistcoat pocket a £5 note and held it towards David.

The latter opened his eyes in wonder, and Raymond could scarcely repress a smile at the quick way in which the simple fellow was jumping at the bait.

"Well, now!" cried David, speaking slowly, "if I had known that you wanted it, I would have let you have it with pleasure, sir, but I never dreamt of it, so——"

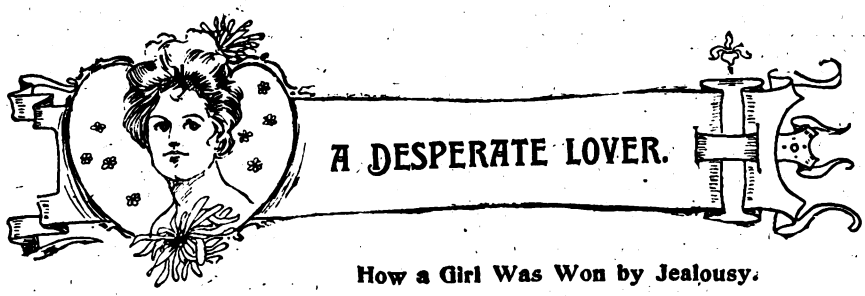
"What?" gasped Raymond, turning cold.

"Miss Owen-Williams gave me £10 for it only this morning! Mrs. Pritchard said she would agree to that, as the lady was descended from another great Welsh family. But," he added quickly, "I would readily have sold it to you, for all that, if I had known, for you have been so good! Miss Owen-Williams said I ought to thank you for your attentions to Maria and for your unselfish goodness—that was exactly what she said, sir, and she laid stress on the *unselfish*—in getting me that situation. She said that she hoped she would find a husband who was unselfish and not conceited enough to think that a woman could be bought or could be fascinated by his vanity. I don't know why she said that, but she did, and she told us that she was going away from the district for a time, as there was someone hereabouts she did not wish to see and perhaps that person would be gone when she came back!"

David prattled on innocently enough, not comprehending the effect of words.

Mr. Raymond Spencer escaped as soon as he could and left for home on the following morning, a wiser and less conceited man.

H. Bramley.



A DESPERATE LOVER.

How a Girl Was Won by Jealousy.

She entered a large jeweller's shop, and Bob, who had seen her from the opposite side of the street, crossed over and passed in immediately after her.

Stopping at the first counter he asked to see some diamond rings. He could see Gladys further down the shop, but she did not see him until he turned round as she was going out.

He called to her.

This was their first meeting since about two months before, when she had for the seventh time firmly, but gently, refused to marry him.

"Won't you help me select one?" he asked, nodding towards the tray of rings spread out over the showcase.

"Why, Bob," with a light laugh, "are you in earnest?"

"Certainly. You know I'm — er — aw — well, you know."

"Is it an engagement ring? Oh, do tell me about it! Who is she and——"

"Here is her picture," and he produced a photograph from his pocket. "But I don't believe you know her."

"Oh, isn't she pretty!" she cried, enthusiastically.

"Isn't she," agreed Bob.

"What pretty eyes! And what a sweet mouth."

"Of course."

"When is it to be?" she asked, after studying the picture intently for a moment.

"Oh, I'll tell you about it after awhile. Now, which of these rings do you think would be most suitable for the girl who would so honour me as to become my wife?"

She looked them over carefully, and finally holding one up to him said: "Take this one, Bob."

Gladys waited at the door while Bob paid for the ring.

"His wife!" she exclaimed under her breath. She was beginning to awaken now; to realise that he really was about to drop out of her life.

They had been friends for years. In their school days a friendship had sprung up which had lasted.

She had liked him better than any of the other boys. Did she regret to lose him now? She believed she did.

Bob joined her and they started down the street together. He held the ring in his hand, but she did not notice it.

Grasping her hand, he slipped it on her finger before she had time to resist.

"It's yours, Gladys," he said. "And you're mine."

She stopped and looked at him in astonishment.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Bob?"

"Don't you understand? You're to be my wife. Don't you see you're wearing the engagement ring?"

She flushed and stammered a little.

"But, Bob, that other girl? Aren't you going to marry her?"

"Only joking. That's my cousin's photo. I had just received it by post. You see, I was becoming desperate, and did this as a last resort."

"You think you are smart, don't you?"

"Then you refuse me again?"

"I didn't say that."

R. L. Rogers.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF A celebrated Russian beauty.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

Carr in Vera's Clutches.

It was past midnight when, in response to her low-toned invitation, I entered Vera's room. She had returned from Wilborough about half past eleven; the dear Dean was old-fashioned and kept early hours, and, what was worse, insisted on his guests doing the same.

Vera was in a charming *negligée* of pale yellow silk, her dark hair curling in soft masses, fell below her waist. She looked very young and very lovely.

"He is charming, this David of yours, dear Peggy," she said softly.

"He has fire and fervour enough for a Russian almost. I find him quite to my taste."

I laughed in frank amusement, and drew a chair close to the fire—we burn fires all the time in our bedrooms except perhaps in the extreme heat of summer.

"And what of the poor young man himself?" I asked. "Is he already fascinated?"

The Princess shrugged her shoulders, and proceeded to light one of her special cigarettes.

"He is, I think, appreciative of my society." She leant back as she spoke, blowing clouds of perfumed smoke into the air.

"And"—I bent forward, resting my hand upon her knee—"how long?" I asked significantly.

The Princess closed her eyes, then with a little yawn and a stretch of her long white arm, she murmured softly:

"I think that David stays a week with the Dean—is that not so, dear Peggy?"

I nodded, and, declining the offer of a Russian cigarette, departed, well pleased with the progress of affairs.

Belinda was a little subdued for the first few days after she had dispatched her note to David. She glanced wistfully at her post each morning at the breakfast-table, hoping against hope that he would write and protest against her decision. Needless to remark he did not write; the Princess took care of that.

She kept him furnished with the latest gossip from Havilands, and as from the first she had spoken of Belinda with admiration and friendliness, he was inclined to give her statements full credence. He had not mentioned his attachment for Belinda to the Princess; neither, so Vera contrived to make him understand, had anybody else, it being a favourite speculation of hers as to whom "her sweet young friend" would eventually marry.

"Dearie," she said one evening to my charge, "you are behaving very badly to poor Farringdon. He worships the ground you tread on. It is the truth"—she shook her head reproachfully at Belinda's shrug—"and his affection is so sincere, so disinterested! Were you penniless to-morrow he would love you just the same. Now Towzer is, of course, another matter altogether. He wouldn't dream of marrying a woman without money. Poor thing, he could not afford to."

"I wish, oh, how I wish I had no money," said Belinda earnestly. "Or, rather—for I have none myself—that my father was quite poor. If only I were free"—she stretched out her arms with an impatient gesture—"free to live, to love, without regard to money, rank, position. It is much happier to be poor. It is splendid to work for one's living. I hate to feel helpless, dependent on other people's wishes, ruled by other people's wills."

"It is the penalty you have to pay for riches, dearie. All the same, there are compensations. Sometimes one meets a rich man worth loving. Look," she pointed to Farringdon, who was watching Belinda with a quiet steadfastness that made him for the moment quite good-looking.

He was a favourable specimen of British manhood; tall, well set-up, straight-limbed, with the figure of an athlete, he had a certain distinction of manner which went far to redeem the plainness of his face, and the somewhat ordinary tenor of his conversation.

Belinda changed colour as she met his eyes. The Princess noted it, and flashed a look of scorn over Belinda's head. Then she murmured:

"To be sincere, to be faithful—ah, what we women would forgive our lovers if they were but faithful and sincere! I have met but one such in my life—a young man, English, with all the faults and all the virtues of his race. I have met men as handsome, many more clever than he, but never one so simple yet so true.

Digitized by Google

"Imagine," she slipped her arm in a caressing fashion round Belinda's shoulders, drawing the girl's fair head level with her own dark locks, "he is in love with me! And—" she paused, "for the first time since how many years, my heart stirs at the thought of him.

"He is very good to look at, this young man. Tall—he overtops both you and me, Belinda—dark-haired, with eyes of a strange shade of purple. His name"—she paused, letting her face rest on Belinda's face, grown suddenly white and fixed. "You are not well, my dear," she asked kindly; "the room is hot perhaps? Shall we stroll into the garden for a while?"

"No, no. I am quite well. His name, what is his name?"

"You are quite interested, I declare. Remember"—she shook her white hand warningly—"remember he can't fall a victim to your blue eyes, he has already shown a preference for mine. What, still curious?" as the girl showed signs of irritation at the delay. "Well, then, I'll tell you. He has a beautiful name. My friend is called David."

"*David!*"

Belinda repeated the name in a harsh voice, with white lips and trembling limbs. All vestige of self-possession and reliance left her. The art of Society, that art which trains and teaches the repression of feeling, fell away from her. The lessons that she had gained from the world were useless to her. She had received a crushing blow, and for the moment reeled under it.

The next her native courage came to her aid. She forced herself to smile, and murmured, somewhat tremulously, that David was a favourite name of hers.

"I once had a friend of that name too," she said, and gazed appealingly at Vera as though asking in dumb, piteous fashion, the beautiful foreign woman to assure her that this David was not hers—not the David that Belinda so dearly loved.

Vera smiled sweetly, but volunteered no further information, and Belinda, for once, lacked the strength of mind to ask for it. She came to me, poor child, full of her grief.

"Lady Peggy," she said, "does the Princess know David Carr?"

"It is not improbable," I answered.

"Did you"—she paused. "Please tell me," she asked wistfully, "if—if that was your reason for speaking to me as you did? I mean was that why you thought I ought to write and tell him he was free?"

"To be candid, Belinda, that was partly my reason."

"But"—and a tinge of colour flushed her cheeks—"David cannot marry the Princess; she has a husband already. He wouldn't be so wicked as to love a married woman."

I smiled discreetly, my belief in Vera being greater than my confidence in Carr's powers of resistance.

"Besides, he can't think so very much of her, or else he'd follow her to England, just as he came to Cairo when I was there."

"Well?" I said with a half-laugh.

"Lady Peggy, you don't mean he is here? Oh, no, he wouldn't, he *couldn't* be so cruel as to be here in England and not come to see me."

"My dear Belinda, be a little reasonable. We will suppose, for the sake of argument, that he is in this country—if you like, in this county. What then? He has received an intimation from you that he may, without breach of honour, regard himself as free. He has evidently accepted his freedom. Surely he is not to blame if he uses it, and," I watched her narrowly, "stops away from you."

"I never thought that," she cried, "I never dreamt that he would take it like *that*. Lady Peggy, please, please find out where David is. I won't do anything you do not wish. I will not write to him, I will not even try to see him. But, but I must know if he's in England."

"I will do my best to find out, dear," I replied, "but I must beg you to try to control yourself a little better. I don't mean now," I laid my hand gently on her shoulder—"who should you confide in but me? But with others who know you less, and do not think of you so kindly, you must show more reserve. Whatever, however, you suffer it must be done in secret; to all appearances you must not have a care."

"I'll do my best," she said, in a quavering sort of voice, "and thank you for speaking so kindly. But I cared for him so much; I have been so true, so constant. It seems more than I can bear that he should not have been faithful."

"My dear child, constancy is only a virtue when it becomes a necessity. There was no necessity for David Carr——"

She stopped me with a gesture.

"I believed in him," she said gravely, "and he seems to have failed me, that is all."

A little chat with Vera convinced me of the fact that it was now time for David to appear upon the scene. The Dean—under the influence of the Princess and in gratitude to Carr for his favourable opinion on the structure of the Cathedral arches—had decided to give a sort of *fête* at the Deanery.

The grounds were to be lit up with absurd Chinese lanterns, the town band—the Dean would encourage local talent—was to make night hideous with popular airs, and there was to be dancing on the lawn, and supper—kindly thought—in the dining-room!

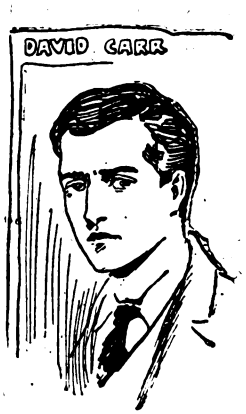
It was agreed at Havilands that we should arrive in time for supper! Vera, however, as the prime instigator of the affair, had to suffer accordingly, and drove over soon after lunch, taking her maid and her evening gown with her.

It was arranged that during the entertainment Belinda should catch sight of David. How and under what circumstances I shall tell you in due course. In order to break the shock to her a little—I did not want a scene—I told Belinda that David had arrived in England some few days ago.

"Thank you," she said quietly. "I daresay he will write, or perhaps come himself. I think I have been very wrong to doubt him. It was foolish to write that letter. I see it now. He must have felt hurt; it looked perhaps as if I no longer cared for him. I shan't worry any more until David shows me plainly that he is tired of waiting. I shall still think of him as being true," she nodded brightly as she finished with a look in her beautiful eyes, that gave me a twinge. Well, she would not keep her faith in David long. That evening would see the end of it.

We arrived at Wilborough just after ten. Dinner at the Manor had been an hour earlier, much to Lord Haviland's annoyance, and we had driven off directly afterwards. Our hostess, who nourished a platonic friendship for the Dean—much to the horror of his sister, a woman who ordered his household—was disposed to enjoy the prospect of the evening's entertainment.

The rest of us were not enthusiastic. Crawley preferred bridge to any *fête* in the world. Most of the men felt like him, except Lord Farringdon, who undoubtedly preferred Belinda! That young lady had, to all appearances, regained her spirits. She was looking very well, and talked in a friendly and animated fashion to Lord Farringdon all the way to Wilborough.



The Deanery looked very pretty, and the lights were quite effective in the distance. A large number of the local clergy, with their wives and daughters, were among the guests, dancing with great vigour—the daughters, I mean, not the clergy—and some few with grace.

Farringdon whirled Belinda off to take part in a waltz; Crawley, having selected with great discrimination the youngest and most frivolous-looking of the curates' wives, followed suit; the rest of our party wandered in various directions, leaving me in peace to search out Vera.

I found the Princess in the Dean's study, a place admirably

Digitized by Google

adapted for reading—or repose, in which the Dean composed his excellent sleep-producing sermons. I did not enter the study, but gazed discreetly through the windows.

The picture therein was a pretty one. The room, heavy with the scent of lilac, was softly lit with rose-shaded lamps, and formed a fitting background to the man and woman sitting there.

David was fastening on Vera's gloves. The Princess was leaning back in a low armchair, David bending over her. It is a tantalising task to give a man to button a woman's gloves. He feels an almost irresistible inclination to kiss the slender fingers, the delicate wrist, the perfect arm, the glove encases. Button by button David fastened, lingering long over the task as though it were a task of love.

He finished with a sigh; then, acting on impulse, as men—the best of them—will act where a woman is concerned, he dropped lightly on one knee, and raising her hand pressed it with fervour to his lips. Her glance met his, they looked earnestly into each other's eyes; a moment only, but in that moment Belinda, like a peri at the gate of Paradise, stood by and saw them.

With a low, startled cry she turned away, hurrying like a hurt woodland creature to hide her pain.

I did not follow her; in such cases girls are best left alone. The less fuss made over them the quicker they recover. I knew quite well she would draw the exact conclusion I wished her to arrive at from the scene she had witnessed. She would believe David had ceased to care for her, and would regard a passing tribute to Vera's beauty as a declaration of love.

I expect my women readers are at this moment in a state of virtuous indignation against David. They consider him weak, foolish, and entirely unworthy of Belinda.

I notice that you middle-class women never make allowances for your men-folk. During this series a good many hard things have been said about Society women; our extravagance and frivolity are the least of the faults imputed to us. Now I am going to say a few words about *you*.

Since circumstances have compelled me to live amongst the middle class, several significant facts have come under my notice. When you are married, you seem to look upon your husband, not as a man "to love, honour, and obey," or the reverse, but as a sort of household fixture on whom a smart frock or a smiling face would be thrown away.

You treat him as a sort of "poor relation," who has to put up with cold mutton, glum looks, and settle the bills into the bargain. You never consider him. If your mother can't pay her taxes, you force the poor man into doing it for her. If you're worried about the baby's teeth, you compel him to share the anxiety. If you feel ill you give him an exhaustive diagnosis of your symptoms.

You appear before him in horrible, ill-made wrappers, and do not attempt to conceal the fact that your hair has not a "natural" curl. You cry loudly when he refuses a request, unashamed of red eyes and nose. You bore him to distraction, and you grudge him five minutes' conversation with another, perhaps less wearying woman. For the most part your homes are dull, your cooking is terrible, your conversation is vapid, and your taste in dress not good—ask your husbands if what I say isn't true.*

To return to Belinda—who freely shared the prejudices of her class—she remained absent for the rest of the evening, reappearing only at the last moment when we were about to start. She was leaning on Farringdon's arm, talking quite fast, and with a high colour in her cheeks. She came face to face with David and the Princess in the middle of the lawn. David impulsively moved forward, stretching out his hand.

For a moment I felt anxious. If she smiled and behaved in a reasonable manner all might yet be explained between them, and my pains and trouble go for nothing. I need not have been alarmed. Belinda stepped aside, gave a very ceremonious bow, and then passed on in silence. David, his face scarlet, returned to Vera's side.

The next morning Belinda asked me abruptly if I could not leave Havilands that afternoon.

"I can't stay here, Lady Peggy," she said fiercely. "If I do I shall say something, *do* something," she stamped her foot, "to the Princess. Why doesn't she go home to Russia?" the girl went on indignantly.

"She will be returning shortly," I said smiling, "next week, I think."

"Is David Carr remaining in England, do you know?" she asked.

I shook my head.

"He spoke last night of being back in Petersburg very soon. He travels, I think, about the same time as Vera."

The girl made no reply, but, the colour fading from her cheeks, left her face white as marble.

"When can we leave here, Lady Peggy?" she said wistfully.

I paused.

"What about Lord Farringdon, Belinda?" I said dubiously. "Isn't it rather unkind to him to leave so suddenly."

Belinda seemed uncomfortable.

"I told him we should most likely leave to-day," she murmured. "I said I was tired of the country and that you generally let me have my own way. And he——"

"Well, my dear," said I encouragingly, "and what did Lord Farringdon reply?"

"He said he was leaving Havilands to-morrow, and that he knew the Duchess of Staunton quite well."

"In that case," I answered cheerfully, "we will go."

And that afternoon, to the infinite regret of Towzer and the amusement of the Princess, we departed.

The Duchess of Staunton was an old lady, very wealthy, but horribly mean. The house in Brook Street was noted for its bad table, small fires, and niggardly arrangements generally.

Midge, who flitted in the second day after we arrived, declared that her Grace would starve a cat, and that Belinda was looking perceptibly thinner since she had come to town.

I suffered more than Belinda from the economy of the establishment. Indeed I had to go out most days to lunch or I would have starved. But I bore with the inconvenience cheerfully. Farringdon was daily with Belinda, who seemed to like and look forward to his calls.

One evening the Duchess gave a party. Belinda, radiant in white and pearls, danced many times with Farringdon, and sat out the numbers that she did not waltz. Things were looking very hopeful, so much so that I forgot to feel annoyed at the unexpected appearance of Eastacres, who, his mother having somewhat recovered, was about town as usual.

He bowed to me, and glanced round eagerly, seeking for Belinda. Just as she entered the room from the conservatory, leaning on Farringdon's arm, there was a slight stir about the door. A moment later and Princess Zouloff, magnificent in maize-coloured velvet, with diamonds round her throat and in her hair, swept into the room.

Belinda showed signs of discomfiture—I had kept it from her knowledge that Vera was invited—and clung in an appealing fashion to Farringdon. I was sorry for her, and a little vexed with Vera, when I realised that David was accompanying her. It was, I thought, a foolish thing to run the risk of his seeing and speaking to Belinda.

All thought of that, however, faded from my mind. With a low bow Eastacres advanced to the Princess, and in a quiet voice—audible only to those near at hand, Belinda and myself among the number, made the following announcement:

"I am grieved to be the bearer of evil tidings," he said. "But I am charged to tell you, and without delay, that news has been received within this hour of the death of your husband—Prince Zouloff."

For a moment Vera stood motionless, her face white, her eyes unnaturally bright. Then with a little cry she turned—turned to David.

"Free!" she cried, "I am free!"

Then, staggering, she fell—into his arms.

(Another powerful instalment will appear next Tuesday.)

[* *I print these remarks exactly as they were written by Lady Peggy Carstairs, although I do not necessarily share her views on the subject.*—ED. S.S.]

Digitized by Google

A Speculation in "Kaffirs."

A Romance of the Stock Exchange.

"DIGBY! how about that bill of Causton's; due to-day, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if it isn't met, you know what to do?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then see that you do it! I have my doubts about Causton's."

"Doubts, sir! why, they're as sound as——"

"Don't think so! and what's more, Digby, I have a shrewd suspicion that your faith in Causton and Co. isn't altogether disinterested."

"Mr. Hunter—I——"

"Oh, I'm not quite blind, Digby—I *know* that you are friendly with Saville Causton—that he has a fair daughter—that you visit his house at Bayswater—three and three easily make six, my friend!"

Hugh Digby, managing clerk to Hunter and Crane, Colonial bankers and agents, hardly knew how to parry his chief's insinuation. There was a certain amount of truth about it, which really made explanation all the more difficult and embarrassing. Hunter was not by any means a man easy to get on with. Middle-aged, crabbed, and of a sourly suspicious disposition, he looked upon nearly everybody with whom he came in contact as having sinister designs as towards himself. This was especially the case with regard to his manager, Digby, but he knew the latter's value, commercially, and availed himself of it for all it was worth. Hugh Digby was, in addition to being a smart business man, a kindhearted, generous fellow of about thirty, and liked by everybody.

It was this universal popularity which probably was at the root of Hunter's personal dislike of his chief subordinate; but the banker (he was sole partner, Crane having been dead for many years) found that his firm's prosperity was largely due to Hugh Digby's splendid management, and successful enterprise, and, therefore, for purely selfish reasons, disguised his real feelings. But his jealous animosity towards his manager was nothing compared with his absolute hatred of Saville Causton, stockbroker, and a leading light on "'Change." It originated in this way.

Some twenty years or so before the date of this story, the two men met, at an up-river garden-party. One of the guests was a Miss Esther Walrond, whose beauty and personal charm attracted the attention of more than one of the many gentlemen present. Both Hunter and Causton were no exceptions to this general feeling of male admiration for the lovely Esther, while each seemed to read instinctively the other's state of mind on the subject and to jealously resent it.

From the very first, however, Saville Causton, brighter, more lovable, and decidedly better-looking than his rival, made the running in the race for love. Before the people dispersed for return to town—almost, indeed, before the sun set upon the Cliveden woods—the young stockbroker had created such an impression that the inevitable end was only a question of time. To make matters worse, from Hunter's point of view, Causton received from his host and hostess a cordial invitation to stay the night and spend the next day on the river. With an assured conviction now that his chances were practically *nil*, Hunter reached his bachelor flat in Jermyn Street that night, full of unreasonable wrath against the man who had apparently succeeded in getting ahead of him in the business upon which he had set his heart—or that which with him, passed for such.

Within six months, Causton had married Esther Walrond, while David Hunter had vowed bitter revenge against the happy bridegroom. The latter who had succeeded to his father's business and position on "'Change," had never a thought beyond his own immediate interests, and affections, and was consequently quite oblivious to the slow but sure influence for evil being worked to his commercial disadvantage by the Austin Friars' banker. There came a day, however, when a necessity for the temporary borrowing of £5,000, resulted in failure. All the sources for such accommodation suddenly appeared to have mysteriously closed up; a polite refusal to do business, but without any assigned reason, being, in every case, the only reply to his applications for monetary assistance.

This was David Hunter's opportunity, the one for which he had been scheming and plotting for years—and he took it.

One morning Saville Causton received a note that astonished him not a little. It ran:

The Colonial Bank, Austin Friars.

DEAR SIR,—*I have strong reasons for believing that you are seeking temporary accommodation. I shall be pleased to do business with you to any amount that you may need, for one, three or six months, as may best suit you. I would rather not state exactly why I make this offer on behalf of my firm. You and I met many years ago, and you have doubtless forgotten the fact; but, being the possessor of an exceptionally good memory—at least so they say who know me—I venture to recall a passing acquaintance, in the hope that by so doing I may be of service to you. I shall be happy to honour your bill at any moment.—Faithfully yours,*

To Saville Causton, Esq. DAVID HUNTER.

The letter did not reach Causton's office in Draper's Gardens till just before closing time, so the somewhat bewildered stockbroker took it home with him for consideration.

Consultation with his wife cleared the air a bit, however.

"Oh, I remember him now!" said Esther, at breakfast the next morning, and opposite whom sat a nineteen-year-old replica of herself. "Surely, Saville, you recollect that disagreeable-looking man who made himself attentive to me at the Fabers' garden party, nearly twenty years ago?"

"No, I don't remember the fellow! However, remembrance or not, his offer, odd as it is, seems genuine, and—well—I *must* accept it, or I'll never get out of this hole I'm in."

"Why, it's the same bank where Hugh—I mean Mr. Digby, is manager," suddenly exclaimed Vera Causton, a tell-tale colour in her cheeks.

"Great Cæsar! so it is!" cried her father. "The murder's out! I'll see him about it first, before writing a reply to Hunter."

But to the stockbroker's surprise, Hugh Digby was as much in the dark as to why or how David Hunter had made the offer, as Causton himself.

"I can only suppose," he said, "that he by some means has heard of your need for accommodation, and, for some reason of his own, wishes to be of service to you. Still, I am a bit surprised, knowing him as I do—though, of course, under the circumstances, I am glad for your sake."

This settled the matter. Later on Hunter gave Saville Causton his cheque for £5,000, taking as security the stockbroker's bill at three months. For the rest of his life will Saville Causton remember that disastrous three months, and the day that saw it close; the day upon which the bill became due.

On the morning of that day, David Hunter was called away to Vienna, and would be absent a week or more.

It has been seen what were his final instructions to his managing clerk prior to leaving by the mid-day mail, his concluding words being especially significant.

"Should you," he said, emphatically, "not carry out my

Digitized by Google

instructions to the very letter, I shall hold you personally responsible."

For nearly two years now there had been a tacit engagement between Vera Causton and Hugh Digby. A fine, high-spirited, beautiful girl, she was yet as large-hearted and womanly as her father had found her mother to be.

When, the clock showing half-past eleven, there were no signs of Causton, with the wherewithal to take up the bill, somehow, though very naturally, Digby's thoughts settled upon Vera. This cornering, which, perhaps, might mean the "hammering" of Saville Causton troubled him as much if not more on his sweetheart's account, than on any other.

As if to materialise his thoughts, a clerk brought him a card bearing Vera Causton's name.

"Show the lady in, Smiles! or, stay! I'll come into the outer office."

"Oh, Hugh!" exclaimed Vera excitedly. "We are in such troub——!"

"Sh!" was Hugh's whispered caution. "Say nothing here, dear! I'll come out with you for a few minutes. Smiles, I shall be in again directly. Ask Mr. Causton to sit down if he should call!"

Up and down the ancient precincts of Austin Friars, Vera and Hugh walked, the former pouring into her lover's ear all her fears for her father.

"Not home last night? That looks serious, Vera!"

"It does—it is!—oh, Hugh, can't you think of something for *me* to do?"

"If I were a free man, dear," he answered her, "I mean if the conditions upon which I hold my position at the bank did not make it important for me to act, or to even appear in any such transaction, I *do* know of a way in which I could set things straight for your father."

"Oh, Hugh!—tell me—tell me!—Perhaps it is, after all, something which I could do!"

"I am afraid not, Vera. If only your father were here it would be all right—he could act upon the information I possess, and make a fortune in less than two hours."

"Hugh!—I will not leave you till you have told me!" said the girl with determined voice and manner.

Then he told her.

"I have a friend," he said, "who is in touch with certain things which influence the well-being or otherwise of a popular "stock" on "'Change.'"

"Yes, yes!" she interrupted him impatiently. "I understand, Hugh! I understand!"

"Well, dear, this morning I received information from Spencer, which, if acted upon by someone not hampered as I am by hard and fast conditions, and at once, would result in the making of thousands."

"Yes, yes—go on!"

"An idea occurs to me! You are not altogether ignorant, dear, of stock-dealing, are you?"

"Well, I have heard father talk about and explain time-bargains, Contango, and——"

"Stop, darling, that's it—Contango—the buying of a stock which you hope to sell any time before the next settling day."

"Yes, Hugh—well?"

"Briefly, dear, then, I have a little saved, as you know. It is on current account in the "Colonial." I am going to withdraw it *now*. I will then write you a letter to a broker whom I know and can trust, and you will hand that and the money I shall give you (the latter as 'cover') and instruct him to buy for you 'Kaffirs' to the amount of ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand pounds, Hugh!—why, supposing it turns out wrong, what will become of *me?*"

"Oh, that will be all right, dear! 'Kaffirs' have fallen—you buy—in less than two hours—if my information is correct, which I quite believe it to be—'Kaffirs' will go up to a giddy height; you will immediately sell; take up Mr. Causton's bill; while the extra profit on the transaction will come in very handy as a fillip-up for your father's business."

As he planned, so did he and Vera carry out the idea.

Within a quarter of an hour Vera was in the broker's room, in consultation over the matter.

Now the broker in question, in common with everybody in the City, save only Hugh Digby and his friend Spencer, was absolutely ignorant of anything having happened which would be likely to influence the fall or rise of "Kaffir" stock. When, therefore, Vera requested the gentleman to purchase for her ten thousand pounds' worth of the stock, he thought her, in spite of Hugh Digby's letter of introduction, a trifle mad.

"But my dear young lady! do you know that this stock has fallen more than one per cent. since ten o'clock this morning."

"I am aware of it!" said Vera calmly; "but nevertheless I wish you to carry out my instructions."

"Well, Miss Causton (I may say that I have known your father for many years), as a matter of sentiment, I warn you; but as a matter of business—I will act on your instructions."

The "rise" prophesied by Hugh Digby's friend came sooner than ever he expected.

At a quarter past one the stock had gone up so considerably that Vera's hopes were doubly realised, so that before two o'clock the bill was taken up and was safe in Vera's pocket.

"Now to find my father!" said Vera to Hugh, as they were snatching a hasty lunch at the Albion in Aldersgate Street.

"But there is not the slightest clue to his whereabouts," was Hugh's reply.

"Well, I believe I shall find him, and that before long," said Vera. "Anyway, see me, dear, to the Tube, Bank Station, and I will think it out during the journey to Queen's Road."

Now Saville Causton was an inveterate pipe-smoker, and invariably sought a smoking carriage when travelling by rail.

Vera's car was empty, comparatively, from the Bank onwards.

At British Museum Station she noticed a man with his overcoat collar up, board the train and enter the smoking car which happened to be next to the one in which she was riding.

Vera was nothing if not prompt and self-reliant. If the mere studying of appearances meant the defeat of purpose, she was unconventional enough to throw everything not strictly necessary overboard, and aim for the essential only.

So in this instance.

In the man who entered at British Museum, she unmistakably recognised her father, and when the train stopped at Oxford Circus, she unhesitatingly crossed the platform into the smoking car, and, coming behind Saville Causton, who sat upon a cross bench, touched him lightly upon the shoulder.

It is needless to say more than that, all explanations made by Vera, the father and daughter rejoiced together; the former, a bit ashamed, perhaps of his cowardice, loudly extolling Hugh Digby's shrewdness and timely help.

David Hunter's disappointment on his return, at finding the bill redeemed was intense. And yet there was nothing to find fault with. Hugh Digby had acted throughout with loyalty to his firm as well (though Hunter only suspected this) as with consideration for Saville Causton. It proved to be the beginning of a better state of things, for from that day forward the business of Causton and Co. prospered as in the days of old.

All this was as gall and wormwood to David Hunter; but he was powerless to stem the tide of Causton's progress towards re-success, and never again attempted to strike at his old rival behind his back. Four months after the "Kaffir" episode, invitations were issued by Mrs. Causton to her daughter's wedding.

"Who do you think I am going to send one to?" asked Esther of her husband.

"Can't say!—the Lord Mayor, perhaps?"

"Nonsense, Saville! What do you say if I have asked Mr. David Hunter?"

"Say!—why, that in the first place, he won't come—and next, that if he does show up, all the wine and milk will most certainly turn sour."

"Now, do be reasonable, Saville! Don't you think that I owe the poor man something for disappointing him, and marrying you?"

"I don't know, I'm sure—what do you say, Vera?"

"Why, that if Mr. Hunter likes to see mamma's daughter married, he ought to be given the opportunity."

"Ah, you'll see!—he won't come!"

And he didn't.

Roger Easton.

Digitized by Google

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

In Addition to £1,000 in Cash.

THE MOST LIBERAL OFFER EVER MADE BY ANY PERIODICAL IN THE WORLD.

THIS prize is so huge that it is almost impossible for one to realise at first thought what it really means. Therefore the following hints will probably enable you to grasp the full value of such a regular income:

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE means, unless you are extravagant, absolute freedom from money troubles as long as you live.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE is an insurance against depression and mental worry.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will enable you to dispense charity with a liberal hand.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy you a bigger house and enable you to live in better style.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will cover the cost of taking a cottage in the country and living there in comfort for the rest of your days.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will pay the expenses of months of foreign travel.
£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy anything you can possibly want, from a piano to a motor car.

In fact, there is no limit to the things you can do with **£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.**

THE prize will be paid to the person (perhaps you) who correctly solves the pictures which appear below, together with other pictures which will appear in PEARSON'S WEEKLY under the conditions printed in that paper.

Each picture consists of certain objects, the names of which represent the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom. For example, the hull of a ship would mean "Hull." Every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

A further sum of **£1,000 in cash** will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:—

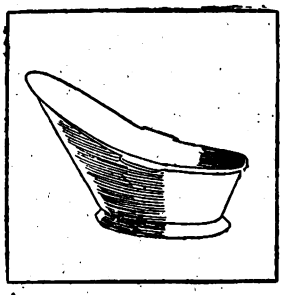
FIRST CONSOLATION GIFT, £100.

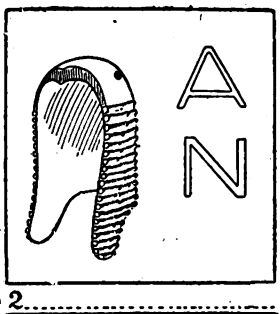
2nd Cash Gift	£50	6th Cash Gift	£25
3rd ,,	£50	7th ,,	£25
4th ,,	£25	8th to 57th Cash Gifts	£10 each
5th ,,	£25	58th to 97th ,,	£5 each

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of £5 a week for life *(which will be paid under any circumstances)*, you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash gifts.

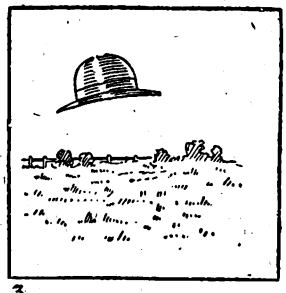
If you find out the names of the railway stations represented by the pictures shown here, you should write down the name under each, put your name and address at the foot, and then get a copy of next week's PEARSON'S WEEKLY, in which you will find further pictures.

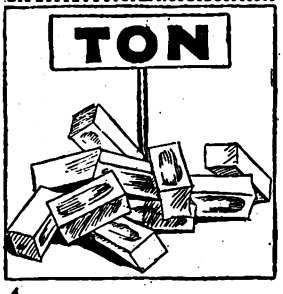
☛ If you are unable to secure a copy of PEARSON'S WEEKLY or BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, drop a reply post-card to the Publisher, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, Henrietta St., London, W.C., and he will get you out of your difficulty. ☚


1.



2.


3.



4.

5.

6.

Write your Name and Address here .....

Digitized by Google

A Temptation and a Fall.

With a Very Happy Sequel.

A DARK-HAIRED girl in a white jersey with a red ribbon round her neck, sat at the window of a small cottage situated in the village of Tweeford. The street on which the cottage faced was narrow and dark, and the room in which the girl sat was clean, but poorly furnished.

She was very sweet and pretty, and looked as much out of place in her dingy, mean surroundings, as a moss rose in a London garden. Her brown eyes were clouded, and she spoke in a weary tone to a patient-looking old lady, who sat in an armchair by the fire—for there was a small fire, although it was a warm afternoon in September.

"It's no use, mother," said Effie, with a sigh. "We have not got the money, and we are not likely to get it either."

"I wonder, my dear, if you were to go to Radling with a letter to old Mr. Jones, whether he would give me the money."

"I don't believe so, and I don't want to go to Radling, and I hate old Jones!" cried the girl petulantly. "I'll go on the river instead; Mr. Baines will lend me a boat."

She rose and began looking behind the coal-scuttle for her hat. It was the place she usually threw it when she came in. Mrs. Jessop sighed heavily. The sum wanted was only £20, but to these two lone women it was as unobtainable as two millions.

It was owed for rent long overdue, and Effie had been to the landlord with tears in her pretty brown eyes, and begged for time, but now tears were unavailing, and the money had to be found within fourteen days.

"*Dear* Mr. Baines, let me go for a row," she said some few minutes later, sidling up to the boat owner.

He had a great weakness for pretty Miss Jessop, and his wife declared he would give her his pony and traps and all his business if she but asked for it.

"Let me have the *Elsie*—may I?" she continued, indicating a lovely little boat fresh from the painter's hands.

"Not that one, missy," replied Mr. Baines. "She 'ave just come from Lunnon this day morning, she 'ave—you take *'er*, missy—she's good, she is," and he helped her into another boat of less charming exterior.

If she looked pretty on shore, the girl in the white jersey looked ten times more so on the water. But it was not of her appearance she was thinking. The fact of their wanting £20, and there being only one shilling and sixpence for the next day's dinner, occupied her mind much more, and the sun was declining when she turned the boat homeward, still undecided as to whether it should be stewed steak or "a little fish to make up."

Suddenly coming towards her round the bend of the river she saw another boat with a single occupant—and that occupant a man. As it came closer she recognised the boat as the *Elsie*, with her freshly-varnished sides bravely glittering in the sunlight.

"Pah!" said Effie in disgust. "Some horrid tourist down for a couple of hours, who can afford ninepence an hour."

But when he came closer she altered her opinion. The man in the boat was Jeffery Standing, whose father, the rich diamond merchant, had taken the Grange for the season.

As the boats passed, Mr. Standing bestowed a stare of hearty admiration on the girl in the white jersey, and she looked down and blushed, and hated herself for so doing.

Some hours later he passed her again. It was in the narrow village street, while she was out thoughtfully expending her one and sixpence. She had dropped her handkerchief, and he ran after her and gave it back, and raised his hat and asked if he might help her carry her parcels home as they lived almost next door, but she curtly thanked him and hurried home, uncertain as to whether he had not first taken her handkerchief from her pocket and then given it to her!

The next day Mrs. Jessop was firm. Effie must go to Radling with a letter to Mr. Jones. She put it off as late as she could, and finally departed, very much out of temper.

"It *is* a shame," she grumbled, "wasting a beautiful day like this hunting about for a horrid old man, and I know that I am no more likely to get the money from him than I am of seeing it opposite to me in this carriage."

Just at that moment she caught sight of a glitter between the opposite seat and the stuffed back of the carriage. She was alone in the compartment, so, bending forward, she put her hand out to feel what it was.

The next moment she had drawn out a heavy green morocco purse.

For quite a minute she stared in stupefaction at the sight, and then with a beating heart she undid the clasp.

There lay before her twenty-five pounds in gold and a lot of loose silver. If the skies had fallen, Effie would not have been more astonished. She rubbed her eyes and stared at the money, and then rubbed her eyes again. For fully three minutes she sat thus holding the money in her hands, and then came the question—"What to do with it?"

Should she give it to the guard when the train stopped and have it taken to the lost property office, and perhaps never be claimed? Or, perchance, had Heaven sent it to pay the rent; therefore, should she keep it? Nobody being present to answer her self-put questions, she arrived in Radling station, and straightway she put the money in her pocket and walked quickly away, resolved at present to keep it and see what happened. Mr. Jones was out, and was not expected back, so, heavy-hearted, and with a guilty sensation of theft upon her, Effie journeyed home, expecting every moment someone to put his hand on her shoulder and ask where she got the money from. She *knew* she ought to give the purse up, but she was very poor, and she yielded to temptation as so many have done. The next few days were those of the keenest agony to the poor girl. Every step that passed the house she expected to belong to the constable, and every knock at the door sounded like a summons from Radling Police Court.

She stayed indoors as much as she could, for she was afraid to meet the eyes of the townspeople, and was also afraid of

Digitized by Google

hearing something about the purse, for commonsense told her nobody would be likely to lose a large sum like that and make no inquiries.

At last, a week later, came a curt and cold refusal from Mr. Jones, together with a peremptory notice from the landlord to pay the rent the next day. Mrs. Jessop alternately wept and prayed for the money, and at last Effie set her little teeth, and said to herself, "Very well, I *will* take the money, I am a thief, I suppose, but I shall not be alone in the world. I'll take him the money to-night, and then—and then! What?"

Her thoughts took her no further; how she was to account for the sudden accession to wealth she could not fathom, so, woman-like, she left it alone, hoping for luck to help her out when the time should come.

Having decided upon her course of action, she felt easier, and sallied forth to buy some small household requisites, humming to herself.

Having made a tour of the village and made her purchases, she went home again.

The little house was silent. Poor Mrs. Jessop had gone out, to see if a friend would help her to find the money. Effie put away her parcels and sat down, and having nothing better to do, idly read the stale country news out of the paper that the candles had been wrapped in.

All at once a small paragraph caught her eyes, and the print danced madly before her! She held on to the table for support, and after a moment managed to read the following:

Yesterday, Mrs. Mary Gibson, charged a young man of gentlemanly appearance with the theft of her purse. Her case was, that she and the accused were the sole occupants of the carriage from H—— to Radling. The purse, which contained the sum of £25 in gold besides some silver, was in her hand as she entered the carriage, because she took her ticket from it. On arrival of the train at Radling she found the door too stiff to open, and asked the accused if he would open it. This he did, and also helped her to alight, and it was then that she found her purse was gone. The accused is a gentleman of high social standing in the county, and the case is exciting a good deal of interest, as, although he stoutly denies the theft, it is understood he has been losing a good deal lately over horse racing. He stands remanded until next Tuesday.

Next Tuesday? Effie raised her eyes to the ceiling and counted the days over. Heavens! next Tuesday was to-day and perhaps even then, while she sat there, some innocent man was being tried for the theft of the purse that *she*—Effie Jessop—had got in her possession!

Like one possessed she dashed upstairs, and, throwing on her hat and jacket, fled down the street to the railway station, the green morocco purse tight in her hand. The Radling train (there were but three a day) was just starting as she ran over the bridge and called loudly to the guard to wait for her.

He opened a smoking third, threw her in, and the train started. Effie sank exhausted upon a seat, and gazed helplessly at the purse. Poor man! Perhaps he has been convicted and sent to prison, and if he is married, the disgrace may kill his wife! Merciful Heaven! I shall then be a murderess as well as a thief!"

Poor Effie! this last thought nearly distracted her. The train had scarcely time to draw up ere she sprang from the carriage, and was away across the station and down the street towards the Court-house. A large number of idlers were outside.

Clasping the purse tightly against her beating heart, Effie wedged her small figure through the people into the crowded court room.

A loud humming sounded in her ears and she but indistinctly heard someone speaking: "Now it only remains to decide if the prisoner is the thief——"

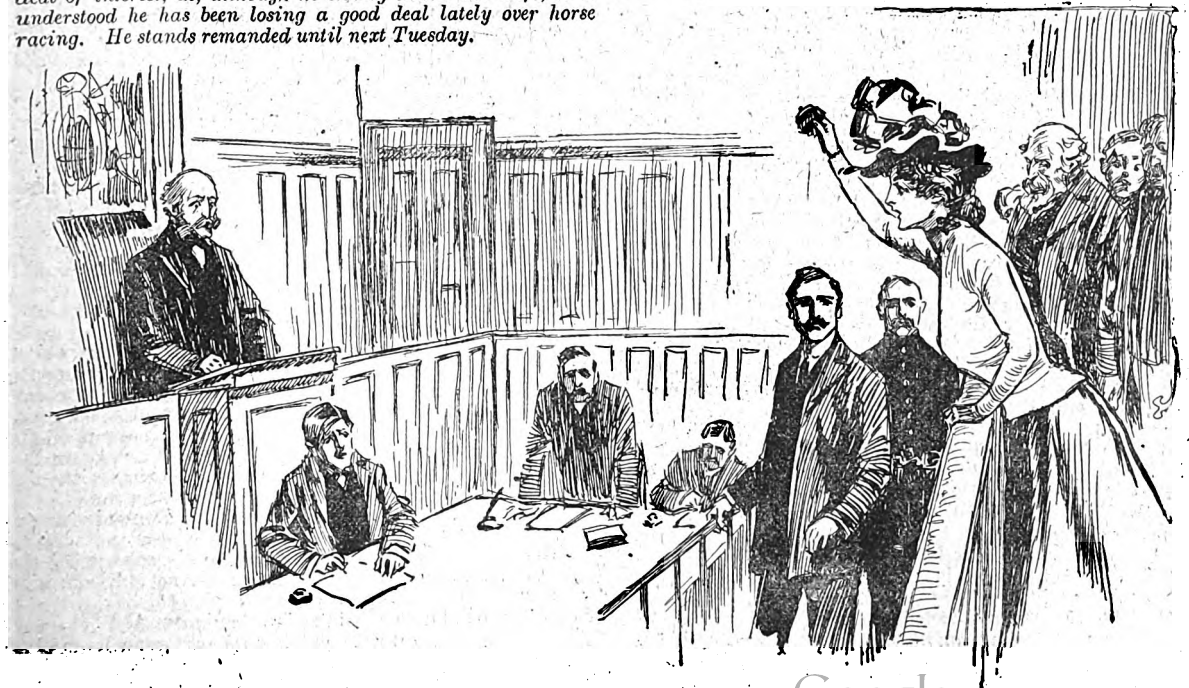
"He is not—he is not!" cried Effie, stepping forward and holding the purse high in the air, at sight of which an old woman in green glasses and a blue bonnet shrieked out: "My purse! My purse! Oh, the hussy!"

What a scene there was, and what a noise!

It was not until they threatened to clear the court that Effie's story could be heard.

The poor girl, so excited and so nervous, could hardly speak, and when the magistrate asked her why she had not given the purse up before, she could not answer at first, but on being pressed, she raised her pretty little head proudly and said:

"Because I am poor, and my mother is poor, and we wanted the money. I did not steal it, I found it, and was tempted to



"He is not a thief!" cried Effie, stepping forward, and holding the purse high in the air.

Google

keep it. I only knew an hour ago that an innocent man "—she waved her hand vaguely towards the dock where she saw a man standing—"was accused of taking the money, so—so I have brought it back, although to-morrow my mother and I will be turned into the street without a home, for want of it!" and she burst into tears.

Then someone took her out of the court and into the open air. She sat down on a seat to recover, and curious knots of people gathered round to look at her, especially two rough-looking men, who said they would like to see what a woman was like who would bring £25 back to oblige an unknown person! It was wasting the gifts of Providence, according to them!

Then someone gave her his arm and assisted her into a beautiful carriage, wherein was an old gentleman. At sight of her he seized her hand and shook it fervently before everybody and said: "God bless you, my child, you have saved my life and the honour of my family, for had my son been convicted the disgrace would have killed me!"

Effie, still dazed, looked at the old gentleman, and wondered when she had seen him before.

A young man jumped into the carriage, and, raising his hat to the people who gave a cheer at the sight of him, the carriage started.

Effie turned round. The young man was Jeffery Standing.

"*You* here?" she said involuntarily.

"Rather!" he said with a laugh. "If it hadn't been for you, there's no knowing where I should have been."

"Why?" she said, looking mystified. "I don't understand; were you in there?" indicating the court-house.

"Was I *there?* Don't you know it was I who was accused of stealing that purse?"

* * * * *

And the villagers even now say that the wedding between Mr. Standing's only son and Miss Effie Jessop was the prettiest that has ever been seen.

E. S.

Love by Proxy.

Telling of the Happiness the Love-birds Brought.

The Italian woman sighed. The murky atmosphere of a London fog and the sordid environments of a thickly populated street did not tend to diminish her mental gloom.

And business was bad.

The small cage containing a couple of paroquets on its fragile and rickety stand was her only source of income, and she did not derive therefrom as handsome an annuity as she would have wished. No one seemed to want their fortune told by the small green birds, who picked out the packets of paper stored away at one side of the cage. Even the little paroquets hopped about in a dismal sort of way, feeling compelled to show their solicitude for their respected mistress by a hopeless, despondent attitude, born of rheumatics in their little limbs, due to the damp, raw air.

Occasionally a hoarse chirp, by way of showing they were alive, broke from their throats. Then silence reigned in the cage.

Signora Democa drew her scanty shawl closer round her shoulders, shivered, and looked despondently at the pavement.

Presently she glanced up, and spied as dainty a young girl as you could wish to see tripping towards her. The girl stopped as she met the Italian's wistful glance.

"The signora will have her fortune told?"

"Trade is not good, is it?"

"Very bad, signora."

One of the birds corroborated this by a doleful croak.

The girl produced a penny. The woman rose, touched one of the birds with a stick, and, glad of something to do, it rushed at the first fortune packet with all its little might and thrust it through the cage bars. The girl laughed as she took it. The Italian's eyes flashed, and the dark, swarthy face lit up with pleasure.

"Undo, signora, and look."

She did so, and read:

"*If Fortune smile not on you now,*
Take courage, for it will, I trow."

"How funny! How applicable," thought the girl, smiling.

"It pleases the signora?"

"Very much."

For a moment or two she glanced at the cage, undecided how to act. Then an inspiration suddenly flashed across her.

"Would you like to earn five shillings?" she asked.

The mention of such vast wealth nearly took the woman's breath away. As for the paroquets, they cocked their heads on one side and listened.

"Yes, kind signora."

"Now, what I propose is only for your ears—do you understand?"

"A seecreet, signora?"

"Yes. Tell me, does a gentleman, tall, good—good-looking, with a fair moustache pass your corner every morning?"

"Yes, signora."

The dark eyes flashed again.

"If I wrote something in one of the little packets—could—could you make the birds give it him?"

The Italian showed a beautiful set of white teeth.

"I would try very hard."

The girl waited while the birds fumbled for another packet. The fortune teller opened it carefully. After abstracting the printed matter, she handed the envelope to the dainty woman, who scribbled something on a piece of paper, placed it inside the packet, sealed it up, and saw it replaced in the cage, the first among the row of little papers.

"You must not let the birds give it to anyone else, mind."

"No, no. The signora can me trust. I give my honour of my word."

"Here is half-a-crown. You shall have the other when the gentleman has his 'Fortune.' You must not tell him anything."

"I understand. The saints bless the signora."

With many ejaculations and salaams the woman watched the girl walk away. Then, together with her rickety stand and cage went home rejoicing.

As for the paroquets, they kept their own counsel, and

Digitized by Google

dreamt of a continual fluttering towards the packets of paper which refused to be set free.

At 9.30 next morning Signora Democa sat at her usual business corner, waiting for the tall gentleman to pass. The paroquets were in a fever of excitement—no doubt on account of the brilliant morning, which was as fine as the previous day had been depressing.

At last the tall man came along. He looked dejected.

"Morning, signor. A good day a fortune to tell."

"Rubbish!" he ejaculated.

"All truth, signor. One penny does it."

He caught sight of one of the green paroquets, with its little head cocked on one side.

"Looks very knowing, that bird."

"Yes, yes. He knows plenty!"

He fumbled for a penny, gave it her, and was about to pass on when he observed a violent agitation on the part of one of the paroquets, which, being judiciously progged by the "magic wand" of its mistress, was dragging forth one of the fortune packets.

"Means business, that bird. Won't take a penny for nothing in return, eh?"

"Plenty beesiness. The signora will open his packet?" and she smiled.

Never in his life had the man done anything so childish; but things were so wrong and luck so against him, that he thought he would see what the wretched packet contained.

Expecting to see some verses of the usual cheap sentimenality, he opened the paper case, and abstracted a neatly-folded little note. When he had read the contents, his face was a study that Signora Democa never forgot.

"By all that's wonderful!" he gasped.

The fortune-teller smiled benignly.

"Does not it the signor please?"

"Where did you get this—this," he almost shouted.

"It was with them altogether amongst the papers."

Though he knew the woman was not adhering to the strict truth—perhaps for some reason best known to herself—he said nothing, but stood stock still.

"You wouldn't object to earning a sovereign, would you?"

Signora Democa could not speak for astonishment.

"You shall have it now if you do what I ask."

She nodded emphatically.

"I am going to write a note and put it in this packet. Have you ever noticed a lady, rather tall and well dressed, dark hair—pretty, yes, very pretty, pass you?"

"Sometimes, with a leetle dog."

"By jingo, yes! You must make one of the little beggars"—indicating the paroquets—"give her the packet containing the message."

"I do that, I think."

He gave her a sovereign, and then wrote—"Yours safely received. Can't make it out at all. Does it mean all is well?" sealed it up in the packet, and charging the woman to see that it got into the proper hands, and also to say nothing about it to anyone, went away, looking a good deal happier.

If the Italian was mystified and curious, one may forgive her. It was no business of hers what people chose to do, or how they did it, so long as she received ample compensation. Whether she scented a courtship, a dark plot, a marriage, a scandal, mattered not.

She rejoiced in her fortune, and awaited the trend of events.

Meanwhile the man, Laurence Godfrey, of the Inner Temple, briefless, but hopeful, walked on and cogitated deeply. Things had not gone well with him of late. His uncle, from whom he had great expectations, said that if he married a penniless girl who was nobody, he would cut him off without even the proverbial shilling.

Sweet Molly Giffard, to whom he had been secretly engaged, was the victim of her father's wrath, who would not sanction the engagement of his daughter to a penniless barrister. He had forbidden his son-in-law in prospective, the house, and commanded all correspondence to cease. Poor Molly was in much distress, but anxiously awaiting her twenty-first birthday, when she would inherit money, and—love knowing no prison bars—resolved to elope. The two had not met for more than a year, when Molly conceived the brilliant idea of utilising the paroquets as a means of conveying Cupid's messages, knowing Laurence passed the Italian daily.

Thus it was that Laurence Godfrey once more began to hope.

The morning following Godfrey's deal with the paroquets, Molly visited the Signora Democa and received the answer from Laurence. She gave the fortune-teller the other half-crown and wrote another message, which was to be given to "the gentleman who had the previous one."

Signora Democa now began to see a romance. The exchange of "fortunes" had been in progress about three weeks, and the paroquets were frantic with excitement, when, one bright, sunny morning they saw Laurence step briskly up, looking very smart, wearing a happy expression and a white buttonhole.

"Good morning, signora," he said.

"Fortune this morning, signor?"

"That will come along presently," he said. "Here's something to be going on with," and he slipped a five-pound note into the woman's hands.

"No further use for the birds," he volunteered.

The Italian failed to find her tongue. She could think of nothing but the money.

"Has—has the lady with the little dog passed this morning?"

"No, signor, not yet."

He looked anxiously down the road, and an instant later appeared perfectly happy as "the lady with the little dog"—the latter being conspicuous by its absence—appeared round the corner.

"Molly!"

"Laurence!"

That's all the Italian heard. She saw sweet Molly blush rose red and look radiantly happy.

"It is this lady's twenty-first birthday, signora," said Laurence, "and I wanted to wish her many happy returns of the day."

"So I came," put in Molly.

"Cab!" shouted Laurence suddenly.

One soon came rattling along.

"Get in, darling," he said, as he guarded the wheel from soiling her dress.

"Where to, sir?"

"St. Georges' Church, Rowland Gardens, cabby!"

"Yessir."

Then he took his place beside her in the cab.

"Oh, Laurence, I didn't mean to—to-day," stammered Molly.

"It's all right, dear girl. Banns been published three weeks ago—special licenso, and everything else."

"What *will* father say?"

"'Where there's a will there's a way,' I should think. Oh, by-the-bye, my uncle died last week and left me all his money Oh, Molly, aren't you glad?"

"Well—not—not very sorry," and she hid her face on his shoulder.

"It's all through those paroquets—they never made a mistake, and I've had your messages every day. When they die we'll have the little beggars stuffed."

"Yes," said the girl, "they are dear little things."

Dagney Major.

Digitized by Google

CAROL FERRARS.

The Tale of a Lady Companion.

"Really, auntie, when I am married, you must get a companion.

"Yes, I know, dear," as her aunt moved impatiently, "that you don't like strangers, but who is to order the dinner, arrange the flowers, clean the birds, take the dogs for a walk, see you to bed, read to you, start your cross-stitch, and keep it right?" Mollie paused for breath.

"Oh, dear!" sighed old Mrs. Thorn, "I had no idea you had done so much for me!"

Her niece smiled with unconscious rony.

"Mollie, dearest, are you sure you really love Archie enough to marry him?' Men can be very trying when they are husbands," put in the old lady artfully.

"Yes, auntie, I am sure I do," emphatically; "I shall be able to manage him all right. You see, I haven't studied dear uncle for ten years without gaining some experience of what men do and say when the dinner is badly cooked and the breakfast not on the table punctually at nine."

"Yes, yes, I know, but all men are not like your uncle, some men make much more fuss than he does." Mollie raised her eyebrows but forebore to make any remark. "They even *swear*, dear, before the servants if the plates are cold at dinner; and then they can be so mean over money, and you know you have none of your own."

"No, but I intend to have an allowance from the beginning. I wouldn't allow even Archie to dole me out a sovereign or less at a time, and make me account for every penny I spend. Don't worry about me, auntie, I am quite capable of looking after myself, and I think there are very few girls now-a-days who are such muffs over money as the old-fashioned women used to be, from all accounts. Now, do let me write out an advertisement and send it to the *Morning Post*," and Mollie laid down the cross-stitch sideboard cloth whose intricate pattern was always getting in a muddle under Mrs. Thorn's feeble and impatient fingers.

"There, I don't think you can possibly make another mistake in it, I've marked it all out so plainly, and where you should leave seven holes between each star I have put in the first stitch, so that it will be quite easy."

"Thanks, dear," gratefully, "yes, it does look clearer now. I don't know whether these spectacles are not so strong as the last ones, or whether it is that this pattern is more difficult, but I seem to have found it easier to go wrong than usual," remarked the vicar's wife plaintively, and Mollie, thinking of the number of times her work on her trousseau had been interrupted this last busy week, could but agree with her.

"Still bothering over that eternal cross-stitch?" asked the vicar briskly, entering the room at the moment. He bent over his wife's chair and kissed her forehead. With all his trying ways, the vicar was always devoted to the wife who had trotted through nearly forty years of wedded life contentedly beside him. They had no children and, for the last ten years, ever since Mrs. Thorn had passed through a rather severe illness, they had provided a home for the vicar's niece in return for a hundred and one little kindly offices which she had performed for them, thereby increasing the comfort of the domestic arrangements at the vicarage incredibly.

"Uncle, will you help me persuade auntie to advertise for a companion to take my place here after next month? If you like," turning to the old lady, "she might come a week before the wedding, so that I can show her all the things which I do, and then she would have got into your ways before I leave."

"Very sensible, my dear, very sensible. Come, Jennie, make up your mind to do it; Mollie will give her a week's training to show her what her duties will be."

While her uncle was talking, Mollie wrote out the advertisement and read it aloud:

"'Required immediately as companion to an elderly lady, a refined young gentlewoman with musical tastes, must be fond of the country and willing to look after pets. Apply, Mrs. Thorn, the Vicarage, Bramleigh.' Will that do? We must find someone who will take care of you," stroking the big tortoiseshell cat which had curled itself up on the window-sill beside her. Rufus stood up and arched his back and purred in reply, then stepped leisurely out of the window to sun himself and blink with overfed indulgence at the sparrows twittering and quarrelling on the gravel path below.

The gong sounded for lunch, and the discussion on the subject of the companion ceased. The vicar was strict about being punctual for church and at meals, and rose immediately the first sound of the gong reached his ears, and held out his arm to his wife. It was his invariable custom to do this, and as Mollie rose too to follow them she wondered whether the new companion would treat all his little fads with the loving tolerance that she did, or whether she would come down late for meals and hurry to church after the bell had stopped—direst offence of all in the vicar's eyes. He always expected everyone to sit waiting for five minutes at least before the gong was expected to sound for meals, and to be waiting ready dressed to start for church soon after the bells began to ring for service.

After lunch the old lady always slept for an hour, and Mollie was free to do as she liked. It was the time of the day she enjoyed most, and part of it was always devoted to her daily letter to her *fiancé*. The time was drawing near now, however, when she would exchange this peaceful, quiet life at the vicarage, whose quiet was only disturbed by little domestic storms in a teacup, for a home of her own, and Mollie had looked forward to that little new home eagerly through the last three years during which Archie had been building up his practice as a country doctor. Much as she loved her uncle

Digitized by Google

nd aunt, and grateful as she felt to them for giving her a home, he yet longed to be independent and have a home of her own. She wrote her letter, and sat wondering not a little about the girl who was to take her place and fulfil the familiar duties which had been her care for so long.

The morning's post brought a sheaf of letters, evidently answers to the advertisement. Mollie carried them up to her aunt's room and sorted them out and read them to her while the old lady sipped her coffee and ate her dainty little breakfast.

"Oh, Mollie, dear, that sounds a very sad case, I really think I ought to engage her," said Mrs. Thorn, as Mollie read a touching tale of poverty and sorrow.

"Wait a bit; you mustn't decide in a hurry, and besides, I believe she is a humbug, and has piled it on for your benefit—elderly ladies always have kind hearts," said practical Mollie astutely.

Then she went on reading.

"I like the look of this writing," said Mrs. Thorn presently, picking up an envelope addressed in a neat, pretty writing. Her niece opened it and read it aloud. It was short and concise, and told no tale to try to win the sympathy of the reader; it stated clearly the qualifications of the writer, and there was a straightforward and honest tone about it which attracted both Mrs. Thorn's and Mollie's fancy directly.

"That is one, at any rate, worth answering," said the old lady, and laid it on one side. A few others were looked over, then Mollie took the ones Mrs. Thorn liked best and answered them.

The fire was burning brightly in the cosy drawing-room, for although the month was May the evenings were still chilly.

They were all sitting round the fire chatting after dinner, the vicar, his wife, Mollie, and her *fiancé*, who had come over to dine and sleep.

There was a little air of suppressed excitement about them all, for the new companion was expected to arrive that evening.

They had not yet seen her, as the address on her letters was of a remote part of Yorkshire, but she had sent her photograph for the inspection of her employers. The face it portrayed was undeniably pretty and refined looking.

A loud peal at the bell made the family jump; the vicar frowned.

"I hope she is not a noisy young woman," anxiously.

"She didn't ring, uncle; it was Johnson, our one and only cabman," said Mollie, smiling, as she hurried out into the hall to welcome the newcomer.

Pretty as the photograph had proclaimed her to be, they were none of them prepared for the lovely colouring and tall, graceful figure of the girl who, a few minutes later, followed Mollie into the room. She looked tired and nervous, but held her head erect for all her weariness as her eyes travelled from one to the other, and took in her new surroundings.

Mrs. Thorn liked her at once; she was prepossessed in her favour because she had picked her letter out of all the others as the one whose writer she hoped would prove suitable and, of course, one is always pleased to find oneself in the right. Mollie liked her because she looked friendless and poor, and because she listened deferentially to the vicar's rather pompous speech of welcome. The two men liked her because she was young and pretty, but of course they said it was because she had such a nice manner, and was refined and ladylike looking.

As soon as she had gone up to her room for the night, pleading her fatiguing journey as an excuse for retiring so early, they were free to make remarks on the new companion, and she, when she had escaped their friendly scrutiny, acknowledged to herself that she had indeed come into a haven of rest at last.

The days passed swiftly before the wedding, and on all sides the new companion, Carol Ferrars, earned golden opinions; already everyone in the house appealed to her in questions of taste and about all the arrangements for the great event.

"I feel almost jealous of you, Miss Ferrars," said Mollie aughing one day, but with a ring of truth underlying the joking voice.

"You have nothing to be jealous of," replied Miss Ferrars sadly; "you have all your happy life before you, mine is already in the past."

Mollie pressed her hand sympathetically, seeing that the girl's lovely blue eyes were brimming over with tears.

"How can anyone so young and pretty as you say such a thing?" But Miss Ferrars was silent, and went on trimming the hat which she was doing up to wear at the wedding.

Mollie repeated this conversation the next time that Archie came over.

"There is something very sad about her face," he replied, "and the curious thing is that I am sure I have seen her before. I thought so the moment she came in that night that she arrived."

"You must be mistaken; I don't think you could have seen her, she lived up in Yorkshire," replied Mollie.

The excitement of the wedding over, Mr. and Mrs. Thorn and the companion settled down to the quiet, uneventful routine of the life at Bramleigh Vicarage. The old couple had grown very fond of Carol, as they called her, having soon dropped the more formal Miss Ferrars. In fact, they remarked to each other, almost as if ashamed to say so, that really they did not miss Mollie a bit.

There was a great contrast between the two girls in character as well as in looks, for Mollie was as brisk and decided as Carol was gentle and tactful. The cats and dogs transferred their affections to Carol at once, and even Rufus, who was generally disagreeable with strangers, allowed her to brush and comb his wonderful coat the day after her arrival.

A few days after the wedding the first month of Carol Ferrars' life at the vicarage was completed.

"Would you prefer to have your salary paid quarterly or monthly?" asked Mrs. Thorn kindly, when Carol carried in her breakfast tray.

"Oh, I should like it monthly so much, if you don't mind," said the girl eagerly, colouring brightly.

"Certainly, if you will get me my purse I will give it to you now; I daresay you would like the money instead of a cheque."

Carol thanked her gratefully and took the money.

The following day Mrs. Thorn and Carol drove into the village to do a little shopping. The old lady made a few purchases at the little draper's, and put her hand into her pocket as the assistant was making out the bill, for her purse. She uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"What a bother. I have felt my purse at home. Perhaps you wouldn't mind, dear, lending me a few shillings. It was silly of me to forget it."

Carol drew out her purse without pausing to think. She opened it; it was empty of all save one shilling.

"I am so sorry," she stammered, "I have only got a shilling."

Mrs. Thorn looked surprised.

"But, my dear," she began, "it was only yesterday that I gave you——" Then, seeing the look of genuine distress on the girl's face, she stopped. The assistant was smiling broadly; however, Mrs. Thorn was, of course, well known and extremely popular in the village, so the matter was easily smoothed over, and they left the shop.

"You must have thought it very strange, dear Mrs. Thorn," said the companion that evening, as she got out the board and sat down to play halma with the old lady, "that I had no money in my purse this afternoon, but——"

"Don't apologise or explain, my dear," said Mrs. Thorn kindly; "the money was yours, and you had a perfect right to do as you liked with it. It surprised me for the moment, but, of course, you may need it to send to some poor relative. Anyhow, it is no business of mine," and she settled down to her game.

It was noticed by the inmates of the vicarage that, as time went on, Miss Ferrars began to lose the bright look which had been one of the beauties of her expressive face; she seemed always on the alert, and the nervousness of her manner increased. Mrs. Thorn was the last to notice it, and it was Mollie, who had come on a visit to the vicarage, who drew her attention to the altered looks of her companion.

Digitized by Google

One evening after dusk, Dr. Tomlin, Mollie's husband, was returning from seeing an old labourer who had met with an accident, and to whom he had been called in the village doctor's absence. As he was strolling quietly up a path in the shrubbery which was little used, he came suddenly upon two people talking in agitated tones.

He recognised one, it was Carol Ferrars; but the other figure, which was that of a man, was a complete stranger to him.

They separated just as he reached them, and Carol said—

"Good-bye, Jim, for God's sake don't run this risk again, even to see me; think—think," and Archie's ears ached at the despair in her voice, "what it would mean to me if you were caught!"

At that moment they both turned and saw that Dr. Tomlin must have overheard the words; the man sprang forward almost as if he would seize the young doctor by the throat, but Carol threw her arm round his neck and turned him away. "Go!" she cried, panting with terror and excitement, and her companion hurried away into the dusk without the doctor having seen his face. Carol turned to the doctor and laid her hand on his arm.

"Dr. Tomlin, I feel I can trust you. Will you promise me that, if you hear anyone making inquiries for Jim Trench, that you will say that you know nothing about him, that you have never seen him?" Carol's voice was unsteady with emotion, she looked faint and exhausted.

"Dear Miss Ferrars, I would do anything to help you, but will you not trust me a little more. I am all at sea. Who is Jim Trench, and why are you afraid of him being seen?"

"I cannot stop to tell you now, Mrs. Thorn will be wondering where I am," her manner growing calmer. "But if you will meet me here to-morrow morning at eleven, I will tell you everything; but you must not let anyone else guess my secret, not even Mollie."

"I promise," said Archie Tomlin, holding out his hand.

An urgent message had been brought up from the village while the vicarage family were having their breakfast next morning, for Dr. Tomlin.

A stranger to the village had suddenly attacked a man in the street the evening before, and the village doctor wanted Dr. Tomlin to join him in witnessing to his insanity before the magistrate, was the request which the note contained. Without thinking, he read it aloud; Carol Ferrars rose to her feet excitedly.

"I don't believe it," she cried. "You won't witness against him, Dr. Tomlin, you shall not!"

"What is it to you?" said the vicar gravely. "Do you know anything about this man, Miss Ferrars?"

The colour faded slowly from her face, leaving it white as death. She sat down again, every limb trembling.

"He is my husband," she said in the silence which followed the vicar's words, and, bowing her head in her hands, broke into a storm of tears.

Mollie rose and, going to her, drew her into her arms to comfort her.

The vicar and the young doctor went down to the village together.

F. Lindsey.

"Did you ever try to stop a dangerous dog by catching his eye?" "No; I can't run backward."

She (at the theatre): "I don't understand what the detective is supposed to be doing in this piece." He: "I fancy he is looking for the plot."

He (kissing her): "And so you will be mine?" She: "Yes, dear, though I am afraid it will hurt my reputation for being such a self-possessed girl."

Stranger: "I want to buy a good watch dog." Dog Fancier: "Here is the one you want, sir. Trained by an expert. He can tell an insurance agent or a tax collector a mile off." "And what will he do then?" "Do? He'll chew 'em into soup bones." "Well, he won't suit me." "Why? Most people want a dog like that." "Yes, I know; but I'm a tax collector, you see."

Your Editor Chats.

NEW THINGS COMING ALONG.

I have a number of good things in store for readers and they will soon be coming along. One of them is in the shape of a new serial story. This will start in a few weeks, and it has been written by Mr. R. Norman Silver, whose work is already well-known to readers of Short Stories. It was he who wrote "The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told off Duty," "The Brains of the Force," and other stories that were much appreciated by readers. The new story is fresh and crisp throughout, and is full of dramatic scenes. It is a story which will be of special interest to the fair sex in the power with which the love element is treated. At the present moment Mr. Silver is putting the last finishing touches to the story, and he tells me that of all the stories he has written, this has given him the greatest satisfaction. This remark coming from the author himself should brand the narrative as being of more than ordinary interest.

A NEW COMPETITION.

Another surprise in store for you is a prize competition on absolutely new lines; nothing of the kind has ever appeared before; it is a competition for which every reader may enter, and requires no great amount of work. I may say at the outset that it is not in any shape or form a picture puzzle competition, nor is it an anagram competition, nor, in fact, any sort of competition that has been used before. You may wonder why I don't tell you straight out what sort of thing it is, but my reason for not doing so is that there are many rival papers which would be only too glad to get an inkling of what is coming along in Short Stories in order to try to steal a march on the paper. In a few weeks your curiosity will be satisfied, and you will have an opportunity of spending a few hours in what may prove to you to be profitable employment.

A NEW SERIES.

The third surprise is a new series of splendid articles to follow the series entitled "How I Chaperoned Belinda." These are entirely different from the previous series, and have been written under very interesting circumstances. I shall be able to tell you more about them next week.

The prize of £10 in the first "Dayton" Competition has been awarded to Mr. Lewis Yelland, 84 Arabella Street, Roath, Cardiff.

The prize of £10 in the second "Dayton" competition has been awarded to Mr. W. N. Quarrington, 14 Poet's Corner, Margate.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Often Impossible.

HE: "Don't you think it wrong for people to marry their intellectual inferiors?" She: "Yes—always wrong, and in some cases quite impossible."

Not Very Complimentary.

CHOLLIE: "Would you believe it that I was threatened with serious brain trouble when I was young?" Dollie: "Indeed? How did you succeed in having it removed?"

Glad it Was Over.

HE (preparing to leave): "I assure you, Miss Sweet, the time has passed very pleasantly this evening." She (abstractedly): "Yes, it is pleasant to know that it is past."

Where She Was Kissed.

LAWYER: "Where did he kiss you?" Pretty Defendant: "On the mouth, sir." Lawyer: "No, no! you don't understand. I mean where were you?" Defendant (blushing): "In his arms, sir."

Papa Wouldn't Like It.

"IF you do not marry me I shall hang myself!" exclaimed a lovelorn young man. "Well, if you do, please go away a few streets," was the cheerful response, "for I heard papa say he did not want you to hang round here."

Character from the Pencil.

"I ALWAYS like to write with a soft lead-pencil," remarked the young man. "Have you ever given any study," inquired the cruelly thoughtless girl, "to the manner in which a person's character will manifest itself in his handwriting?"

Worth an Extra Shilling.

MR. GREEN (to Johnny, who has been hiding behind the screen): "There, I'll give you a shilling not to tell that I kissed your sister!" Johnny: "Yes, but I saw you put your arm round her waist a-cuddlin' of her. It's worth another bob not to split on that."

The Day Hadn't Come.

DESPAIRING LOVER: "Bertha, have you nothing to say in answer to the letter I wrote you last Thursday? Do you know that all my future is bound up in your reply to that letter?" Fair Maiden: "I haven't looked at it, Horace. Next Tuesday is my day for opening sealed proposals."

A Sister's Duties.

MISS MITTENS: "What does this mean, Mr. Brotherton?" Mr. Brotherton: "These? Oh, these are just a few socks, underclothes, and coats that want mending!" Miss Mittens: "But——?" Mr. Brotherton: "You promised to be a sister to me last night, you know; and my sister used to do all my mending before she was married."

Why She Did It.

"THAT'S a very clever idea of yours, Miss Nellie." "What is a very clever idea, Mr. Dolley?" "Wearing a big hat at the theatre and exasperating everybody in your rear until the curtain rises, and then relieving their anxiety by taking it off and placing it on your lap." "Yes; I know; it is a good plan. It attracts the attention both to my hat and to my hair."

Thought Too Much of Her.

ETHEL: "Are you sure that all his thoughts are of you?" Edith: "Oh, yes! Why, he has just lost his position on account of inattention to business!"

Cutting the Rough Diamond.

MILLIE: "Why do you never speak to Mr. Marples now? He is uncouth, but I feel sure he is a diamond in the rough." Clara: "So do I. That's why I'm cutting him."

The Taste of a Kiss.

"OH, Sophie! I hear you kissed Mr. Rondo, the poet, in the conservatory last night." "Um-m-m!" "Tell me. What was it like?" "Well, he has a very pronounced literary taste."

Such a Surprise!

"I'VE planned such a delightful surprise for my husband." "Really?" "Yes. He has a spring suit nearly as good as new hanging in the wardrobe, and I've put a shilling in one of the waistcoat pockets."

Kept the Men off.

MAUD: "Why has Lilian given up wearing rational costume? Did George object?" Ethel: "Oh, no; he said he approved of it, because it would prevent her attracting any other man's admiration."

Not as He Meant It.

HE knew what they always say, so he thought he would forestall her. "I suppose you've never been kissed by a man before?" he said. "Do I look as plain as all that?" she demanded haughtily.

Wanted Him to be Thinner.

MAUD: "Why did you break your engagement with poor Tom Hotchkiss?" Edith: "Hush, don't tell anyone, but he was growing so horribly fat. When grief has pulled him down a bit I shall take him on again."

Couldn't Run any Risks.

MOTHER (reading): "An inventor has just patented a machine that will toss a man 500 feet into the air by simply touching a spring." Pretty Daughter: "Goodness gracious! Let me destroy that paper before papa gets hold of it."

Giving a Gentle Hint.

"I HAVEN'T anything new to sing to you to-night, George." "Well give me something old, then." She broke into a refrain that was "a song of the day" seventeen years before. "That's very, very old, Clara," he remarked at the close. "Yes, George; I sang that to you the night we became engaged."

The Postscript Wasn't Meant.

SHE was a smart and pretty girl, and part of her duties was to write the advertisements for a large drapery establishment in the City. Her mind used to run so much upon her business that one day, when she wrote to her lover to meet her that night at home, she unconsciously added as a postscript: "Come early and avoid the rush."

She Had Inherited It.

WOULD-BE SUITOR: "Is it possible that you have never attended a dancing class?" Young Lady: "Never in my life." "Remarkable! Why, you dance charmingly; how do you account for it?" "I must have inherited it. Papa is an adept in manipulating the light, fantastic toe." "What evening did you say he wouldn't be at home?"

Flattery Won the Day.

HE kissed her boldly in the open street. "Sir!" she shrieked, "you are an utter stranger to me. What means this familiarity?" "Madam," he replied, bowing low, "though we never met before, you must excuse me. I bet my friend that I would kiss the prettiest girl I saw in the whole street." A soft, forgiving smile replaced her wrathful glance. "You are forgiven this time," she said sweetly, "but please don't let it occur again."

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Fairholme's Mission.

"The third item," continued Brett, "which demands attention in Paris is the whereabouts of the Turks. They must be found and observed. My chief difficulty will be to keep that delightful commissary from imprisoning them, if, as I imagine, we find the little thief a captive in the Rue Barbette. So you see my actions are speculative. Yours, on the other hand, will be definite."

"Ah," said Fairholme, "I am glad to hear that. If you expect me to analyse and deduce and find out the probable movements of intelligent rascals, I am sure I should make a mess of things."

"You will reach London," said Brett, "at 7.30 p.m. I suppose you have in your service a reliable servant, endowed with a fair amount of physical strength?"

"Rather," cried the Earl. "My butler is a splendid chap. He has been fined half-a-dozen times for his exceeding willingness to settle disputes with his fists."

"Telegraph to him to meet you at Charing Cross Station. I can depend upon my man Smith to use his nerve and discretion. Moreover, he knows Inspector Winter, of Scotland Yard, and should trouble arise, which I do not anticipate, this acquaintance may be useful to you. The third person who will meet you will be the ex-sergeant of police, whose report to me you heard yesterday. He will point out to you the flat tenanted by the invalid lady. You speak French well, and after a few questions you should be able to satisfy yourself whether or not the person who opens the door to you when you visit that flat is acting a genuine part. You can pretend what you like, but if admission is denied to you I want you to force your way inside and see that invalid lady at all costs. In the event of a gross mistake having been committed you must apologise most abjectly and assuage the wounded feelings of the servants with a liberal donation, whilst the ex-sergeant of police will advise you as to any other place which may demand personal inspection. I do not conceal from you the difficulties of your task, or the chance that you may get into trouble with the police. But the fact remains that Talbot, alive or dead, is concealed somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Carlton Hotel, and it is high time that this portion of the mystery attending his disappearance should be made clear. Do you follow me?"

"Precisely," said Fairholme. "My programme appears to be very simple. I am to kick down any door that is pointed out by the ex-policeman provided I am refused admission by fair means."

Brett laughed. "I think," he cried, "you have put my instructions in very direct and succinct form All I hope is that the invalid lady may prove to be an elderly fraud. It only remains for me to give you my blessing and say good-bye."

"But what about you?" said the Earl anxiously. "Suppose we come across Talbot to-night, as you anticipate, where shall I find you to-morrow?"

"You must telegraph to me here," was the answer, "and you must possess your soul in patience until you hear from me."

"No, don't protest," he went on, as Fairholme gave indications of impatience. "You need not fear that you will be left out of the denouement, whatever it be. I am sure to need your help before long, and I will cable you at the first possible moment. For that reason, should you leave your house for more than an hour or so, I hope you will make special arrangements for telegrams to reach you without delay."

"You may rely on that," was the hearty answer. "But look here, Brett. It is 10.45 a.m. now. If I have to catch that eleven-fifty train from the Gare du Nord I have no time to lose. By the way," he added, turning at the door, "is there any reason why I should not wire to Edith to expect me to-night?"

"Not the slightest," said Brett, smiling, "except perhaps this, that instead of calling upon Miss Talbot this evening you may be locked up on the charge of housebreaking."

"Um," said the Earl, thoughtfully, "I had not thought of that. It will be more fun to take her by surprise. So here goes to get my traps packed."

After Lord Fairholme's departure, Brett took matters easily. He did not put in an appearance at the Prefecture until late in the afternoon, and, as he surmised, the commissary whom he encountered the previous night had even then only just arrived at his office. Without any difficulty, the barrister was introduced to the official, who evidently awaited an explanation of the visit with great curiosity.

Brett's ill-humour at the uncalled-for interference of the police was now quite dispelled, and he greeted the commissary with the genial affability which so quickly won him the friendship of casual acquaintances.

"I think," he began, "that your agents, monsieur, were watching me throughout the whole of yesterday."

"That is so," nodded the other, wondering what pitfall lay behind this leading question.

"Do I take it that after my departure from No. 11 Rue Barbette about mid-day they maintained no further guard upon that house?"

"Assuredly. It was monsieur's personal movements which called for observation."

"Then you do not know that an individual whose identity may be much more important than mine to the inquiry upon which we are mutually engaged, is an

Digitized by Google

inmate of the apartment at this moment—probably a captive against his will, possibly dead?"

The Frenchman's huge moustache bristled with alarm and annoyance.

"It is a strange thing, monsieur," he cried, "that an English gentleman should come to Paris and know more about the movements and haunts of criminals than the French police."

It was no part of Brett's design to rub the official the wrong way, so he said gently:

"Your remark is quite justifiable, and under ordinary circumstances any such pretence on my part would be ridiculous. But you must remember, monsieur, that I came here from London possessed of special information which was not known even to the police authorities in that city. I am working solely in the private interest of persons high in English society, and it would not serve the purpose of any of the Governments concerned were too much stress publicly laid upon their connection with this mystery. If I can succeed in elucidating the problem it will be a comparatively easy matter for the police to bring the real criminals to justice. As a step towards that end I have come to you now to place you in possession of a clue which may reveal itself in the Rue Barbette. All I ask is, in the first instance, that the affair may be conducted with the utmost secresy, and, secondly, that you will permit me to be present when you examine the person whom I expect to find there. I may be able to help you very materially in your questions, provided the man is alive and well."

The commissary was soothed. The barrister's judicial reference to the importance and confidential nature of the inquiry raised in his mind a dazzling vision of personal distinction and preferment.

"The matter shall be conducted with the utmost discretion," he cried. "What force does monsieur consider to be requisite in order to examine this house thoroughly, and prevent the attempted escape of others whom we may find there in addition to the man described?"

Brett with difficulty repressed a smile. "I do not think that a large force of police will be necessary. If you yourself, monsieur, and another officer will accompany me in a cab, I am sure we will be able to deal with all possible opposition. There is no exit from the flat save through the main door, and the apartment is situated on the second storey, so that escape by way of the windows is practically impossible if we act with promptitude."

The commissary could not reach the Rue Barbette too rapidly. He bundled a subordinate into a fiacre, and the three were driven off at breakneck speed.

They stopped the vehicle at the corner of the street and walked quietly to the house, attracting no attention, as neither of the Frenchmen were in uniform.

Inquiry from the concierge elicited information that none of the occupants of the flat tenanted by the Turkish gentlemen had put in an appearance since the previous afternoon. So the trio mounted the staircase, and without any preliminary summons the junior official applied his shoulder to the door.

The lock yielded quite readily. Indeed, the damage done by Lord Fairholme had been but temporarily repaired, and no special precaution had been taken to fasten the place. All was quiet within. The first room they searched was empty. So was the second; but in a bedroom, the door of which was locked and required forcible treatment, an extraordinary sight met their eyes.

The Invalid "Lady."

STRETCHED on the bed, gagged and securely tied, was the figure of the diminutive Frenchman, who, little more than twenty-four hours earlier, had so coolly suggested that Brett should be murdered.

Stout leather thongs were fastened to his wrists and ankles and then tied to the four uprights of the bed. His arms and legs were consequently stretched widely apart, and the only sign of vitality about the man was the terrible expression of fear and hate in his eyes as he looked at them.

The gag stuffed in his mouth prevented him from uttering the slightest coherent sound, whilst the agony of his frame, owing to the position in which he lay, joined to the exhaustion induced by terror and want of food, rendered him a pitiable object.

They removed the gag and cut the bonds. The poor wretch remained on his back unable to move, though he flinched somewhat when the police, as gently as possible, loosened the leather straps from his wrists and ankles, for his useless struggles had caused the thongs to cut deeply into his skin.

Brett was the first to realise the unfortunate wretch's chief requirement. He procured some water, raised the man's head, and allowed him to take a deep and invigorating draught.

"Why, it is 'The Worm!'" said the junior policeman. "I know him well. He is a pickpocket, an expert rascal in his line, but hardly up to the standard of great events."

At the sound of his nickname a flicker of intelligence came into the little thief's eyes, but he was still dazed, and did not recognise his rescuers.

"I don't care what you do with me," he murmured at last, in a weak and cracked voice. "Kill me quietly if you want to, but don't tie me up again. I have done nothing to deserve it. I really haven't. I have been acting quite square in this business." And then he broke down and whimpered further protestations of innocence.

"He is weak from want of food, and dazed with terror," said Brett quietly. "I suggest that one of you should get him some meat and wine, whilst the others remain here and endeavour to reassure him. In half an hour he will be greatly recovered. Meanwhile we might examine the place."

The commissary thought Brett's suggestion a good one. His assistant summoned the concierge and attended to the wants of "The Worm," whilst Brett and the commissary conducted a careful scrutiny of the premises.

They found little, however, beyond a considerable accumulation of dirt, for the ways of Turks are primitive and their habits unpleasant in European households. It was evident that before taking their departure the occupants of the flat had carefully removed or destroyed all documents or other articles which might throw light upon their proceedings.

The leather thongs which had bound the prisoner evoked some comment from the barrister.

"These are somewhat unusual articles," he said to the commissary. "You will notice that they are cut from raw cowhide and well stretched. In other words, they are the familiar 'bow-strings' of Constantinople, and warranted not to yield if twisted round the neck. I think they will answer for other purposes than tying people on beds."

"We must find these Turks," said the commissary. "They are desperate characters."

"Find them by all means," said Brett earnestly, "but upon no account arrest them."

"And why, monsieur?" cried the other, with elevated eyebrows.

"Because if you do you will paralyse our future actions. When all is said and done, the only charge you can bring against them is a trivial one. It is evident they merely tied up this man, either with the object of frightening him into a confession, or to leave their hands free whilst they dealt with his employers. Perhaps they had both objects in view. In either event the appearance of the police upon the scene would close their

Digitized by Google

mouths more tightly than an oyster. As it is, I expect they will return, and, if possible, you must compel the concierge to conceal the fact that you have visited the house. Let him put all the blame on me. They know that I am mixed up in the inquiry, and fear me far less than the recognised authorities. Oblige me in this respect and you will not regret it."

The policeman was wise enough to fall in with the suggestion.

An hour later "The Worm" was taken in a cab to the Prefecture, as his condition was yet so hopeless that little real benefit could ensue from a searching cross-examination.

So Brett parted company with the officials, having made an appointment with the commissary for the next day at noon, when they assumed that the prisoner would be considerably recovered from his weakness and fright.

The barrister subsequently made a round of the minor cafés in the neighbourhood of the Cirque d'Hiver. After much casual questioning, he elicited the information that a well-known circus, of which Mlle. Beaucaire was at one time a shining light, was performing at that moment at Marseilles. He ascertained that during the winter season this class of entertainment perambulated the South of France and Northern Italy.

The actor from whom he gleaned these important facts said that he had a trustworthy friend in Marseilles who would easily be able to ascertain whether or not La Belle Chasseuse intended to rejoin her former profession. Brett secured his hearty co-operation by a liberal donation for expenses.

The barrister resolved to pay another visit to the Cabaret Noir late that evening, but he waited in the hotel until nearly ten o'clock in anxious expectation of a telegram from Fairholme.

At last the message arrived. Its contents were laconic.

"Right first time," it ran. "Invalid lady's name 'Jack.' Somewhat exhausted after long confinement. Edith delighted. Jack visits Under-Secretary to-night. We all purpose joining you in Paris to-morrow. Do you approve?"

Brett promptly wired "Yes," and then set out for Montmartre dressing himself in the height of fashion so far as his wardrobe would permit, and donning a fierce moustache and wig, which completely altered his appearance. He looked like a successful impresario or popular Italian tenor.

The Innkeeper.

THE fair-ground of Montmartre was in full swing when Brett arrived there. The Cabaret Noir was in charge of his former acquaintance, the weary-eyed waiter, and other assistants.

The barrister wondered whether Mlle. Beaucaire had taken her father completely into her confidence. To make certain he questioned the waiter.

"Is Monsieur Beaucaire in?" he said.

"But yes, monsieur. You will find him in the billiard-room."

This time Brett was not conducted through the private passage that led through the rear of the bar. The man politely indicated another entrance, and brought him to the proprietor with the introductory remark:

"A gentleman who wishes to see you."

The room was tenanted by a nondescript crowd, whose attention was promptly diverted upon the appearance of a stranger, and a well-dressed one at that.

The games in progress at the two tables were momentarily suspended, whilst Gros Jean, a corpulent man above the middle height, whose legs seemed to be too frail to support his rotund body, advanced towards the door, peering curiously beneath his bushy eyebrows to get a glimpse of the new comer, for the shaded light did not fall on Brett's features, and M. Beaucaire wondered who the stranger could be. The barrister almost started when he recognised his fellow-passenger, the man who travelled to Paris with Gaultier and himself. Gros Jean bowed politely enough, and murmured something about being at Brett's service.

"Oh, it is nothing of great importance," said the barrister airily, as he was not anxious to attract too much observation from the unwashed humanity who took such interest in him. "I merely wish to know when it will be convenient for me to have some conversation with mademoiselle, your charming daughter?"

"May I inquire the reason, monsieur?" said the other.

"Certainly. I have heard of her skill as an artist, and it is possible that I might be able to arrange a London engagement for her."

"Ah," said the landlord deprecatingly, "what a pity! Had monsieur called here yesterday he could have seen mademoiselle. She has now left Paris for some weeks."

"Perhaps," said Brett, "I may have the pleasure of meeting her elsewhere. I myself depart to-morrow on a tour to the South of France. It is possible that mademoiselle may be employed in some of the southern cities. If so I will certainly make it my business to call upon her."

Beaucaire came a step nearer. Clearly he did not recall the barrister's face. He well knew that his daughter's attainments were not such as to command the eager search of London theatrical managers, yet he was assured that the individual who now addressed him was not an ordinary music-hall agent, hunting up fees.

He lowered his voice, after an angry glance at the loungers in the room, which caused them to turn to the tables with redoubled interest.

"I regret," he said, "that mademoiselle is not professionally engaged at this moment. Indeed, she has not appeared in public for some months. May I ask how monsieur came to hear of her name?"

"It is the easiest matter in the world," said Brett with his ready smile, producing his note-book and rapidly turning over the leaves. "I have here the names and addresses of a large number of artists whom I was recommended to call upon. Mademoiselle's name was given to me among others at the Cirque d'Hiver, where I heard most encouraging accounts of her skill. You see, monsieur," he went on, "that in England the public are not acquainted with any other language than their own, and when Continental artists are engaged we prefer those whose performance consists chiefly of acrobatic or other feats in which dialogue is unnecessary."

The barrister's ready explanation was sufficient. Nevertheless Beaucaire was puzzled. But even the most vulgar or brutal Frenchman is endowed with a certain amount of politeness, and in this instance Gros Jean felt that his visitor should certainly be treated with great deference.

"I am most sorry," he cried, "to be unable to assist monsieur any further. If, however, you will leave me your address I will communicate with you after I have

Digitized by Google

heard from my daughter. I have no doubt that she will readily come to terms."

"I think you said that mademoiselle was in the South of France?" observed Brett casually.

Instantly Beaucaire became suspicious again.

"No," he replied shortly; "I do not think I said so."

"Of course not," laughed Brett. "How foolish of me! It was I who mentioned the South of France, was it not? You see that French is a foreign language to me, and I do not express myself very easily."

Beaucaire grinned politely again, and said: "Permit me to congratulate monsieur upon both his pronunciation and facility. Few Englishmen speak French so well."

The barrister was determined not to allow the conversation to end too rapidly. He wished to note more carefully the details of this interesting household. Pulling out his cigar-case, he offered it to Gros Jean with the remark: "Your small French tables seem curious to my eyes after long acquaintance with English billiards. Are any of these gentlemen here skilled players in your fashion?"

"Oh, yes," said the innkeeper. "André there, for instance, can make big breaks. I have seen him make forty consecutive coups. Will you not take a seat for a little while and observe the play?"

"With pleasure." And Brett confirmed the favourable opinion formed of him by ordering refreshments for Beaucaire and himself and inviting the redoubtable André to join them.

He apparently took a keen interest in the game, and applauded the manner in which the Frenchman scored a series of difficult cannons.

Meanwhile he noted that between the private passage from the bar and the public one that led from the café was a room into which the light of day could not possibly penetrate. He was certain that no door communicated with it from the public passage, and he could not remember having passed one that first afternoon when La Belle Chasseuse brought him and Fairholme into the billiard-room to display her prowess as a markswoman.

It was certainly a curious apartment, and for some undefinable reason he could not prevent his mind from running upon its possible uses.

Probably the Café Noir had no cellars. The place might serve as a store room. This natural hypothesis was upset by the appearance of the waiter, who passed through the billiard-room and opened another door at the further end, through which he soon emerged, carrying a fresh supply of bottles.

"It is obvious," said Brett to himself, "that if there is no door communicating with the private passage, then the only way in which that room can be reached is by a ladder from the top. Now I wonder why that should be necessary?"

He remained in the billiard-room some twenty minutes. When Gros Jean was called on some momentary errand to the front of the house he took his departure, purposely making the mistake of quitting the room by the wrong exit. At the same instant he struck a match to relight his cigar, and while the expert billiard player, André, ran after him to direct him as to the right way he rapidly surveyed the passage. The plaster walls were smooth and unbroken on their inner side, affording no doorway exit.

Apologising to André with a laugh, he then sauntered towards the front café, where he purchased another drink at the counter. He assured himself that he had not been mistaken. The only private door out of the bar led into the passage, so that the room beyond might be regarded as an above-ground cellar, which could only be reached by a staircase through a trap-door.

"I have learnt something at any rate," he murmured as he passed out into the Boulevard, "and I imagine that my knowledge is not shared by the Paris police. Mademoiselle would have acted more wisely had she not

Bile Beans Cure a Musician.

CHRONIC BILIOUSNESS AND HEADACHE ENDED.

DOCTORS FAILED TO CURE PERMANENTLY

SUFFERERS from biliousness will be interested in the remarkable story related by Mr. F. V. W. Haggard, who lives at 9 George Street, Swindon, Wilts. Mr. Haggard is a pianist who is well-known in Wiltshire; and for a long time—nearly two years, in fact—he has been a sufferer from biliousness and its attendant evils. Describing his sufferings, and the remarkable nature of his cure by Bile Beans for Biliousness, to a "Swindon Advertiser" reporter, he said:

"I have been ill for nearly two years with biliousness and sick headache, and when I was fulfilling a professional engagement this sickly sensation invariably came over me. If I went to act as accompanist at a concert or anything of the kind I could not stand the hot atmosphere, and when I retired, my head ached awfully. I tried all that money could buy to obtain relief but to no purpose. On several occasions I consulted medical men, but though their remedies proved beneficial for a short time they had no lasting effect.

At length I began to feel so ill that I thought I should have to cancel my engagements altogether, which, naturally, would have been a great loss to me.

"One day a friend of mine, knowing how much I suffered from biliousness, gave me a few Bile Beans, and recommended me to give them a fair trial. I found they did me so much good that I sent for a box, and as a result of taking them the biliousness gradually decreased. I took the Beans regularly for a time, and whenever the sickness came over me I slipped a Bean—I carried them loose in my pocket—into my mouth. They always had the effect of completely clearing my head. I continued with their use and am now entirely free from biliousness and headache and the other sensations from which I suffered so much. I am now in capital health and feel very grateful to the proprietors of Bile Beans."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain cure for chronic biliousness, headache, indigestion, debility, liver and kidney disorders, pains in the side, loins, and back, constipation, piles, dizziness, sleeplessness, anæmia, and all female ailments. Also for colds, chill, neuralgia, lumbago, rheumatism, and as a preventative of influenza. Bile Beans may be had of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., on receipt of prices 1/1½ or 2/9 (2/9 box contains three times 1/1½ size). They are sold only in sealed boxes; never loose.

yielded to impulse, and reserved her shooting display for a more dramatic occasion."

A Confession.

THE next morning Brett kept his appointment with the commissary. That worthy official set himself to the congenial task of examining a prisoner with the air of one who said: "Now you will see what manner of man I am. Here I am on my native heath."

He consulted bulky volumes, made notes, fussily called up various subordinates, both in person and by speaking-tube, and generally conducted himself with a business-like manner that much amused the barrister, who, however, for his own purposes took care to appear greatly impressed.

At last all was ready, and the captive of the Rue Barbette was introduced.

This precocious personage had recovered his self-possession and natural impudence during the night. By the commissary's instructions he had been well supplied with eatables, and the restrictions as to persons under detention were so relaxed as to permit him to enjoy a supply of his much-loved cigarettes. Consequently, the little thief was restored to his usual state of jaunty cheekiness.

The first part of the interrogation, which promptly ensued, was not strange to him.

"Your name?" said the commissary.

"Charles Petit."

"Age?"

"Believed to be twenty-seven, but as no record was kept of my birth I cannot be certain."

"Abode?"

"Changeable. Of late I have dwelt in the Cabaret Noir, Boulevard de Montmartre."

"You are generally known as 'The Worm?'"

"That is so."

"You have served several periods of imprisonment, and have paid over 400 francs in fines?"

"I have not kept count, but I suppose it is all written down there." And he jerked his thumb towards the conviction book, which lay on the commissary's desk.

"You are a noted thief and you obtained your nickname by reason of your dexterity in picking locks and climbing through scullery windows?"

"If you say so, monsieur, your words cannot be disputed."

"Very well." The commissary scratched a few lines on a memorandum tablet. Then he suddenly raised his quick eyes and fastened them upon the prisoner with the direct question:

"How came you to be detained in such an extraordinary manner in the house, No. 11 Rue Barbette, yesterday?"

A vacant and stolid expression intended to convey an idea of utter innocence came over "The Worm's" face.

"Believe me, monsieur," he said, "I cannot give you the slightest explanation of that extraordinary incident."

"Indeed! You surprise me. I suppose you wish me to understand that you casually strolled in out of the street and were set upon by three Turks, who gagged you and bound you with leather thongs, leaving you to starve quietly to death if you had not been rescued by reason of a chance visit paid to the place by myself and others?"

"I assure you, monsieur, that, strange as it may seem, you have almost related the facts. I went to the place in question with a very ordinary message from a Turkish gentleman with whom I had a slight acquaintance. The other Turks listened to me with the gravity peculiar to their nation, and then, before I could offer a word of remonstrance, treated me exactly as you saw."

"At what time did you go there?"

"It must have been nearly three o'clock, the day before yesterday," was the answer.

"And what message did you bring?"

"I was told to ask the Turkish gentlemen to be good enough to cross the Pont Neuf exactly at half-past six, when they could meet a friend who desired to give some information to them."

"Oh! come now," said the commissary, with a knowing smile, "that will not do, Petit. You are far too old a hand to convey such a childish message as that. What reason can you have for seeking to shield these men who treated you in a barbarous way and left you to die a cruel death?"

"On my honour——" began the thief melodramatically, but Brett here interrupted the conversation.

"Will you allow me," he said to the commissary, "to put a few questions to this man?"

"Certainly," was the answer.

"Now listen," said Brett, sternly gazing at the truculent little rascal with those searching eyes of his, which seemed to reach to the very spine. "It is useless for you to attempt any further prevarication. We know exactly who are your confederates. We are acquainted with a large number of the gang that frequents the Cabaret Noir. Do not forget that I was present when you tried to palm off on Hussein ul Mulk the false diamonds, which your confederates hoped he would accept. For you to attempt now to escape from the law is hopeless. The sole chance you have of remitting a punishment which may even lead you beneath the guillotine, is to confess fully and freely all that you know concerning the outrage which has been committed.

"No, don't interrupt me," he continued with even greater emphasis, when "Le Ver" tried to break in upon his remarks. "You will tell me that you merely acted as the agent of others, and that you yourself are not conscious of the naturo of any crime that has been committed. I know that to be so. You have been made a mere tool. You are the cat, simply employed by the monkey to pull the chestnuts out of the fire, and you have only succeeded in getting your own paws burnt. Your sole chance for safety now is to inform the commissary and me exactly how you came to be mixed up with this affair."

The Frenchman's truculency seemed to vanish under Brett's cutting words. His wizened face even manifested a faint flush of anger as the barrister pointed out how he had been duped by his employers.

Yet the order of his craft was strong in its influence, and he commenced another series of protestations.

"I assure you, gentlemen," he cried, "that with respect to the Turks I have no knowledge whatever of their pursuits or motives. I was present when this English gentleman here was debating with them, and I understood that they even went so far as to use threats against him. My mission was to give to the leaders of the Turks a package which I did not even know contained diamonds, either genuine or false. No one could

(Continued on page 159.)

Digitized by Google

ALFOSCO REG'D

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

ALFOSCO REG'D

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 435

10/6

Design No. 435. 10/6.

Special Value for Half-a-Guinea. Costume made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s world-renowned Specialite Serge or Venetian Cloth. All colours and sizes kept in stock. The bodice has pouched front, and is stylishly trimmed strappings of Taffeta Silk, and small buttons. Well made skirt, bell shape, inset at side, pocket, and trimmed silk and buttons to match bodice. Price only **10/6**; carr. 6d. Skirt alone, **6/6**; carr. 5d. BEST VALUE IN LONDON. Good fit guaranteed. This Costume made in the new **"Alfosco"** Tweed, all colours, will be **25/-**. Patterns post free.

Design No. 1261. 10/6.

Chesterfield Three-quarter Sacque Jacket. This Jacket is produced in Black, Fawn, and Brown Beaver Cloth; in Grey and Black Vicuna Coating; also in pretty Grey Tweeds. Price **10/6**; carr. 6d. extra. This Jacket can also be ordered 33in. long, **11/6**; 36in., **12/6**; 39in., **13/6**; and 42in., **14/6**. Carr. 6d. ex. Patterns Free.

Design No. 787. 12/6.

The Costume of the Season. A marvellous production for **12/6**. This smart **"Alfosco"** Coat & skirt is made in Allen Foster & Co.'s Venetian Cloth or Specialite Serge, all colours in stock. The Coat is lined and made in the new Russian style, trimmed Taffeta Silk and fancy buttons, full well made skirt. Price only **12/6**, carr. paid 6d. ex. Measurements required are bust under arms, inside sleeve, size of waist and length of skirt in front.

Send Postcard for

PATTERNS AND NEW SKETCH BOOK

of Latest Fashions in

Ladies' Costumes and Jackets.

Free on Application. Call or Write.

Design No. 787

12/6

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 Golden Lane, Barbican, London, E.C

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED).

Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil, invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/4; 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard-Bishop, Devon.**

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to **£1** may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. A genuine work. Post free, **2/-**; Colonies, **3/-**.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well.

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

(The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

Of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 55 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors:

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

RUN NO RISK

KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE

THE WORST COUGH

GIVEN AWAY

with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 472.)

PAPER PATTERN

of this

BLOUSE.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

Price One Penny.

Digitized by Google

WHENCE COMES THIS MIGHTY HEALING POWER.

All the Land Wonders at the Remarkable Cures effected by Professor Adkin.

HEALS DISEASES CALLED INCURABLE.

Ministers, Doctors and Professional Men Tell How He Has Cured the Blind, the Lame, the Paralytic and Many on the Very Brink of Death.

FREE HELP FOR THE SICK.

Professor Adkin Offers to Help All Sufferers from Any Disease Absolutely Free of Charge—Professional Men Investigate His Powers.

PROF. THOMAS F. ADKIN.
President of the Institute of Physicians and Surgeons.

In all parts of the country men and women, doctors and surgeons, clergymen and educators, are wondering at the remarkable cures made by Professor Thomas F. Adkin, discoverer of the Adkin Vitaopathic treatment.

Prof. Adkin heals not by drugs, nor by Christian Science, nor by Osteopathy, nor by Hypnotism, nor by Divine Healing, but by a subtle psychic force of nature in combination with certain vital magnetic remedies which contain the very elements of life and health.

A reporter recently talked with Prof. Adkin and was asked to invite all readers of this paper who are sick or who are worried by the ills of those dear to them, to write to him for assistance. "Some people have declared," said Prof. Adkin, that my powers are of God, they call me a Divine healer, a man of mysterious powers. This is not so; I cure because I understand nature, because I use the subtle force of nature to build up the system and restore health. But at the same time I believe that the Creator would not have given me the opportunity to make the discoveries I have made or the ability to develop them, if He had not intended that I should use them for the good of humanity. I therefore feel that it is my duty to give the benefit of the science I practice to all who are suffering. I want you to tell your readers that they can write to me in the strictest confidence if they are troubled with any kind of disease, and I will thoroughly diagnose their cases absolutely free of charge and explain by a simple guaranteed home treatment how a complete cure should be effected. I care not how serious their cases, nor how hopeless they may seem, I want them to write to me and let me make them well. I feel that this is my life work."

So great is the sensation wrought in the medical world by the wonderful cures performed by Prof. Adkin, that several professional gentlemen were asked to investigate the cures. Among these gentlemen were Dr. L. B. Hawley and Dr. L. G. Doane, both famous physicians and surgeons. After a thorough and painstaking investigation these eminent physicians were so astounded at the far-reaching powers of Prof. Adkin, and the wonderful efficacy of Vitaopathy that they volunteered to forsake all other ties in life and all other kinds of treatment and devote themselves to assisting Prof. Adkin in his great work for humanity. With the discovery of the Adkin Vitaopathic treatment eminent physicians are generally agreed that the treatment of disease has at last been reduced to an exact science.

In all some 8,000 men and women have been cured by the powers of Prof. Adkin. Some were blind, some were lame, some were deaf, some were paralytics, scarcely able to move, so great was their infirmity. Others were afflicted with Bright's disease, heart disease, consumption, and other so-called incurable diseases. Some were sufferers from kidney trouble, dyspepsia, nervous debility, insomnia, neuralgia, constipation, rheumatism, female troubles, and other similar ills. Some were men and women addicted to drunkenness, morphine, and other evil habits. In all cases Prof. Adkin treats he guarantees a cure. Even those on the brink of the grave, with all hope of recovery gone and despaired of by doctors and friends alike, have been restored to perfect health by the force of Vitaopathy and Prof. Adkin's marvellous skill. And, remarkable as it may seem, distance has made no difference. Those living far away have been cured in the privacy of their own homes, as well as those who have been treated in person. Prof. Adkin asserts that he can cure anyone at any distance as well as though he stood before them.

Not long ago John Adams, of Blakesbury, Ia., who had been lame or twenty years, was permanently cured by Prof. Adkin without an operation of any kind. About the same time the City of Rochester, N.Y., was startled by the cure of one of its oldest residents, Mr. P. A. Wright, who had been partly blind for a long period. John E. Neff, of Millersburg, Pa., who had suffered for years from a cataract over his left eye, was speedily restored to perfect sight, without an operation. From Logansport, Ind., comes the news of the recovery of Mrs. Mary Eicher, who had been practically deaf for a year; while in Warren, Pa., Mr. G. W. Savage, a noted photographer and artist, who was not only partially blind and deaf, but at death's door from a complication of diseases, was restored to perfect health and strength by Prof. Adkin.

Vitaopathy cures not one disease alone, but it cures all diseases when used in combination with the proper remedies. If you are sick, no matter what your disease nor who says you can not be cured, write to Prof. Adkin to-day; tell him the leading symptoms of your complaint, how long you have been suffering, and he will at once diagnose your case, tell you the exact disease from which you are suffering and prescribe the treatment that will positively cure you. This costs you absolutely nothing. Professor Adkin will also send you a copy of his marvellous new book entitled, "How to be Cured and How to Cure Others." This book tells you exactly how Prof. Adkin will cure you. It fully and completely describes the nature of his wonderful treatment. It also explains to you how you yourself may possess this great healing power and cure the sick around you.

Professor Adkin does not ask one cent for his services in this connection. They will be given to you absolutely free. He has made a wonderful discovery, and he wishes to place it in the hands of every sick person in this country, that he may be restored to perfect health and strength. Mark your letter personal when you write, and no one but Professor Adkin will see it. Address: Professor Thomas F. Adkin, Office 580 J, Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A.

Digitized by Google

be more surprised than myself when the Turkish gentleman produced them."

"Who sent you there with the diamonds?" said Brett.

"Even that I cannot tell you," said Petit. "It was a mere chance affair. I was seated in a café sipping some absinthe when a man asked me if I would execute a small commission for him. He explained that it was to deliver a parcel at a house not five minutes distant, and——"

"I see," interrupted Brett, with the cynical smile which so often disconcerted glib liars like Petit. "It is hopeless to expect you to tell the truth. However, I think I know a way to clear your wits. You must be brought face to face with La Belle Chasseuse. Perhaps when you are confronted with that lady in the room between the café and the billiard saloon of the Cabaret Noir——"

"The Worm" gasped out brokenly:

"Pardon, monsieur! I will tell you everything!"

Henri Dubois.

THE man's face had absolutely become livid as he listened to the barrister's words.

"Well," Brett said, "tell us now who it was that sent you to the Turks with the diamonds?"

"It was Le Jougleur, Henri Dubois."

"What?" cried the commissary, starting violently. "Henri Dubois! The most expert thief in France! A scoundrel against whom the police have vainly tried for years to secure evidence."

"I know nothing of that, monsieur," said the little man, who seemed to be strangely crestfallen, "but I am telling you the truth this time. It was he who sent me the day before yesterday to the Rue Barbette, and again yesterday, although I was very unwilling to go the second time, because, as this gentleman will tell you, they looked very like murdering me on the first occasion."

"What was the object of your visit yesterday?" said Brett.

"There, monsieur, I have told you the truth, although monsieur the commissary here thinks it was childish. My instructions really were to ask them to meet him on the Pont Neuf at 6.30 p.m., when he said he would explain everything to their satisfaction. But, above all, I was to warn them to beware of the Englishman."

"Then, why should they seize and gag you for conveying such a simple message?" demanded the commissary.

"I cannot tell. I have done them no harm. Believe me, gentlemen both, I have not the slightest idea how these diamonds were obtained, or why there should be such a fuss about them."

"How long have you known Dubois?" said Brett.

"Oh, two years more or less."

"Have you ever been associated with him before?"

"Never, monsieur. My record is there." And he again jerked his thumb towards the volume on the table. "It will tell you that I deal in small affairs. Dubois is an artist. If he found a woman's purse in the street he would return it to her with a bow, if she were rich and handsome—and with some francs added, if she were poor.

"I know little about him," he continued, "except that he is a great man. They say that he once robbed the Bank of France of 200,000 francs!"

"He is a favoured lover of La Belle Chasseuse?" demanded Brett sharply.

"The Worm" recovered his equanimity somewhat at this question. He replied with a smirk: "There are others!"

"I think not," came the quick retort. "No; there are none upon whom mademoiselle bestows such favours. She left Paris with him last night."

"The dickens!" ejaculated the little man.

"Oh, yes; and she has just passed a fortnight with him in London."

"A thousand thunders!" screamed Petit. "Her father told me she was performing in a music-hall at Marseilles."

The barrister had evidently touched a sore point, and "The Worm" was more ready than ever to tell all that he knew about Le Jongleur. But his information amounted to little more of importance. The chief fact had been ascertained, its predominant interest was the identity of the man who had planned and carried out the "Albert-gate outrage."

Brett quickly realised that to question him further was useless. Petit evidently expected to be set at liberty at once. In this however, he was disappointed, for the commissary curtly remanded him to the cells.

Brett, on the other hand, made up his mind that "The Worm" at liberty might be more valuable to him than "The Worm" in gaol. So he asked the commissary, as a favour to himself, to set Petit free, first giving the thief to understand that he owed his release to the barrister's intervention.

This was done, and Le Ver was voluble in his expressions of gratitude.

Brett soon cut these short.

"Here," he said, "are a couple of louis for your immediate necessities. I am living at the Grand Hotel, and I want you to call there each morning at ten o'clock. You will inquire at the office if Mr. Brett has left any message for you. Then if I need your services I will be able to reach you early."

Petit protested that he would serve monsieur most willingly, and soon afterwards the barrister took leave of the commissary, promising that worthy official to keep him fully posted as to further developments, and secure for him, and him only, the ultimate credit of capturing such a noted thief as Dubois on condition that no active interference was made by the police.

During the afternoon Brett received a visit from his actor acquaintance, who brought him a telegram from Marseilles. It read:

"Mlle. Beaucaire has obtained an engagement here at the Palais de Glâce. She makes her first appearance on Monday evening." Brett smiled.

"This is certain," he said to himself. "They left Paris on Thursday night and they probably will not reach Marseilles until Monday. I have plenty of time to hear Talbot's story from his own lips before I take my departure for the South."

An hour later he was seated in his room smoking and reading a magazine when the waiter appeared.

"A lady and three gentlemen wish to see monsieur," he explained.

He rose promptly, and accompanied the man to the foot of the staircase. There, near the elevator, he saw Edith Talbot, Lord Fairholme, and Sir Hubert Fitzjames, whilst with them was a tall, handsome young man, whose face bore a great resemblance to that of the girl.

Edith was the first to catch sight of him.

"Oh, Mr.—Mr. Brett, I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you! Here is my brother!"

"I am indeed glad to see you," said Brett, shaking Talbot's hand heartily.

"Then how shall I find words to explain myself?" was the reply, "for in my case there is joined to the pleasure of making a much-desired acquaintance the knowledge that to your efforts I am indebted for my liberty and possibly for my reputation."

"We have much to say to each other," said the barrister. "I suppose you have secured rooms in the hotel?" he continued, turning to Miss Talbot.

"Oh, yes, everything is settled," she cried. "Please take us all somewhere at once where we can talk quietly."

Brett answered with a smile: "Lord Fairholme and I have a sitting-room which we use in common, and which has already been the scene of many earnest conferences. Let us go there."

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Point of Etiquette.

"HENRY" and his wife were staying with some relations some time ago. They had arranged to go out to a concert with one of the latter—his wife's sister. At the last moment, "HENRY'S" wife felt unwell, and did not wish to go to the concert. "HENRY" was placed between leaving his wife on the one hand and neglecting her sister on the other. Who should have the preference?

* * * *

I think the best thing would have been for "HENRY" to have seen the sister to her seat in the concert, and have then returned to his wife. At the end of the concert he could arrange to meet the sister and escort her home. He would thus neglect nobody.

A Libelled Lover.

"JESSE" was for long in love with a girl, until some friends told her things about him which were untrue. He told her the stories were false, but without convincing her, and she left him. Since this he has met another girl who seems to be very fond of him, but he does not feel that he returns her affection. In fact, the first girl was the only one he feels he can love.

* * * *

The first girl, "JESSE," cannot care for you much if she will be so easily led away from you by stories which have been told her by third parties. Have you written to her to prove to her the stories are not true, giving her clear proof, and making her ashamed of herself for crediting them? This is what a maligned man should do. If you have, and she still disbelieves you, then she cannot care for you. Better by far try to return the affection of the second girl.

'Twixt Two Suitors.

How are you to act when you are in love with one man but receiving attentions from another, whose friendship you very much like, but for whom you have no feelings of affection? To tell man No. 2 you do not care for him would hurt his feelings greatly, and although you love man No. 1, he has not proposed, or even hinted at an intention to become engaged to you. This is the position in which "SOPHIE" finds herself.

* * * *

If "SOPHIE" has no love whatever for man No. 2, she should make that perfectly clear to him. It were better he knew it now than waited until a time when the blow would be more severe. Secondly, if man No. 1 really loves her he will keep a sharp look-out on man No. 2, and soon see that he does not get the upper hand in the transaction—that is, if he is a man of ordinary construction. Meanwhile "SOPHIE" had better convey to man No. 1 in as tactful as way a possible the fact that she would much like to become engaged to him.

Too Presumptuous.

"W. J." took a fancy to a girl some time ago, and wrote to her. The letter was inclosed in that of a friend of hers, a device adopted by "W. J." so that the girl's parents should not know of it. Since this she has never showed any wish to become intimate with him. He is to meet her again soon. How should he act to gain her approbation?

* * * *

Is "W. J." sure the girl even cares a little bit for him? Her action rather suggests that she does not return his admiration. Otherwise a girl would not so strongly oppose a letter from a man, provided the letter were not too presumptuous in tone. If "W. J.'s" letter was worded indiscreetly, he owes the girl an apology, and when he meets her again should tender it. If she accepts it, then he should try to prove to her that he is deserving of her respect. Perhaps his mistake is too great eagerness to make the girl his sweetheart without even knowing whether she has taken to him.

Bad-Tempered Husbands.

"B. H." complains of the temper of her husband. Sometimes, she tells me, he behaves like a fiend, at others he is as loving as a man could be. In the former cases he abuses her and almost goes to the length of violence. At other times he brings her presents, and takes her out to amusements. How is this to be explained, and how can a wife act under the circumstances, seeing that her husband is evidently fond of her?

* * * *

It is a position which only too often happens in domestic life. Every man has his bad moments and his good ones. For a single man it matters not a bit, for he has nobody, generally speaking, upon whom to vent his ill-temper. But a married man has his wife, who accordingly suffers. Of course, everything depends on the man. There are so many ways of dealing with them. Some husbands in tempers are best met in meek silence, others fought by an equal display of heat. But the most effective cure is to convey to a man that he is making himself ridiculous.

* * * *

I know one married woman who cured her husband's ill temper by treating his caprices as nothing but a joke. He found he could not anger her at all, and finally gave up the attempt. When he found it coming on, instead of abusing his wife he went out and chopped wood. Perhaps this would act on your own husband. Try it and see.

An Old Affair.

THREE years ago "M. W." and "NELLIE" were sweethearts. Then something happened and they parted, only to see each other at rare intervals. The other day they had a chat, and, while he was talking to her, "M. W." felt as though their relations were the same as of old, and that he could resume his love for her. Do I think it is possible for two people who have been estranged for so long to again become lovers?

* * * *

It is quite possible. There must be something in common between you, which all the quarrels in the world have not finally driven away, as is clear from the fact that you felt your love returning when you chatted with her. If you really feel you could love her again, and wish to resume the relationship, I should cultivate the girl afresh. She may, of course, have altered in her own feelings, but of that you will soon be able to judge.

Cynthia.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

TO-DAY
SEND FOR H. SAMUEL'S
GREAT MONEY SAVER
FREE!

SEE FOR YOURSELF THE ENORMOUS SAVINGS

THAT WILL RESULT FROM DEALING DIRECT WITH

H. SAMUEL.

SEND A POST-CARD NOW FOR HIS

BIG FREE GUIDE.

Contains nearly 200 Pages, over 3,000 Engravings of Astounding Bargains of Highest Value at

LOWEST FACTORY PRICES. HALF YOUR OUTLAY SAVED!

Ladies' Gold Watches, 21/-; Gent's Silver Watches, 8/6; Real Silver Alberts, 3/9; Gold Brooches, 3/6; Real Gold Rings (Set with Real Stones), 6/6. And Thousands of other Genuine Bargains.

FREE PRIZES TO BUYERS! TEN LISTS IN EACH GUIDE!

DON'T DELAY! WRITE AT ONCE!!

H. SAMUEL, Dept. 29, MARKET ST., MANCHESTER.

Worth a Guinea a Box.

BEECHAM'S

PILLS.

No other medicine in the world can claim so many regular users. Thousands of families always keep a box of BEECHAM'S PILLS in the house, so that, on the first sign of any irregularity of the system, a timely dose may be administered, and further trouble and suffering averted. Nine-tenths of the BEECHAM'S PILLS sold are purchased by those who HAVE USED THEM BEFORE and have found them indispensable as.

A FAMILY MEDICINE.

Sold everywhere in Boxes price 1s. 1½d. (56 pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 pills).

"No Better Food."—*Dr. ANDREW WILSON F.R.S.E., &c.*

Fry's PURE CONCENTRATED Cocoa.

"Strongest and Best."—*Health.*

Not a stimulant merely for the moment; but a Permanent and Agreeable Form of Nourishment

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%
repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

Madame Sarah Bernhardt

writes:

"I desire to express to you my entire "admiration for your magnificent Gramo- "phone. Yesterday, while listening to "the Habanera of 'Carmen,' I thought "I was listening, not to the echo of the "voice of Calvé, but Calvé herself—the "marvellous and only Calvé. I am still "affected by it, and I wished to express to "you at once my recognition—and so I do.

"(Signed)

"Sarah Bernhardt."

The above is a literal Translation of the original.

THE GRAMOPHONE AND TYPEWRITER LTD.,

21 City Road, London

And at Berlin, Hanover, Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Brussels, Amsterdam, Milan, Sydney, Calcutta, Barcelona.

SHORT STORIES

THE DAINTY HOME STORY PAPER. TARTAN COVER No. 8.—CLERGY.

No. 736.] Week ending February 7, 1903. [Price One Penny.

TO BE FIRST

Is to occupy an enviable position. Many aspire for first place, but few attain it. To acquire the lead, aspiration and push alone are not sufficient. Merit is required. This is exactly why . . . .

BEECHAM'S PILLS

stand foremost among medicines. They possess real merit, and have proved themselves worthy of a permanent position in the family medicine chest. Trial purchasers become regular users, because they find nothing to equal Beecham's Pills for dispelling

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Indigestion, Sick Headache, Languor,

and other such troubles which arise from a Disordered Stomach. They regulate and tone up the entire system. The genuine worth of BEECHAM'S PILLS has obtained for them the unique position of having the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World.

Sold Everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills) and 2/9 (168 Pills).

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Cutlery

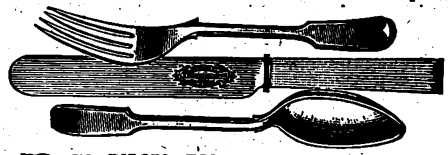
. . . THE . . .

"ENTERPRISE" PARCEL, 25/-

Of Household Cutlery and Plate.

Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white 'Ivorette' Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of "Columbian" Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.



51 PIECES FOR 25 SHILLINGS.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.

TERMS. Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if you are not perfectly satisfied.

No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Cutlery and Plate, etc., Post free.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."*

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Warnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Ros Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

DON'T COUGH *for* KEATING'S LOZENGES EASILY CURE THE WORST COUGH.

One gives relief. An increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1s¼d. tins everywhere.

Don't Suffer from Eczema

"ANTEXEMA" cures the worst cases—You may try it FREE.

Let no one endure any longer the Itching, burning, and smarting of Eczema, or any form of skin trouble, great or small. Send to-day for a free trial sample of "ANTEXEMA," together with copyright treatise on "Skin Troubles," and 200 testimonials from grateful sufferers who have been cured. Sent in plain wrapper, post-paid, by the Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, N.W. "ANTEXEMA" is sold by all Chemists at 1/1½ (post-free from us for 1/3). Refuse injurious substitutes.

ZOX for Neuralgia at Night.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

SPLENDID SERIAL STORY STARTS SHORTLY.

Short Stories.

No. 736.] For the Week Ending February 7th, 1903. [One Penny.

The Chronicles o' Glencrackit.

BY G. VINCENT-HOLYTOWN.

MacPherson the Diplomatist.

"So ye're determined tae gang Sooth, but at the same time ye want me to advise ye tae dae it, like."

In seemingly-abstracted fashion did the canny Andrew MacPherson address this acid remark to his nephew, Norval Menzies, a strapping youngster of twenty-two.

The younger man did not relish the insinuation, and his ruddy complexion flushed a deeper red as he replied:

"Not at all, uncle, you have taken me up wrongly. I have determined to go South and make my way in the world. I asked for no advice as to whether I should go or stay, but simply told you as a matter of respect, that I was going. Would you have me rush off without giving you some warning?"

"Ye w'u'd hardly dae that, I'm thinking," was Andrew MacPherson's ruminative reply, made with impassive face.

Harmless as the words might appear, they cloaked another stab for young Menzies.

"I shall not ask you for a penny," he flared up, "if that's what you mean."

Norval was a poor match for the elder man in any bout of words. Twice already during the interview had he lost his temper through his uncle's apparently careless remarks, which had really been designed for this very purpose. The advantage of course fell to Mr. MacPherson, who looked up in bewildered deprecation of his nephew's outburst.

"Did I say ye w'u'd?" he queried mildly, continuing. "Look here, Norval, ye'll no' need tae ask for siller tae stairt ye in life, for I'll gie ye what's necessary without asking."

"Oh, uncle Andrew, you are too kind, but I couldn't think——"

"Nae mair could your puir mither, ma man. A thochtless, freevolous lass she was, wi' nae mair sense in her heid than tae mairry a man like Menzies."

"He was my father," burst in Norval, with flashing eye.

"There's nae gainsaying that," resumed Mr. MacPherson composedly, "ye're as like him in your folly as could be. He was aye rushin' ram-stam intae a' mainner o' trouble, heedless o' advice, and he w'u'd aye scatter what little siller he had without ony thocht for the morrow."

"And yet everybody liked him!"

"Oh, ay, everybody liked him for that very reason, he lavished his substance amang them. I'm pleased tae think I can dispense wi' that spurious kin' o' popularity. I could lectur' ye for hours on the fuilish, extravagant things your puir faither and mither did when they were alive——"

"Had they no redeeming features, uncle?"

"They had, Norval, though they w'u'dna heed ma advice, they could at least listen tae it without interruption."

Norval felt deservedly rebuked, and allowed his uncle to finish without further comment.

"Aye, ma man, ye'll need siller tae stairt ye in London. Ye can prey upon the Soothron tae your he'rt's content, for he expects ye tae dae it and raither likes it. But ye'll ha'e tae dae it in a frock-coat and a silk hat, and tha'e braw things cost bawbees. Ye understaun' that rig-oot constitutes the naitional garb o' an Englishman, and he tak's it as a personal compliment when ye wear it, for he believes ye've been brocht up tae wear naithing but kilts in Scotland. Moreover, Norval, ye'll ha'e tae drop your pronoonced Scottish accent and speak the English language in a' its purity, the same as mysel'. When I was in London last, a man in a shop there (wha was selling me some guids at the time) assured me that unless I'd tell't him I was Scottish he w'u'd never ha'e guessed it. And noo, Norval, tae conclude, whenever ye're ready tae stairt for London, I'm ready tae stairt ye."

"I don't know how to thank you enough, uncle, I'm sure," began Norval, with glistening eye, but Mr. MacPherson closured him immediately.

"Dinna try then," he broke in huskily, "I promised your puir faither on his death-bed that I'd mak' a man o' ye; and I will. Aye, he was a fine man, was Menzies, I hope ye'll be like him in everything."

Andrew MacPherson's words might occasionally be inconsistent but not so his acts.

* * * * *

Long after young Menzies had left the room, Andrew MacPherson sat still, pondering sadly over his impending loneliness.

A bachelor, he found himself in the full prime of life, absolutely without relatives other than his young nephew. Upon him he lavished in his own curious, dogmatic way, the affection he had bestowed upon his only sister, Mrs. Menzies, and her husband, in their lifetime, unhappily cut short by a deadly epidemic. And now the young man was leaving him, as after all was to be expected, to push his way in the world. Andrew MacPherson had often thought of marrying, but the near departure of Norval decided it, and for Andrew MacPherson to make a decision meant immediate action.

He had always been on terms of the most friendly intimacy with the Misses Leslie, aunt and niece, who lived on the next farm. Possessing a warm liking for them both, he had never yet made up his mind which to admire the more.

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

At one time the younger lady's winning ways and gentle loveliness would attract most of his attention, while at another the sound common-sense and business ability of her aunt, who was not much more than a decade her senior, would extort his deeper admiration.

At this particular phase of his mind, however, the sentimental very naturally prevailed over the practical, and he accordingly determined to approach Marion Leslie with a proposal of marriage in preference to her Aunt Helen.

That very evening he proceeded to put his fortune to the test, by calling on the young lady in question.

Awkwardly enough, he could not, of course, be aware, that his nephew had forestalled him the previous day. Indeed, out of Norval's proposal to and acceptance by Marion Leslie, had arisen his sudden impulse to rush South and fight the world on her behalf. He had not told her of his design, having (with the brilliant suddenness inherited from his father), only thought it up that morning. As we have seen, too, he did not find, or take, an opportunity of explaining to his uncle, the reason of his determination to go South.

Out of this combination of circumstances, therefore, a very delicate situation was bound to be brewing.

"Come in, Mr. MacPherson," was his smiling welcome by the young lady herself, who opened the door to him; "Aunt Helen will be in presently."

"Weel, Marion," commenced Andrew deliberately; "I dinna ken if your Aunt Helen's presence is an absolute necessity, on this occasion, I raither think no'. The fact is, that I've come tae see ye in consequence o' an interview I had wi' Norval Menzies this forenoon."

Marion flushed and toyed uneasily with her crochet-needle.

"Then he has told you!" she said, in a voice that strove not to be tremulous.

"Of coorse he has, wha' else should he tell it tae if no' tae his mither's brither?" inquired Andrew MacPherson in a tone of challenge.

"Indeed, as you say, Mr. MacPherson, to whom else?" rejoined Marion, a little more confidently; "Norval is always straightforward."

"Like his faither afore him, Marion," said MacPherson proudly; "Menzies w'u'd n'ither tell nor act a lee tae save life or siller. Efter his maist fuilish speculations he w'u'd aye come and tell me the ungarnished truth. I aye liked Menzies. . . . Weel, ye can imagine that this means a big cheenge in ma life——"

"But not to take place for a long time yet——"

"Immediately, Marion, accordin' tae the idea he conveyed tae me. He's just like Menzies, his faither, let him tak' a thing intae his heid and it's got tae be done on the spot."

"He is impetuous, I know," murmured Marion; "but such urgency in the matter must have rested entirely on your permission."

"In that connection, Marion, I intimated tae him in the plainest o' words that whenever he's ready tae stairt, I'm ready tae stairt him, and if he's like his faither afore him, he's no' likely tae dally long."

"How good of you, Mr. MacPherson," stammered Marion, blushing profusely.

"Nonsense, I couldna dae less . . Noo, ye w'u'd hardly ha'e suspected, Marion, that a bachelor o' sae mony years standing, like masel', could regaird mairriage as a desirable thing——"

Marion's gaze dropped as he continued: "But the fac' remains, Marion, that I dae, and seeing that Norval's goin' tae leave me so soon, I've decided tae get mairried——" Marion's eyes were lifted to his face with a puzzled expression—"at once, and, as I've already hinted, I've called tae ask ye if ye'll dae me the honour tae become ma——"

"Stop, stop, Mr. MacPherson," broke in Marion in an anguish of shame; "there is some terrible misunderstanding. Norval—that is—I—I am—I am already——"

The poor girl could get no further with her words, nor would Andrew MacPherson permit her to try, stopping her attempt with a peremptory wave of the hand. A keen-witted man at all times he had instantly grasped the real circumstances.

Possessing diplomacy of no mean order, this knowledge enabled him to save the situation, spare her feelings, and retain his own dignity, even at this late stage of the interview.

"There's nae misunderstaunin' ava," he said, with assumed peevishness. "The main fault o' women-folk is that they canna listen tae the feenish o' what a man's got tae say. Ma words were these—and if ye dinna interrupt me I'll try tae mak' an end o' them—I've decided tae get mairried at once, and, as I've already hinted, I've called tae ask ye if ye'll dae me the honour tae become ma—deputy tae your Aunt Helen. I'm a bashful man and I thocht ye w'u'd dae it better than masel'."

Marion, dazed but willing, promptly agreed to the request, and Andrew MacPherson solemnly took his leave, repeating to her at parting—"There's nae misunderstaunin' ava. I'm prepared tae substantiate every word I said."

When Andrew MacPherson got home, the first sound that greeted his ears, was the melodious tenor voice of his nephew in full song:—

Though I leave thee now in sorrow,
Joy may light our loves to-morrow,
Doomed to part, this faithful heart,
One gleam of joy from hope shall borrow.

The singer was at his evening toilet, and, not having heard any one enter, he got a start when his uncle spoke, at the conclusion of his stanza:

"Ye're just like your faither, Norval. Menzies was aye happiest when he had eicht or nine assorted dooms, o' his ain making, hanging o'er his heid. I observe also that ye borrow your gleams o' joy frae the same source as your puir faither did. But wha, may I ask, doomed ye tae pairt, but yoursel'?"

Norval guessed from the quizzical look on his uncle's face that his love-secret was revealed, though how, he could not imagine.

"However do you manage to find things out as you do, Uncle Andrew?" he queried in nervous banter.

"Through the studied language o' diplomacy, ma lad," replied Mr. MacPherson cautiously. "And see here, Norval," he continued meaningly; "raither than leave onybody in sorrow, I think it w'u'd be better for a' concerned if ye w'u'd stay where ye are. If ye conteenue tae manage ma beesiness affairs as ye have done in the past, I can promise ye a salary commensurate wi' an early mairriage. In fac', I've conveyed the impression, tae the richt quarter, that ye're anxious tae be mairried and settled doon as soon as convenient, and that I've raither encooraged the idea——"

Andrew MacPherson broke off the subject, to open a note that was handed in for him, and Norval's outburst of gratitude was wasted on him for the time being, for the letter was of paramount importance:

"Dear Mr. Macpherson," *it ran;* "*Aunt Helen says she cannot recognise any deputy in the matter at issue, although she might favourably consider any reasonable proposal by the principal direct, yours sincerely,* Marion Leslie."

"I'll ha'e tae gang oot again, Norval," he said.

"Is it anything I can do for you, uncle?"

"No, Norval, ma man, this is a personal maitter that canna be done by proxy. I've tried that already withoot success."

Digitized by Google

A Tangled Love Skein.

The Story of a Double Sacrifice.

"So you are sent out to be my successor here, eh?"

This was the greeting accorded to Harry Stenlake as he presented himself to a man who appeared to be anything between twenty-five and fifty—a man with a heavy moustache and beard, a complexion that made one hesitate to say that it was bronzed because there was a certain tinge of whiteness about it, and a young-old sort of look about his face. His frame ought to have had a suggestion of great strength, yet the new-comer, Harry Stenlake, could see that the man was weak.

"Yes, my name is Stenlake, and I am instructed by the firm in the Old Country to take up the duties while you have a rest before taking up a better appointment at home."

Stenlake spoke with a feeling of uneasiness; he had come out to Peru full of hope, but hope seemed to be oozing out of his finger tips. It almost appeared as if, in shaking hands with his predecessor, the hope that had been in him had passed out to James Thornton, and thus their respective sentiments had been altogether reversed.

Thornton eyed him curiously, and then invited him into the small wooden dwelling which he had facetiously called "Liberty Cottage."

It was a relief to get out of the broiling sun, and Stenlake heaved a sigh before partaking of the refreshments offered to him by his host.

They chatted about England for a while, the journey out, and kindred topics, afterwards turning to the question nearest the heart of Stenlake.

"The duties?" repeated Thornton. "Oh, I can't say that they are hard. You have a lot of natives to look after, and there are a fair number of people who are descendants of Spaniards and natives; we call them *mestizos*. There are good and bad among them, but you will get along without trouble if you study them a bit. Mining is the chief occupation, as you are aware, but the employees get various things from the forest trees—fruits, gum, and other articles, as well as several articles from the ground in the forest (miniature mining, I call that). We export a lot, sending it to the agent in Lima to the order of the firm. Well, you superintend all that. There isn't much knowledge of mining required to get the ore, because we have no costly machinery or up-to-date processes."

"So, on the whole, it is a pretty easy job?" queried Stenlake, with the intonation of a man who feels that he is asking a question to which he would like to receive an affirmative reply, but expects a negative.

Thornton gazed at him for nearly a minute without speaking.

"You have taken the job and I suppose you've got enough British pluck in you to stick at it and do your best, so I'll tell you how it stands. If I thought you were the sort of fellow that turned tail and left a man in the lurch, I wouldn't tell you. I'm glad that you've relieved me of my appointment."

Despite himself, a shiver ran through Stenlake's frame. He looked at the other man.

"You're strong, I should say," pursued Thornton slowly, "and you will want a strong constitution to stand these fevers and the climate generally. I was strong, but three years of it have broken me up, I fancy. Why did I come out? Well, why did *you?*"

"I tell you frankly," responded Harry Stenlake. "I didn't seem to get a chance of making headway at home. Luck has been against me for years. I had to relinquish my mining education because my father went smash and died, so I was prevented from taking a good berth and rising in the world. I jogged on from one thing to another, and I fell in love. But I hadn't much to offer, and we agreed to wait till I could get £200 a year. We have waited more than three years, and at last I thought that if I got a place like this, she might come out and marry me, and, later, we could go back and I should get a decent appointment. They are giving me £300 a year for this job, which I suppose is equal to £200 in London."

"I didn't come here to gain the woman I loved, but to get away from her!" laughed Thornton. But the laugh had no mirth in it. "But the difference is, no doubt, that the girl loves you, but the one I mean didn't love me, so it appeared!"

"I don't see how I can bring her here if——" began Stenlake.

"It would mean death to her!" interrupted Thornton decisively. "It is commonly supposed that you don't get yellow fever here, because it's too far inland; but you get a very good imitation, to say the least! Then there are other fevers and little 'ills' that man is heir too! However, perhaps you are better able to endure them than I, and it will lead to something better," he added, suddenly remembering that it was bad policy to scare a man. "It means a little extra waiting, that's all!"

That was Stenlake's introduction to his new sphere. During the next three days he was busy with Thornton, and he felt more buoyant. On the fourth day, Thornton took his departure, and Stenlake set his teeth and determined to do his best.

"It's all for her," he muttered, "and this may be the making of me! Thornton didn't seem much interested in my love affairs, for he never asked her name. Too eager to get away, of course. I wonder if he'll go to the girl who wouldn't have him when he gets home? Likely enough! It is strange what love will make you do!"

Harry Stenlake threw himself with ardour into the work of his new position, encouraged by the thought of Millie Darrell's sweet face and buoyed up by the hope that he would escape the evils to which Thornton had nearly succumbed. Hope, says the poet, springs eternal in the human

Digitized by Google

breast, and Stenlake persuaded himself that there were reasons why he should succeed where his predecessor had failed.

"I am not so strong as he is or was," he would say to himself, "but, then, it is precisely the strong men who fall victims to these complaints of malaria and fever, because they don't take sufficient precautions."

Yellow fever and malaria seemed a long way off, but Stenlake soon learnt that he was not a great distance from the Amazon, and—well, some of the *mestizos* fell ill, and that was ominous.

He made himself master of the situation and soon became a favourite with those under him. There were only three Europeans among them; not exactly the sort of men whom he could accept as associates, and he was glad that they had habitations at a considerable distance from his own.

His household work was performed by a native woman, but at the end of a month she stated her intention of going back to her own village and he was forced to look about for another domestic servant. There was not much to be done, but that little must be done.

He sighed for the presence of Millie. It was not a particularly pleasant spot for her, so far from civilisation, yet he thought that they could be happy in each other's society, and in that alone. It was lonely for him, and he gradually began to have a gleam of understanding as to why some men did not take enough care of themselves. There was the temptation to drink, just to pass the time, and there was no difficulty in getting a strong drink, for the natives brewed it from certain forest products. Then the desire to walk about in order to escape the loneliness, the deadly monotony; he did it himself one night, plunging into the forest, and he returned shivering. He was wise enough to take warning. He had not brought much reading matter with him, and he longed for company.

His second domestic help was rather worse than the first, as a companion with whom to exchange a few words, and, lonely as he felt, he was usually not sorry to see her retire to her own hut.

The workers were better off than he, for they formed a village—rather a scattered one, perhaps, but they lived with their families and had neighbours. He could not associate with them; that would have meant loss of caste.

So four months passed. He had received two letters from Millie, and had just replied cheerily to the second. Yet he was not so cheerful nor so full of hope as he made out. The climate and the circumstances were affecting him.

His second help now left him and he was sorry, for he did not feel well; but he nearly jumped with delight when he saw before him a young native woman of about three-and-twenty and heard her ask, in a mixture of Spanish and a corruption of what had once been the language of the country, if he wanted a servant.

Yes, of course he wanted a servant, he told her. Did she want the situation? She did, and almost before he knew what he had done, and certainly without reflection, he had engaged her.

"Ivara," he called to her that same evening, "I have not seen you here before. Have you been at work on the estate?"

He had picked up the jumble of a lingo very well, and she understood him perfectly. She shook her head, and he fancied that the shadow of a look of disdain crossed her face. A beautiful face it was, and full of subdued dignity.

"Looks like a daughter of the Incas, the ancient Kings of Peru!" he mused, but his musing was interrupted by her reply.

"A woman of my lineage does not herd with such as they!" she replied proudly. "It would be better to die! I have wandered in search of work with those who are my equals, for I have to earn my bread, and it is hard to find suitable employment."

He was interested. He asked questions, and that evening passed more pleasantly than any since he had left England. Ivara claimed descent from the Incas, rightly or wrongly; Stenlake was inclined to say that she was right in that claim. She had told him very little, being reserved and dignified, but it was clear that she was pleased by the interest he displayed.

The time passed quite differently now; he was usually busy during the day, and in the evening he would find his tea-supper ready for him and Ivara ready to listen to the stories he told her of the island in the north of which everybody spoke so much. Sometimes she would unfold a little of the history of her own strange country, as it had come down to her by oral tradition, but she said very little of herself. She had grown up in an out-of-the-way place in the north; and Stenlake wondered whether there was some wealthy hidden city—some new Cuzco—up there.

Another two months passed, and then Harry had his first attack of fever; he had been fortunate to escape so long, if what Thornton had said was correct. On the evening of the day preceding his illness he had written to Millie Darrell, and had incidentally remarked that he did not feel very well, but it was merely a passing indisposition.

However, he had a fairly bad attack, and he came back to everyday work afterwards with a weakened frame and an uneasy mind. He had realised two things, namely, that it was not at all certain that he would be able to complete his three years, and—that Ivara loved him!

The two months of agreeable intercourse had not been without its effect on her, and he was conscious that he had abstained from mentioning Millie's name. During his illness he might have raved of her, but if so, Ivara had not understood or was hiding the knowledge within her own heart.

He had not made love to her, he told himself; he had never faltered in his loyalty to Millie, but he blamed himself for having engaged the services of Ivara, and for having availed himself of her companionship at those times when he did not require her help in the cottage. Yet it had been pleasant to pass the time, the long, dull hours, with someone of refinement and sense.

After the way in which she had attended to him during his attack he could not treat her otherwise than he had previously done; it would have been too bad to dismiss her to her own hut immediately on the conclusion of the meal to pass the time in solitude. That would have looked like ingratitude, and he was not ungrateful! So the old companionship was continued, and he defended his action by specious argument.

Ivara was not like a white woman; although refined—very refined for a native—she was but a native, and they were not capable of the finer feelings of the more cultured whites. What he had fancied to be love on her part was nothing more than the faithful devotion of an inferior; it was not love, for she would not dream for a moment that she could unite herself to one of the superior race.

"I am very glad that I decided not to alter the course of things," he remarked to himself at the close of a particularly pleasant evening. "In my weak condition a few days ago I fancied a lot of nonsense! There's no harm in enjoying a little society of a congenial kind till I can get out of this hole and get back to Millie!"

Harry Stenlake's recovery was very slow; his strength was a long time returning, and, although he went about his ordinary duties, he was conscious of a lack of strength and

Digitized by Google

energy. It was this condition that made him take a perverted view of circumstances.

For nearly six weeks he struggled on, during which time he received a visit from the agent at Lima, who went away with a grave face. Then Stenlake was laid low by another attack of illness, and hovered between life and death for several days. Occasionally he had a lucid interval, and he saw Ivara waiting upon him. He shuddered and shut his eyes, vaguely wishing that the fever would take him, for he recognised only too well the look in her face.

It was love, all absorbing love! And once, only once, he detected an expression of jealousy or hate! He must have raved about Millie!

Then he must have had a relapse, for a long blank ensued. He regained consciousness one evening towards dusk, and his senses seemed to come back fully and all at once. He heard a voice, pitched in rather a high key; it was Ivara's. She was speaking English, which she had picked up by practice with him.

"I love him! He is mine! You no take him 'way! I have watch, tend him! I will not lose him!" Then followed a flow of language in her native tongue, showing that her feelings had so gained the mastery that it was impossible to confine herself to a little-known language—a strange tongue, in order to express them.

The words struck him, cutting him like a knife. She was talking to someone, surely. Had the agent sent someone to replace him so that he might return "unfit for service?"

"You no take him!" It was Ivara again, speaking in a lower tone, but with intense feeling, and again using the language that was strange to her. "You no take h m! No, no, no!"

Why was she speaking English? To the agent, or his messengers, she would speak the mixed language or Spanish. Then another voice fell on his ear, and he gasped, "Millie!"

"I do not understand. Mr. Stenlake is my betrothed husband, and I am to take him to England. It is very kind of you to wait on him, and you have earned our undying gratitude. We can never thank you sufficiently. But you are mistaken, Ivara!"

The words were uttered softly, as one speaks when one is sorry for another. Ivara must have comprehended the meaning of some of what she heard, for she answered:

"We ask him to—what?—*escoger*—ah! select! We go in, when he wake and ask him choose—yes, choose one! Which he loves best. See!"

"Poor Ivara!" mentally said Stenlake.

He saw his error now; the native woman, rather than being less capable of love than her white sister, was in reality more vehement. With the women of a warmer clime the emotions are deeper, less restrained, and she loved him with all the fire of her ardent nature.

Stenlake heard footsteps outside the cottage, and the voices ceased. Then he heard another speaker—a man. It was James Thornton!

"Has he come round yet? He appeared better and he ought to have opened his eyes by now." A pause, during which Stenlake imagined Thornton eyeing the two women. "I'll go in and see!"

He entered, and on seeing Stenlake looking towards him advanced with a smile.

"Ah, there you are, Stenlake! Come back to earth once more, eh? You've had a good bout this time, but you're pulling through. As soon as you get a bit stronger, I'm going to ship you off to the Old Country, so make haste and get well, my boy!"

He sat down by the side of the bed and took Harry's hand.

"What does it all mean?" asked Harry feebly. "Why is Millie here?"

He did not notice a strange look that passed over Thornton's face, nor did the strained tone of the reply attract his attention.

"I brought her, you see! You'll know all about it soon, but don't worry yourself now. You've got to get well quickly and go home. Now, if you feel strong enough I'll bring her in to see you!"

He left the room, and the next moment Millie Darrell appeared in the doorway.

"Millie, darling!" cried Harry ecstatically, holding out his weak arms.

She rushed to his bedside. At the door, watching the reunion, were Ivara and Thornton. The latter turned away, his teeth nearly piercing his lip in his effort to strangle a groan. Ivara watched for two or three seconds longer, then she also turned away with the words, in her own tongue, "He has chosen!"

In the outer room Ivara sank on a stool and wept. Thornton gazed at her curiously, but did not disturb her. When she looked up, he addressed her.

"It is not difficult to guess your secret, Ivara," he said tenderly, speaking in the dialect of the district. "I, too, have loved and lost! Let me tell you what she is doubtless telling him! When I went back to England, which was some time after I had left here, I determined to seek the girl who had told me that she loved another better than me. I found her. She still loved him. I learnt that he was the very man who had taken my place here! I felt that it was death to him if he stayed, and she had learnt from the firm that he had been ill.

"That was my chance. He might have died here, my rival! But I loved her, and gave up the chance. I undertook to return here, to relieve him, on condition that my appointment there was given to him. I have some money, and I brought her here to take him away. They can go back and be happy, while I—stop here!" There was a terrible significance in those last words. "Ivara, the women of your race have pluck. Show it!"

Ivara bowed.

"Let them go and be happy!" she said; "for his sake! I will stay and serve you, if you will have me."

"Good!" rejoined Thornton briefly. "Each of us has loved and lost. We can be companions in misfortune, thankful that we have helped to make the loved ones happy!"

George Day.

Housekeeper: "I ordered a dozen oranges to-day, Mr. Titefyst, and you only sent me eleven. How was that?" Grocer: "Well, ma'am, one of them was bad, and I didn't think you'd want it."

"I don't want mother to marry again," said a boy one day at breakfast. "Why not?" was asked, with some surprise. "Because," said he, "I've had one father, and I don't want the trouble of getting to know another."

£5 a Week for Life!

This is the

HUGE PRIZE OFFERED BY

Pearson's Weekly.

For particulars, see page 179.

Digitized by Google

. . A Chip of . . the Old Block.

A Chapter of the Life Story that . . is Always New. . . .

"Then I just won't!—and there's an end of it!"

"And that's your last word, Marcie?"

"I've said so, haven't I?—what more do you want?"

"I hardly know, dear, since you put it in that way; because—well—because your having said your last word makes it useless for me to tell you what it is that I not only really want, but am hungering and thirsting for!"

"And that's something which I've been trying my hardest this half hour past to tell *you*. Tim Moffat, you can't, and never can have—so there!"

"All right, my gal!" he answered her. "I suppose you knows your own mind. Anyways, I shan't trouble you again. I wishes you well, Marcie—and a coronet, if you can manage to get one."

"Well, there's more unlikely things in the world than that. I'm as good as a play-actress—ain't I? If one of them brazen hussies can gammon a lord into weddin' of her; what's to prevent me, I should like to know, from doing the same, if I gets the chance?"

"Nothin', Marcie, nothin'! You're pretty enough, if that's anything."

"You don't say so! Compliments is passing. But it ain't no good. Tim Moffat, you won't catch me with a bit o' sugar! House o' Lords, or coster's barrer, take it from me, my lad, as I'm for your betters, so you'd best make up your mind to it, and own up to a tumble."

"Oh, I own's you've chucked me; if that's what you mean. I don't blame you. I only wants to know one thing; tell me that and I'll keep out of your shadder for the rest of my natural."

"What is it?"

"Is Jack the Dandy at the bottom of it?"

"At the bottom of what?"

"Of my tumble."

"What if he is?"

"Oh, nothin', only I'd just like to know, that's all."

"Then you won't—leastways, not from me!"

"*I* see—it is him!"

"I didn't say so."

"Well, you as good as; and that's enough for me."

"Now look here, Tim Moffat—it may be enough for you, but it's too much for me. You're a low, sneakin' coward!—that's what *you* are! If Jack the Dandy likes a walk with me, what's it got to do with you? You're too much like your father to suit me. *He's* afraid to say 'bo! to a goose,' and *you*—why, you'd faint to look an egg in the face."

The tall, sturdy young fellow whom the little spitfire was scorching to the full extent of her tongue, winced, big as he was, at the insult.

They were standing on the fringe of a holiday crowd on Hampstead Heath. For the past two years Tim Moffat, limelight man at a well known East End theatre, had been the sport of pretty little Marcie Doyle. There was no "playing at love" in his sweethearting. It would have been better, perhaps, had he smiled more and sighed less. Marcie was the very essence of brightness, and of a laughter-loving *abandon*, and the seriousness of her lover's wooing irritated her, when it did not incline her to ridicule, and even to downright rudeness.

Truth to say, she liked him—liked him, indeed, too well for her peace of mind; but with the unreasonable perverseness of her nature, she flouted him because—she liked him.

Tim Moffat, as straightforward and honest-hearted a man as could be found between Aldgate and Mile End, worshipped the very ground the girl trod, but, like many another before and since, he was blind to his own danger.

His upbringing had been exceptionally peculiar.

His father was one of those rare natures, which, if we read of them in books, we are inclined to set down as exaggerated and unreal.

Old Harry Moffat had married a woman, who, from her very wedding-day, had been a perpetual thorn in her husband's side. Times out of number had he suffered from her frenzied temper and always with a tender endeavour to hide from friends and neighbours her failings and his own sorrow.

Twice, in her murderous rage, had she attempted his life, and no one, save his own son, knew of the truly heroic forbearance with which he had dealt with her. Now, she was dead, and so well had the secret been kept by the man whose life she had spoilt and embittered, that no breath of suspicion attached to her memory, which, in the little world in which she had lived, was as green as that of the best amongst them.

Tim Moffat was his father over again—patient, uncomplaining, and yet a manly man. Even as the elder possessed the medal of the Royal Humane Society, in recognition of more than a score of lives saved from drowning, so did the younger wear upon his breast the Albert medal, bestowed by his Sovereign's own hand, for heroism in the teeth of the fiercest fire that ever devastated the crowded east of London city.

Deep down in her heart Marcie Doyle gloried in the praise of her lover on the lips of his fellow men, and, perhaps, but for the influence of Jack Hilton, otherwise Jack the Dandy, she would have yielded to her better feelings, and cast coquetting and its kindred ways to the four winds.

This Hilton was the leading-man at the theatre at which Tim Moffat was employed. A single man, he, as is not unusual with men of his position, was a universal lover.

By that is meant that, adored by the fair sex generally, of the East End, he had at last come to believe himself to be absolutely resistless, so far as women were concerned.

Marcie Doyle was only a "hand" in a big East End firm of sweating tailors; but when the well-dressed and fascinating actor deigned to smile upon the girl, who, waiting outside the stage-door for Tim, betrayed a pleased self-consciousness of the implied compliment, he simply saw an exceptionally pretty young woman, attired, for that part of the world, with really remarkable taste and simplicity.

"Marcie," Tim had said to her as he joined her that night just in time to see Mr. Jack Hilton's effusive salutation, "don't take any notice of that man's notice of *you!* He's nothin' to you—he can't be nothin' to you! More nor that—it'll be the worst day's work you'll ever do for yourself, and—and for me, if you ever looks at him!"

"Tim!" she answered him with what he thought was a strangely forced laugh, "you'll never learn sense! I can take care of myself. When I want any advice, I'll ask you for it. Till I do, you can keep it!"

Jack the Dandy was one of those cunningly keen people who make a rule of curious observation. He soon found out that Tim Moffat had more than a passing interest in Marcie Doyle. It pleased him, too, to know this, and to exercise his craft in, as he phrased it, "cutting out his humbler rival."

Now Tim was nothing if not a faithful servant, and would have cut off his right hand rather than betray his employer's trust.

Digitized by Google

A time came when this sense of duty was tried to the uttermost, when every fibre in both body and soul strained and tingled till Nature almost gave up the struggle in despair.

It was one day in a particularly hot August. Tim had planned to take his sweetheart to Epping Forest. For her, it only meant the loss of a day's pay; for him, he would not only have gladly taken her loss upon himself, but would even have lavished his all upon her, would it but have made her happier.

But a call in the morning at her home, altered the aspect of things.

"Marcie," said her mother to Tim's inquiry, "she's gone out for the day to Southend."

"Do you know who she's gone with?" he asked.

"I thought as she was goin' with you!" was Mrs. Doyle's reply.

"Well, you can see as that isn't so," was all poor Tim could say.

"Yes, an' I don't like it, Tim, I'm sure she's been carrying on secret with somebody lately. She don't talk about you like she used to; an' what I *don't* like, she's been getting a lot of fal-lals and finery, which she can't afford, and which I know I can't."

This seemed to strike the key-note in Tim's mind.

But he didn't betray his thoughts to Marcie's mother. Ever the "chip of the old block" he would hide rather than blazon forth.

"Mrs. Doyle," he said, "she must have gone with some of her shop mates. You know what young girls are in these days. Of course, I'm disappointed at not being able to take her with me to Epping to-day, but there's more days behind the wood, and—and I'll meet the Southend boat—the *London Belle*—to-night when she comes in. There's nothin' for me to do till near ten o'clock; nothin', I mean, but what my man can do; and I'll slip away to London Bridge for an hour."

His talk with himself, however, as he rapidly made his way back to the theatre, was not nearly so sanguine in tone.

"No rehearsal to-day!—and Hilton not 'called' till nearly ten to-night! He's taken her; I'll swear it!—he's taken her! Well, if she cares for him better than she does for me, he shall marry her! He shan't make her believe that he's a little god, and then whistle her off his fingers! If she wants him, she shall have him; and I wish her well of her bargain!"

It was a semi-supernatural piece in which Hilton was playing that night, and in which he gained his main effect, as a modern sort of Mephistopheles, by a cunning disposition of lime and electric lights. Everything depended upon these being at the right moment in thorough working order.

Tim's first concern then when he reached the theatre, after leaving Mrs. Doyle's, was to busy himself with getting all the apparatus ready for the performance at night. The occupation soothed his nerves, and kept him from brooding too much upon his trouble with regard to Marcie. But when he had done all that could be done, and, everybody gone, he had the stage and its surroundings to himself, he could not shake off the feeling of boding depression which possessed him.

"I could ruin him," he speciously argued with himself, "if I let the lights go wrong. They'd guy him, and make no end of a row, if the devil—and he is a devil—didn't have his due! But that would be playing a bit low down, and wouldn't help Marcie or do me any good. No, if he is to be 'downed,' it shan't be by me."

He kept to his resolution to meet the Southend boat at Hermitage Wharf at nine o'clock, making arrangements with the stage-manager for a couple of hours' absence for that purpose.

"If the boat's late," he said reflectively, as he stepped on to the wharf, "and he can't 'go on' to-night, *that* wouldn't be my fault; and it'll teach him a lesson."

But for once the *London Belle* was up to time, and five minutes after nine had struck, her lights were seen slowly shooting the Tower Bridge.

It is the unexpected that nearly always happens, and though Tim almost instinctively *knew* what he should see, he was altogether unprepared for the coming "situation."

It took some time to get the big steamer warped alongside—time occupied by Tim in scanning the passengers in the half gloom for confirmation of his fears. But he could distinguish neither Marcie nor her escort.

Then the gangways were shipped and a stream of people crowded shorewards.

Quite at the end of the procession, Tim saw that which he had come to see.

As Marcie's foot touched the wharf, Hilton, who was immediately behind her, arranged a cloak over her shoulders.

It was at that moment that she caught sight of Tim, looking at her with a sad reproachfulness, which, frivolous as she was, cut her to the quick.

Hilton knew the limelight man, of course, and was at no loss to understand why he was there at that particular moment.

A gay, off-hand spirit of bravado was an important part of his personal stock-in-trade, and he drew upon it now, as being the best thing possible under the somewhat awkward circumstances.

"Ah, Moffat!—come down to look after me, eh? Very kind of you, seeing that you couldn't have known I was to be here."

Tim absolutely ignored both sneer and speaker. It was to Marcie that he spoke.

"I'll put you into a cab, and take you home," he said, "your mother's anxious about you."

Not a word as to his own disappointment.

Before the girl could reply, Hilton addressed himself to Tim.

"You see her home!" Tim blazed out. "What right have you to see her home?"

Digitized by Google

"Look here, my man!" he said; "we don't recognise your right to interfere in any way with this young lady's affairs."

"No!" Tim hotly answered, "but I tell you, Mr.——"

"Don't trouble yourself to tell me anything," interrupted the other airily; "come along, my dear"—to Marcie—"I'll see you home first, and then I must get to the theatre as quickly as I can."

"You see her home!" Tim blazed out; "what right have you to see her home?"

"Tell him, my dear," said the actor, with a curious smile to Marcie.

"Tim!" she said, almost under her breath, "I'm never going to *that* home any more."

"Never——"

"No; Jack and I were married at Southend to-day, and I'm going now to his—to my home."

* * * * *

Contrary to Tim's expectation, things went on well for a time with the newly-married couple; until he almost came to believe that in the end things would settle down for Marcie in a happy and satisfactory way.

But in about six months' time rumours reached Tim's ears of something wrong.

It was said that Hilton was not only unkind to his wife, but was downright cruel.

She had been seen with an ugly cut above her eyebrow, while her white face and sadly subdued manner were reasonably convincing proof that poor Marcie was passing through a peculiarly painful experience.

This was the signal for Tim to be up and doing. He had, in quiet, undemonstrative fashion, like some faithful watch-dog, held himself in readiness for the moment when it might be that he should be wanted.

Fortunately for Marcie, the trouble was, in a way, short-lived.

Hilton had of late given way to drink to an extent that not only was a continual source of danger to his wife, but which threatened even his means of livelihood.

For some time the manager of the theatre had seen how things were going with his leading-man, and more than once strongly remonstrated with him.

"Don't presume," he said on one notable occasion, when Hilton could scarcely get through his duties; "don't presume too much upon your popularity with our audiences. A repetition of what has taken place to-night, will, I warn you, result in a cancelling of your engagement. I'm disposed to give you every chance; it rests with yourself to do or not to do. How's your wife? I hear she's been ill."

"What's that to you or to anybody! My wife's my business."

"Of course she is, but you needn't take a kind inquiry in that way, man!"

The other made no reply, but turning shortly on his heel, walked out of the theatre.

A week afterwards came the end.

Crossing the stage one night to get to his dressing-room, he was met by the stage-manager, who at once challenged him with being in an altogether unfit state to do his work.

"Leave the house!—your understudy will play the part to-night—and from this moment your engagement here is cancelled. I will write you to-morrow to that effect."

Hilton raged and stormed, but to no purpose, the manager in the end having to summon assistance to eject the drunkenly infuriated man.

There is not much more to tell, but that little is the keynote of this brief episode in three lives.

From the hour that he left the stage on that night, Jack the Dandy never played again. With every succeeding month he, and, as a consequence, his wife with him, for she would not, in spite of everything, leave him, sank lower and lower in the social scale.

Then it was that Tim—Tim the true-hearted, the unselfish,—devoted himself to keeping these two from the extremity of need.

"For her sake! For her sake!" was his watchword, and Hilton, debased as he was, knew that his own miserable existence depended upon his own good behaviour.

Gratitude to the man who kept life in him he had not, knew not the meaning of it; it was simply a matter of policy with him.

Then, one day, as Tim was on his way to the Hilton's lodging, he saw, while crossing Mile End Road, a drunken man knocked down and run over by a passing brewer's dray.

It was Jack the Dandy.

He could not have lived a minute after it happened, while Tim thought as he accompanied the body to the local mortuary that, even in his death, Jack Hilton was pursued by the thing that had been his curse.

* * * * *

Twelve months afterwards, on a lovely day in early spring, two people, a man and a woman, wandered quietly, and almost silently along the fresh green glades of Epping Forest.

Up towards High Beech they went until the crown of the hill reached, the man turned towards the woman, and asked her a question.

"Must I wait much longer, Marcie?" he said.

Then she caught his hand in hers.

"Tim," she answered him, "you still wish it! After all that's gone by?"

"Yes, dear!" was his reply. "I have nothing else to wish for."

"It isn't for me, Tim, to keep you from having your wish. You needn't wait any longer."

And the rest will be lived—not told.

John Cowley.

FETTERED LIVES, that thrilling romance of the stage, is to be seen on the stage. On February 9th, under the title of SHADOWED LIVES, Mr. Farmer's splendid romance, so long the fascination of *Pearson's Weekly* readers, is to be produced at the Kennington Theatre, London. A very good cast has been arranged, including many well-known players, and I shall be very much surprised if the drama does not prove a record success in London and the provinces, where the story excited such universal interest.

A Gramophone for a Sentence.

It is not everyone who can afford to buy a piano, or even a musical instrument of any sort, and to such persons a Gramophone—which is another name for a talking and singing machine—would be a much-prized gift.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by making a sentence, the words of which begin with the letters C, L, E, R, G, Y, T, A, R, T, A, N, in the order given.

A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers whose sentences the Editor considers best.

Post-cards only must be used, and they should be addressed to the TARTAN EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, February 10th.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Digitized by Google

The Story of a Story.

Telling of a Loss and Two Gains.

"I am sorry, Miss—er—er" (the editor glanced at the card on his desk) "Miss Ellison, but the story is useless to me. It is not the kind of thing we ever use for *The Knapsack*. Perhaps you may be more fortunate elsewhere——"

The girl did not speak; her disappointment was so intense that if she had spoken she would have sobbed. There was silence in the room for a moment during which the sleek-looking young man at the desk carefully examined his well-kept finger nails, then she collected herself. "I am sorry too," she said simply; "I hoped it might do for you. I am very much obliged to you for seeing me about it."

The man gave a sigh of relief. The look of disappointment on the girl's face and the catch in her breath during that moment of silence had not been lost on him. He had feared a scene and was beginning to revile the good nature that had induced him to see her himself instead of relegating her to the mercies of his sub-editor, a brisk young man with a wonderful knack of disposing of even the most persistent visitors. To have a pretty girl weeping in one's editorial sanctum was not a desirable thing, and Ralph Hendrie suffered an agony of apprehension in those few seconds.

"The title is good," he added, partly because he really thought so and partly because he felt that her self-possession merited some slight reward, "very good, I may say, a most original one."

The girl gathered together her threads of courage. "Do you think," she said, (hoping that her agitation did not show itself in her voice, for how could this urbane young man know how badly she wanted money and how much depended on the story being accepted?) "would you advise me—do you think, I mean, that if I altered the story a little you might perhaps be able to take it then?"

"I am afraid not," said the man, "you see it is not the style of thing we want, not light enough, not cheerful enough, not—well, it would have to be completely rewritten and even then it might not do, you see?"

This was final. Barbara Ellison bowed her head. "Thank you," she said, "I am very much obliged to you. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," said the editor as he held the door open for her to pass out. "If you care to submit anything else I shall be pleased to consider it."

Once safely out of the room and in the crowded Strand where no one noticed her, Barbara let the tears which were smarting in her eyes, overflow. She looked at the long envelope in her hand and a feeling of impotent fury against it, herself, the editor, the whole world, seized her. Why should it be refused? Why should other people get their stories published and why were hers always returned? "I don't believe they even get read," she told herself bitterly; "they see they are by an unknown writer and don't bother about them." Then the gust of fury passed away as she remembered that Mr. Hendrie had at least said that the title was good. It was at any rate original. She remembered how she had found it. Years ago, when she was looking as she often did at the books on a second-hand bookstall, she had happened upon a collection of old rhymes, and one of them had stuck in her memory. She had forgotten the name of the author and the title of the rhyme, but,

Treat the woman tenderly, tenderly,
Out of a broken rib God made
her slenderly, slenderly.

had remained with her, and when she and Mollie found themselves parentless and almost penniless, when she had to do something to earn money and the writing fever had seized her, she had taken "Out of a Broken Rib" for the title of the story on which she had lavished infinite time and pains and perseverance, out of which she had hoped to make at least enough to pay the long-owing rent.

Again she looked resentfully at the envelope; was all her trouble worth nothing? Mollie, her sister, worked in a typewriting office and Barbara would gladly have done the same or anything else to increase their slender income, but she was so delicate that she was unable to undertake any regular work. She had tried many ways of making money at home; she had attempted needlework, but it was so poorly paid that it was not worth risking the loss of her eyesight for it; she had tried painting but there was no demand for her wares, and finally she had tried writing.

In the far away easy days when she and Mollie had had nothing to do but enjoy life, without a suspicion of the reverses Fate held in her hand for them, she had often written essays and stories for private magazines, and she believed that she could write if she could only find the right people to take her work. At present Mollie had only regular work for two days a week, the rent for six weeks was owing, winter, when expenses were always greater was approaching. What could she do?

She shivered and suddenly realised that she was still standing outside the *Knapsack* offices, that it was raining and getting dark. Mollie would be furious with her for going out on such a day. She was cold and tired. That editor had said perhaps some other paper would take her story, but it was too late now to try to-day, the clocks were chiming six. She put the manuscript into her pocket and hurried home.

"Oh, Barbara, darling, how could you go out on such a hateful afternoon?" was Mollie's reproachful greeting. "Your cold will be worse, I am sure. Why did you go? Where have you been? Take off your wet things quickly and I will make some tea. Here, let me take off your boots, see, they are soaking."

Barbara sat passive beneath her sister's reproaches and attentions. She was so tired, so thoroughly exhausted that for the moment nothing mattered but rest and warmth. But when she had had some tea and was rested, she told Mollie where she had been.

"I sent my story to the *Knapsack* six weeks ago. You know how badly we want money. I thought I would go and see the editor and ask him about it, but he said it was no good to him, not the kind of thing they ever wanted."

"The idiot!" said Mollie scornfully. "I am sure it is ten times cleverer than the silly stories he accepts and publishes. Did he say anything else?"

"He said—he was quite nice about it—that it was useless to him but that perhaps some other paper might take it, only I was so tired and it was too late to try anywhere else to-day. He said it was a very good title, Mollie," she added with an inflection of pride in her voice.

"There was no need for him to tell you *that*; we know it's a good title," said Molly stoutly, "it's a good story too, it's really a case of casting pearls before swine."

Barbara smiled faintly.

"Be just, Mollie, dear," she said, "the editor of the *Knapsack* must know better than we can what sort of stories he needs. Because you and I are prejudiced in its favour it does not follow that it is really good, although in my heart I can't help thinking it *is* a good story and perhaps someone else may think so too. Let us look at it again and see where we can send it to-morrow. Will you get it please, Mollie? It is in my coat pocket."

Digitized by Google

Mollie went into the next room. She was gone for so long that Barbara called to her. "It is in the right pocket, in a plain envelope." Mollie came back with empty hands and a troubled look on her face. "I can't find it," she said.

"Can't find it? Why, I know I put it into my pocket. Let me look."

But Barbara's looking proved as futile as had Mollie's. The story was not there. Where, or how, it had fallen out of the pocket it was impossible to say. After the first feeling of loss Barbara was quite philosophical.

"I don't think it really matters," she said. "I don't suppose I should have had better luck with it than I have had. Mr. Hendrie did not know when he said that perhaps it might do for someone else, that I have already sent it to so many papers, that it tires me to think of them. No, Fate meant that story to be worthless, and Fate has once and for all put an end to any hopes of ours that it might be otherwise."

"Very likely you will get it back," suggested Mollie. "It had your name and address on, so any honest person would bring it here."

"Only my name was on it, and what does 'Barbara Ellison' convey to anyone? I wrote a letter with it, of course, but I tore that up as soon as I got out of the office, and there was nothing on the envelope. No, we shall never see 'Out of a Broken Rib' again. It is no good. You know how hard I have tried, Mollie."

Mollie was more cheerful. "Well, if it is lost it is, I suppose," she remarked, "but you might try to write another story with the same title. Anyhow, it's no good to bother any more about it to-night. Let's go to bed. Something may turn up. Some long-lost uncle of whom we never heard may die in New Zealand and leave us a fortune."

The next day, however, there was no question of Barbara being able to write or do anything else. She had caught a severe chill, which finally developed into pneumonia.

It would be impossible to describe all that Mollie suffered during her sister's illness. Fortunately their landlady was a kind-hearted woman, who said nothing about the long owing rent and looked after the invalid with a certain amount of tenderness and skill. But things were very black for the two girls, and in spite of all Mollie's efforts the cloud of debt around them grew thicker and thicker. At last a day came when the worst of the illness was over, when the doctor said Barbara had nothing to do but get strong again.

She was lying on the sofa one dreary December afternoon, longing for Mollie's return, and wondering whether their particular cloud had any lining except of the blackest hue, when Mollie suddenly dashed into the room, her face wreathed with smiles, her eyes dancing with excitement.

"A most wonderful thing has happened, Barbara," she gasped, breathless with hurry and eagerness. "You could never guess, so I will tell you. Look here! Look! See! Do you know why I bought the *Monthly Library*, though it cost one shilling, and we have only five shillings in all the world?" And she flourished the purple covers of the well-known magazine in her sister's face.

"I don't know, Mollie. Tell me."

"Why, your story is in it! Your story, 'Out of a Broken Rib,' you know your story you lost before you were ill. Here it is, published, printed, with your name to it, and a note by the editor asking for your address. Why, your fortune is made, Barbara! Fancy having a story in the *Monthly Library!* You see, I was right when I said that *Knapsack* man was an idiot!"

She was incoherent with excitement. As for Barbara she could hardly believe her eyes when she saw on the first page of the magazine in which the best-known writers of the day were proud to find their work, her story and her name. Above it were a few lines: "The editor will be greatly obliged if Barbara Ellison will communicate with him at once."

"I must go," she said. "I must go and see him. I am better now, and I must go first thing to-morrow. But tell me Mollie, how did you find out my story was in this?" And she fingered the magazine lovingly.

"Why, it was all luck or chance, or whatever you like to call it," answered Mollie, who was dancing round the room to let off her excitement. "I was having my lunch at that A.B.C. shop near the Adelphi, you know, and two gentlemen were sitting at the same table, and one of them said 'Have you seen that clever story in this month's *Library?* It's called "Out of a Broken Rib."' Of course I pricked up my ears and then he said, 'I wonder who Barbara Ellison is, never heard of her before, but she knows how to write, if she is a woman, that's to say.' Just fancy, Barbara, thinking you might be a man! And then they went on talking more about it, but I was so excited I just gobbled my lunch and went and bought a copy. Oh, Barbara, how lovely it is! I wonder how much they will pay you for it?"

The next day Barbara, still pale and weak, was taken to the offices of the *Monthly Library* by Mollie, who waited for her downstairs while she was shown with great deference into the editor's room, and there explanations were given.

"I must apologise, Miss Ellison," said the editor, "for publishing the story without your permission. I can only hope you will forgive me when I explain matters to you. I picked it up in the Strand one evening some weeks ago, and there was no address on it and no clue but the name. Perhaps I was wrong not to have made more searching inquiries. I did advertise the finding of it in one or two newspapers, but I suppose you did not happen to see them. It was exactly the story I wanted for my Christmas number, and had vainly tried to find. So I published it and trusted to chance that you would know I had done so. I hope you will forgive me. I have a cheque, at our usual rate of payment, ready for you now."

He handed her a piece of paper, and Barbara saw through a mist that it was for £10. Never in her most hopeful moments had she expected such payment. She saw the rent paid, their most pressing debts disposed of.

"Oh," she said faintly, "I can't tell you—I can't thank you." She tried to pull herself together, but she was still weak from illness, and where perhaps pride and disappointment might have supported her, gratitude and relief broke down her self-control. The editor was looking at her curiously, and there was something in his face, something in the compassionate expression of his eyes that encouraged her.

Almost before she knew that she was doing so, she was pouring out to him the story of her troubles. She told all, their poverty, her attempts at writing, her rebuffs and disappointments, her visit to the *Knapsack*, her losing of the story, her illness, and the editor's eyes were not quite so clear as usual when she had finished. He spoke to her words of kindly encouragement, and appreciation, and expressed the hope that he might have the refusal of anything else she wrote. And then an event unprecedented in the history of the office, he took her downstairs himself.

"Bless me, what's up?" remarked one of the errand boys, "here's the boss bringing a lady downstairs. Well, I never. She's not up to much neither, not my style, too pale and puky-looking."

"You shut up," remarked one of his *confrères*, possessed of keener perceptions, "she must be up to a good deal or the boss wouldn't bother about her."

Once safely in the cab, which Mollie insisted on having, Barbara's feelings completely overcame her. "Oh, Mollie," she cried, "he was so kind and delightful to me, and he wants me to let him have the refusal of everything I write, and see what he has paid me for my story! I never imagined anything so wonderful could happen." And she leant back with a sigh of content, for truly troubles and poverty seemed to be turning away and prosperity and joy were coming out of their hiding-places.

The editor of the *Monthly Library* finds his most valued contributor and his greatest helper in his wife, and she and the "Barbara Ellison" whose name is famous in the literary world, and whose first short story appeared in his magazine, are one and the same person.

Claudia Ashton.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF. A celebrated Russian beauty.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

I Make a Compact with Belinda.

You must not imagine that Vera created a scene; we don't do such things in our set except with our intimates. Only the little *coterie* immediately surrounding the Princess realised anything much was amiss. The rest merely concluded that she felt faint, or had chosen an effective method of showing off her latest victim. David looked quite interesting and behaved wonderfully well. He just picked her up and carried her out of the room as if she were a little girl instead of a splendidly developed woman.

I left him to restore her, and turned my attention to Belinda and the Duke. The former showed no signs of disquietude, but waltzed as gaily and as gracefully as though nothing had occurred out of the ordinary.

Eastacres greeted me with an inscrutable smile.

"Well," said I abruptly, "and what is the meaning of all this? Is Zouloff really dead, or——"

He stopped me with a gesture.

"He was shot through the heart this afternoon in a duel. No, it was not to do with the Princess. A gaming dispute. The Prince held either too many aces or too few—I forget which; in any case his adversary took exception, and as a result"—Eastacres shrugged his shoulders. "I think the Princess makes a charming widow," he said smiling. "And, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Carr is of the same opinion."

"Why did you bring the news?" I asked abruptly.

"I met Litoff of the Russian Embassy—he told me. He added that the Princess would receive an official communication of the fact to-night; but it was not possible to let the poor lady remain in ignorance of her husband's death. It was not in good taste to let her dance in the shadow of so great a grief! Therefore I told her"—he looked at me and smiled in such a malignant, I had said diabolical, fashion, that I felt quite uncomfortable.

"You are most considerate, Duke," I said gravely. "If it is not indiscreet to ask, was it only Vera's feelings you were consulting?"

"The Princess," he said quietly, "and my own."

"You admire Vera?" I hazarded.

"I admire all beautiful women," he answered, "but I desire to marry only one—Belinda."

"And you brought this information to the Princess——"

"In order that she might give some proof of her regard for the man whom you so thoughtfully fetched over from Petersburg—David Carr. It was wonderfully clever of you, Lady Peggy. I always admire talent even if I am not in a position to appreciate it. To bring Belinda's lover under the influence of another woman was a master stroke of policy. A master stroke of which I am going to avail myself." As he spoke he moved towards Belinda and Lord Farringdon.

"Eastacres," I said sharply, "what are you going to do? Be reasonable, I beg of you, and do not run the risk of a rebuff. Belinda will refuse to speak to or acknowledge you."

"I don't intend to give her the opportunity—at present," he said calmly. "I am going to have a little conversation with Farringdon, that is all. He was my fag at Eton, you know, and——"

I cut short his explanation, and linking my arm in his, impelled him towards the door.

"It's no use, my dear Duke," I said smiling, but holding him tightly all the same. "I am famished. You simply must take me to the supper room. I won't let you speak to anyone till you've looked after me."

I made this observation in a voice somewhat above the usual society monotones. It was impossible to refuse such an audible request, and against his will Eastacres had to yield.

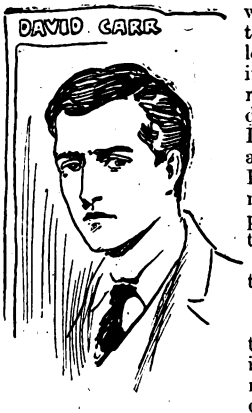
"Now," said I, when under my guidance he had piloted me safely to the morning-room, "for the second time I ask you what does all this mean? That you had some motive in coming here other than consideration for the Princess, is perfectly plain, and the question is are you going to explain that motive, or am I to find it out?"

He shrugged his shoulders and sneered in a fashion that roused my indignation.

"I ask you once again, Eastacres," I said firmly, "if you still decline to answer, you will only have yourself to thank for what ensues."

"Oh, have your own way," he said irritably. "I will tell you; but mind this"—and he put his face uncomfortably close to mine—"protest as you will, I shall follow out my plan. I came here to-night because I knew Vera and David Carr would be together. I waited to give my little piece of information about Zouloff until the moment when Belinda

Digitized by Google



was near to the Princess, so near that she could see the look in her lover's eyes as he caught her rival in his arms, so near that she could realise how utterly that rival had displaced her. Belinda knows, as I know, that Carr loves the Princess, and she"—he smiled—"she is a Russian," he added slowly, "and more than a little mad. It is quite possible that she will be mad enough to make this engineer her husband."

"Well," I said eagerly, "what then?"

He turned upon me swiftly.

"Then," he said, "I come upon the scene and catch Belinda's heart in the rebound. Oh, I am not mistaken, my dear lady, nor deceived. I know well how you have kept your compact with me, how in my absence you have adroitly edged Farringdon into the part we had agreed that I alone should fill. But she shall not marry Farringdon; I will prevent that. He is in love with her, that is true, and a man so young as he will do much for love. But there is one thing that, in spite of all your cleverness, you have overlooked—his pride. Touch him there, and not even love will move him. A word from me, a hint that Belinda made and kept a midnight *rendezvous* with me in Paris, and not all her beauty, or her wealth will make him offer her his name."

"You tell him at your own peril," I said excitedly. "Stanley——"

"Bah," he said, snapping his fingers, "what can *he* do? Farringdon is not likely to mention what I tell him, and otherwise no one will know. No, my dear Peggy, neither you nor Stanley can take a hand in this game. The only rival I had cause to fear with Belinda, was the engineer. Thanks to your cleverness, your all too astute diplomacy, that rival is removed. He will no longer trouble me. Farringdon I shall deal with this evening. And then for Belinda and her millions!"

The man's vanity was colossal. Deep in his heart, despite her rebuffs, insults, defiance, and dislike, was the conviction that Belinda would even yet accept him. If, as he threatened, he spoke to Farringdon, I knew enough of the young lord to feel convinced he would at once give up all notion of making Belinda his wife. As Eastacres said, Farringdon's pride was very great, so great that it became an objection. I must act quickly and decisively; even now he might be proposing to the girl, and she, smarting under David's desertion, would be inclined to listen favourably. At all costs the Duke must be kept from interference—but how?

An inspiration came to me at that very moment.

I went quite close to Eastacres and laid my hand on his arm.

"We had better understand each other," I said calmly. "You threaten to warn Farringdon against Belinda—that in fact is the card by which you hope to win the trick. Play it if you like, but I shall play a better one. Speak to Farringdon, and on the instant I wire to Alphonse Hervé. He is already on the road to recovery—quite well enough, at all events, to take the chance that I shall give him."

"My dear Peggy, you are not clever to-night. How will the presence of Alphonse affect Belinda?"

I laughed contemptuously. "It is you, not I, that are dense, my dear Duke. Do you not understand that it is Alphonse not David that Vera loves? Once let her see the Frenchman, and she will fling David to the winds! Love is so much stronger than jealousy. She is jealous of Belinda, but Alphonse—she loves!"

"And then," he said, "then——"

"David will return to Belinda, and she——" I paused, amused at his look of consternation.

"Are you fooling me?" he said roughly. "Does the Princess really care for that artist fellow?"

"Where were your eyes—your ears these last five years?" I answered. "I speak the truth, Vera is playing with David out of spite to Belinda. I say again it is Alphonse she really loves."

I spoke the words irascibly with an accent of triumph in my voice. The next moment I would have given much to recall them. Belinda, passing down the passage on Lord Farringdon's arm, heard what I said, and, turning, gave me a look at once radiant and reproachful.

Leaving her escort she flew towards me.

"Do you mean it?" she said eagerly. "Oh, Lady Peggy, is it really true?"

There was not a moment in which to think out my answer. I seized at the first excuse that presented itself.

"No," I answered quickly, but softly—"it is not. I said so to keep the Duke quiet. He has declared his intention of punishing David for his open neglect of you. And remembering what you suffered the night of the duel with Alphonse"—I paused and edged her discreetly from the room. "Eastacres positively terrifies me, Belinda; for goodness' sake, my dear child, go quickly away and take Farringdon with you."

Belinda heard me out in silence. Then with a look about her mouth that I had learnt to understand, signified her intention of seeking the Princess and asking for an explanation.

"I won't compromise you, Lady Peggy," said this truly terrible girl. "I won't let her know what I heard you say, but I must ask her once and for all if she cares for—for David?"

"I never heard a more indecent proposition!" I cried indignantly. "Absolutely you have no delicacy. You propose to ask the Princess at the very moment when she has received the news of her husband's death, whether she is in love with another man! Frankly, Belinda, I am ashamed of you."

"She doesn't care," said the girl rebelliously; "at the very instant she heard of his death she turned to—to David. Why should I pay more respect to her feelings than she shows herself?"

"There's no argument in the matter, Belinda. The Princess is judge of her own conduct. Who are you to crititise it? I say you shall *not* go to her." I gave emphasis to the remark by summoning Lord Farringdon and abruptly asking, almost commanding him to take Belinda down to supper.

In face of this proceeding she had not the wit to devise an excuse, nor the audacity to frame a refusal. I watched them disappear, then catching my breath, reached the entrance hall just in time to intercept the Princess who, duly recovered, was on the way to her carriage. David was in close attendance and seemed much concerned.

"I shall see you to-morrow, dearest," I murmured to Vera. "I cannot tell you how much or how deeply I sympathise with you. You will indeed feel lost without the Prince."

Vera, smiling sweetly, made a suitable reply, whispering as she passed me that "the dear David was becoming troublesome in his devotion."

I contrived to have a word with the young man before he left. I told him I was charmed to see him looking so well, congratulated him upon his prospects—engineering and otherwise—and wound up with a discreet allusion to Belinda's forthcoming engagement to Lord Farringdon.

"I believe he's a very decent fellow," said Carr quietly, "he is at any rate a very lucky one. I should have liked to congratulate Miss North personally, but I fear I shall not have time. I leave for Russia to-morrow morning. You will tell her for me, Lady Carstairs, how much I hope for her happiness? I know how eloquent you can be on another's behalf."

He pressed my hand, and with a smile worthy of Eastacres himself, hurried after Vera.

So far so good, he would depart to-morrow imbued with the belief that Belinda was lost to him for ever. I had but to instil a similar conviction into Belinda's mind to make clear the way for the completion of my plans.

The next morning I kept her with me all the time. My one fear being, that through the malignity of chance, she

Digitized by Google

might catch sight of David, and, at the last moment, arrive at some explanation as to the true state of affairs. I took her down Bond Street, and plunged into a long and intricate discussion with her *modiste* as to the colours which best suited her for evening. I was replenishing her wardrobe and my own, with a view to Trouville, where we were bound early in July. I had originally intended to present Belinda at the next drawing-room, but at the last moment her father had decided that the ceremony should be deferred until after the marriage.

I acquiesced in the arrangement, was indeed rather glad of it. People were already making remarks as to why I chaperoned Belinda, rumours being abroad to the effect that I had lost my money. Had I presented her, the rumour would have been substantiated. My friends knew me too well to think I should go through such a fatiguing thing as a drawing-room without a substantial reason.

We had lunch at Prince's—I simply could not go home to starvation at Brook Street—and then after a drive in the Park, went round to Vera's place in Park Lane. I knew by that time David would have gone, and I wanted to know what had transpired.

I feel I must devote some few lines to the description of the Princess' house. As a general rule one house is much like another in Society. Making allowance for the taste of the owner—or the lack of it—you receive the same impression of ease and luxury wherever you go. In the Zouloff establishment the atmosphere is distinct; it has, so to speak, an individuality. The hall, wide and lofty, is plain, almost to bareness, unrelieved by any attempt at ornamentation, save for a massive group of figures wrought in bronze, magnificently barbaric.

At the end of the hall is a lofty chamber composed of rare and precious woods; panel upon panel of wonderful carving, Oriental in design and execution, lines the walls; the windows of stained glass harmonise with the conception. Low-cushioned seats and divans form the furniture, the floor is *parqueterie*, polished like glass. A staircase leads from this chamber to a gallery running round the apartment.

The gallery is lined with glass cases filled with exquisite curios. One could spend hours in this wonderland; passing from specimens of Indian jewellery, gorgeous in the extreme, African diamonds and sapphires, delicate ivories, to a miniature fairyland of coral, seaweed, and many-hued fishes arranged in such similitude to life, that for the moment you forget you gaze on the dead treasures of the ocean.

The Zouloff collection is well-known and much appreciated. Possibly some of you that read this have wandered under that carved roof lit by a cluster of lamps hanging like lotus lilies from a stem. The Princess was bitten at one time with a craze to enlighten the minds and educate the taste of the middle-class. She used to hold "At Homes," where weird men and strange women used to congregate, collecting in corners where they stood in frozen silence, or worse, in giggling familiarity. All sorts of "Societies" used to have their yearly meeting at the Zouloffs' house—Archæological, Episcopalian, Nonconformist, Artistic, and Rationalist people used to gather there. At one time I used to help the Princess entertain—I must say you people want a lot of entertaining!

And your manners! Some of you had coffee and tea when you arrived, coffee and tea when you left, and perpetual coffees all the afternoon! Really I used to long to correct you! The girls were the worst—especially those that came with their *fiancés*. Some of them would take the "young man" aside and whisper comments on the people close at hand, or, worse still, question him as to his doings during the day. Where had he been? Or what had he eaten? With an entire disregard of the fellow-guests that was positively appalling.

In the days when, as a girl, I used to appear at the annual dinner given by my father to the peasants on his estate, I was struck by the self-possession of their manner, the quiet good sense of their conversation, the simplicity of their bearing. They were superior in every way to the middle-class men and women Princess Zouloff used to entertain.

I mentioned some of my conclusions to Belinda, but she did not take kindly to my strictures. She had an intense pride in the class from which she came, and would not tolerate its being found fault with in the least particular.

Vera received us in the oaken chamber I have told you of. It was known in the house as the music-room, being used for concerts and musical receptions.

"It is very good of you to see us, dear Princess," I said effusively.

"Not at all, my dear Peggy. I set out for Russia to-night, to return, I know not when. I should be an ingrate if I denied myself to you and Belinda. Such a pity," she went on softly, "that you were not here a little earlier. Twenty minutes since my friend, of whom I spoke to you, *chérie*," she turned to Belinda, "came to say farewell! I should so much have liked you to meet him—especially as it seems he is an old acquaintance of yours. He only discovered that he knew you last night, when I so inopportunely fainted. He left this note for you, dear child," she handed Belinda a letter as she spoke, and leaving the girl to read it we went up to the gallery.

"It is all right," said Vera, smiling at my look of anxiety, "the note is very short and I think not altogether sweet. Ah, I thought so! See"—she touched my arm and pointed to Belinda who, unaware that she was overlooked, had thrown herself upon a couch, burying her head among the cushions, and was sobbing bitterly.

Vera leant over the balustrade.

"*Chérie*," she called softly, "come up here. I want you." Then, before I had time to protest, she whirled me into a little room screened off from the gallery, containing a very old and very ugly statue of Buddha or some other heathen god, and went half way down the stairs to meet Belinda.

The girl had dried her tears and regained her composure of manner—so much I gathered peeping under Buddha's arm. She still looked pale, however, and her attitude towards the Princess was defiant.

"You gave me this note," she said, throwing up her head as though in challenge. "You said also that David told you he knew me. Did he tell you that he loved me, and had hoped to marry me, as I still hope to marry him?"

"Impossible! My dearest child, consider what you say. You do not mean that you, who have openly encouraged Lord Farringdon, have been in reality secretly engaged to David Carr?"

"I am not engaged to David," said Belinda slowly, "but what I say is true none the less. We loved each other, but we agreed to wait for a year, because my father wished me to see and know what I believe is called 'Society.'"

"I have had many offers of marriage," she went on, "but never was I tempted to give a second thought to any. Did you know that David had loved me?" She went close to Vera, staring at her with clear, compelling eyes.

"Is it likely? Do you think men talk to *me* of their love for other women?"

"Did you know I loved him?"

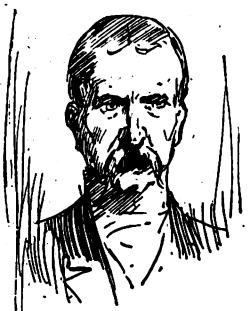
"Not till you told me. Poor child, it is bad to give love for indifference."

"He is not indifferent," flashed the girl. "See, there is a proof of it." She thrust the note into Vera's hands.

"'Farewell—for ever,' read the Princess, 'I wish you all the happiness that you deserve.' A little commonplace in expression, but the sentiment——"

Belinda stopped her abruptly with a motion of her hand.

"I tell you he loves me still," she cried; "you have infatuated, fasci-



THE DUKE OF EASTACRES

Digitized by Google

nated him, but that is not the same as love. Give him back to me," she stretched out her hands. "You are so much more beautiful than I—I have no chance against you. You do not care for him. You can choose from the world of men. Who is there can withstand you? Leave me David, I ask you, I beg you; leave me the love of this one man, a man you do not care for."

Vera laughed softly, cruelly, touching the bracelets on her wrist the while.

"Suppose I do not care for him? What then? He would go to the other end of the world at my asking. He worships the very ground I walk on. Few men have the capacity for love that David Carr possesses. Why should I give him up to you?"

"Why not?" asked Belinda. "You are a brave woman and a strong and clever one. Women like you don't do mean and petty things unless they have some special reason. I have never wittingly injured you. Tell me"—she caught the Princess' arm—"why are you against me in this matter?"

Vera's eyes flashed, a deep flush tinged the creamy pallor of her skin.

"Because I hate you," she said fiercely. "Because each time I look at you I feel afresh my own humiliation. You, a mere school-girl, succeeded where I failed; you, with your baby face and childish ways, won the heart I could not keep. You are the girl Alphonse Hervé loves; I the woman he has left. Now do you wonder that I hate you, that it gives me exquisite pleasure to hurt you? David Carr is lost to you; you have me to thank for that. What shall I do with him?"—she shrugged her shoulders—"marry him, perhaps."

"No," said Belinda, "you shall not marry him. You will marry Alphonse Hervé. I say so. I pledge my word he shall come back to plead for your forgiveness. I never have broken a promise yet, and that I promise you. I mean it." She gazed at Vera with bright, shining eyes. "And, you must promise something in return. Give me your word you will not write to David for three months. In three months Hervé will have made his peace with you, and I——" She paused, then with a sudden charming gesture raised the Princess' hand, and kissed the slender fingers.

"Promise me," she said softly.

For a moment the Princess hesitated, then with a shrug she acquiesced.

"I promise," she said slowly. "For three months I will not write nor send to David Carr, on the understanding that you will not do so either. In three months time I shall send for him and for you also. And then——" She stopped, and a curious smile twitched at her lips.

"Thank you," said Belinda quietly, almost humbly. "You are very good." Then with a sigh she left the gallery, returning to the music-room.

I emerged from the contemplation of Buddha and with a few hurried words to Vera, joined Belinda. I made no allusion to her compact with the Princess until we reached Brook Street. Then in the privacy of my room I opened fire.

"Vera has told me what you said to her this afternoon, Belinda," I remarked. "What was your object in making this agreement about David Carr?"

"In three months time Alphonse will return to the Princess," she answered, "and David will realise that she was only playing with him all the while. His infatuation over, his affection for me will once more be supreme."

"Suppose for the sake of argument that Vera should choose David instead of Alphonse, what will you do then?"

"I can't say," she answered listlessly, "it seems impossible."

"It is very highly probable," I answered sharply. "Now, listen to me, and see if we can't come to some sort of an understanding. I will give you your own way in this matter. That is to say, I will not interfere in any of your plans—on one condition. That, failing David Carr, you will marry——!"

"Not the Duke," she interrupted passionately, "never the Duke."

"Who then—shall we say Farringdon?"

"Very well," she answered lightly, "let it be Farringdon. You see"—she turned towards me—"I am so sure of David that I feel safe in promising anything.

"Lord Farringdon has already proposed to me," she went on, blushing—"I had a letter from him this morning. Will you tell him for me that he shall have a decided answer in three months."

My way during the next few months was plain. I must so arrange that Belinda should not hold any communication with Alphonse Hervé. So long as the artist stayed away from Vera, so long would she keep David in her toils. I had only to prevent a reconciliation between Hervé and the Princess to insure Belinda's engagement to Farringdon.

I told Eastacres something of the truth—only I substituted *his* name for Farringdon's. I don't think he believed all I said, but he was convinced of enough to make him realise that, for his own sake, it would be better to keep quiet as to what took place in the Rue Burgoyne. For the present I had no cause to fear him.

Belinda wrote to Hervé the day after her interview with Vera. I intercepted the letter, and quite forgot to post it! Belinda was troubled at not receiving a reply, and formed a project for asking him over to England—the Duchess of Staunton let her have her own way in everything. I nipped the idea in the bud, however, by announcing that we must start for Trouville at an earlier date than I had anticipated.

"We shall have to leave town directly, Belinda," I said abruptly. "They won't keep our rooms at the hotel after this week, and I can't put up with any others. We had better cross to-morrow. Midge and your old admirer, Reggie, are travelling then, we can all go together."

I did not give her time to argue the question, and the next day found us in mid-channel, on our way to that smartest of smart watering places, Trouville.

Belinda took quite kindly to the place and grew more friendly with Farringdon daily. She was a little worried about Hervé, but it was only on occasions that she remembered him; for the most part she was in splendid form, and as usual her admirers grew and multiplied.

Surely she had reason to be bright; there was the charming blue sea beside her; a balmy, fluttering breeze around her; a crowd of the most fashionable sunshades in Europe before her. The yachts came and went, the sands glittered, the music sounded, men and women in bright-coloured stripes took headers into the tide, or pulled themselves about in little canoes; the faces of all the houses were lively with green shutters and cool awnings; people the gayest and best born in Europe, laughed and chattered and made love.

As for the mixed bathing, which I believe vexes your poor souls every autumn, when, in the off season you scrape up enough to run across the channel—that goes on daily and sometimes all day long at Trouville. Belinda turned scarlet at the sight of Midge's bathing-dress—a wonderful affair in gold and purple, and inquired if she were actually going to wear it?

Midge screamed with laughter, and told the story that morning on the beach. All the women and most of the men sneered at the girl as old-fashioned, but Farringdon quite approved of her taste. He had agreed to wait three months for Belinda's decision.

We had been at Trouville about a week, and I was congratulating myself on the way things were going, when something happened that threatened to seriously inconvenience me.

Belinda was going for a sail in Farringdon's yacht, was in fact just going aboard, when I saw her wave a handkerchief at someone on the beach and exhibit signs of strong excitement. She evidently wished Farringdon to put her on shore, but he refused; the tide was going out.

The next moment I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and a low voice murmured a compliment in my ear.

Thank Heaven that Belinda was already out at sea, and that I should have an opportunity of speaking to the newcomer before her return! The man now standing on the beach beside me was—Alphonse!

(How I got out of my difficulty will be told next week.)

Digitized by Google

WHICH WAS THE MAN?

Telling of What Happened When the Lights Went Out.

The ever perplexing question of choosing between two equally desirable suitors had come to Inez Waring.

Neither had yet spoken his heart, for the reason that Inez was always on the alert to prevent such an avowal.

Although the reigning belle of the city and accustomed to the compliments of men, she had retained full possession of a conscience. To prevent the proposal of either man until she was certain of her own feelings was her one wish and aim.

But despite continued deliberation it became daily more difficult for Inez to determine which of the two her heart preferred.

"And wise ones say," she mused, "that when a woman is thus undecided it is proof positive that she does not love either of her suitors."

But the thought was unwelcome. Something within her rejected it at once. Her admiration for both Miles Henshaw and Owen Forbes went very deep. Should she lose the friendship of either her life would feel the loss keenly. Should she lose the companionship of both—ah, but that must not be! One of them she must keep. But which one?

The question pursued her. On the night of Mrs. Crandall's theatre party it clamoured with unusual insistence. Henshaw was at his best that evening. But so was Forbes.

Inez observed them both with a new intentness. Henshaw was decidedly the handsomer, yet Forbes had a fascination of personality which the former could not boast.

The girl herself was radiantly beautiful, as always. The numerous opera glasses levelled at their box from the stalls were focussed chiefly upon her blossom-like perfection.

Mrs. Crandall's daughter, Grace, had her share of attention. Winsome and sparkling, she made up in charm of manner what she lacked in actual beauty. She was considered a fascinating girl. Certainly Seth Harrington must have thought so. His gaze seemed incapable of including anything or anyone but her.

Inez noted this and smiled. "She, too, will have a question to decide," she thought, musingly. "I wonder——" But the curtain went up just then. The question of Seth Harrington and Grace Crandall retired to some remote recess of her mind for later consideration.

The curtain had rung down on the last act and the audience was just rising to its feet when a most unexpected and startling thing happened. All the lights in the place went out, leaving the people in total darkness.

After the first wave of consternation the crowd was reasonable enough to obey the command of a voice from the stage. They remained quiet, the majority reseating themselves at once. Mrs. Crandall's party were already leaving the box and groped helplessly in the gloom.

"Well!" exclaimed the matron, "this is certainly diverting, to say the least." Her good humour was infectious, and the others of the party joined her in laughing over the predicament.

"I've entirely lost my bearings," declared Inez. "I don't believe I can distinguish north from south."

"I wouldn't care about north or south if I could find a seat," said someone else. "How long is this oblivion supposed to last?"

"Perhaps interminably."

"Perish the thought!"

At intervals as they jostled each other one would cry: "Who is this?" and the answer would come: "And who is this?"

Inez put out her hand and touched a man's coat sleeve. "Who is this?" she questioned.

The response came in a swift and eager whisper: "Dear, don't you know?"

She felt her hand seized in a grasp so ardent that her pulse leapt. Was it Forbes or Henshaw?

Before she could decide, "Dearest, you do know—you do!" came softly against her cheek. The unseen one drew her suddenly to his lips. "I love you!" he said.

It was as though a shower of rosy sparks had blossomed out of the darkness. In that moment Inez knew that she loved this man—whoever he was, she loved him.

"Try to love me!" went on the voice. "Promise me you will try. May I hope?"

"Yes," came her gently breathed reply.

Her own answer startled her and she freed her hand, moving hurriedly away from him. Just then the lights flashed up.

Thoroughly bewildered and somewhat blinded by the sudden illumination, Inez could not perceive who it was that stood nearest her. When she did look, with cleared vision, to discover which man it was to whom she had given her promise, she discovered Grace Crandall standing where she had supposed her wooer had been. Seth Harrington was holding the girl's opera cloak.

"I must have been altogether confused as to direction," she concluded, and then, glancing hastily at the faces of Forbes and Henshaw in turn, "Both of them look guilty—or do I fancy it?"

It was Henshaw who went home with her. Inez waited with a beating heart for the first word or sign from him. But although she read the story of love in his eyes, as always, he made no reference to the incident of the box. His manner gave no indication whatever of remembrance. Then it must be Forbes.

Now, as she thought of him, she realised vividly that she had always wished it to be Forbes.

When he called the next day she went in to meet him with a fluttering heart and a consciousness of confusion.

Yes! As she met his eyes there was the same thrill, the same radiance of that memorable evening.

As the two stood gazing at each other there seemed no need, somehow, for any words. Reference to that first time of confession would have been entirely unnecessary. Both understood. That was enough.

Grace Crandall was the first to offer congratulations when the engagement was announced. After her ecstatic rush of comments and declarations, she said shyly: "And now I've something to tell you. Seth Harrington——"

"Oh, I guessed that!"

"You did?" blushing. "But the strange part of it is that he insists I have already accepted him!"

"And haven't you?"

"Not as he says I did. He declares that on the night of mamma's theatre party, when the lights went out, you remember——"

"Yes!" breathed Inez.

"That he spoke to me and kissed my hand, and that I promised to love him!"

Inez stared blankly, her mind in a whirl. The fact that Forbes had really never mentioned that miserable incident occurred to her now with disquieting distinctness.

"How very odd," she murmured at last. "And you have no remembrance of it?"

"Absolutely none."

"Shall you accept him, then?"

Grace dimpled charmingly. "I'm afraid I shall have to do it," she said. "He says I must be true to my promise."

After she had gone Inez pondered a long time. "Oh, it couldn't be!" she cried at length. "I'm sure Owen was the one. He hasn't mentioned it, but——"

Nevertheless, she still wondered.

Angela Morgan.

Digitized by Google

A RIVAL'S REVENGE.

How a Plucky Girl Saved her Lover.

"Good evening, Dolly! You look prettier than ever, while as for your lips, they seem to ask for kisses. When are you going to—er—honour me"—and a sneer crept about the speaker's mouth—"by becoming my wife?"

The insolence in the man's manner was unmistakable.

"Look you!" replied the girl with flashing eyes. "I have endured your continued persecution quite long enough. If you ever dare to speak to me again in this manner, Dan Davy——" And she paused, as if unwilling to proceed with the threat which was in her mind.

"Well?" said the man scornfully. "What then, my beauty?"

"Then," replied the girl, stung into speech by the mockery of his voice, "then I will tell Mr. Trevor of the way you insult and persecute me!"

"Oh, you will, will you?" A sneer of mingled hatred and contempt distorted the man's evil face, which was now livid with rage. It was clear the name of Jack Trevor had but added oil to the fire of his growing anger.

"Yes," responded the girl vehemently. "And he is man enough to protect me, and, if need be, to call you to account for these insults. You want a lesson, Dan Davy, and you shall have it!"

An angry flush deepened the man's face, while a gleam of defiance shone in his dark eyes. His whole frame trembled with suppressed rage, and his hands clenched involuntarily as if he would have struck her. Controlling himself with an effort, however, he took a step forward, thrusting his evil face close to the girl's until she shrank back affrightedly.

"We shall see!" he said, with a derisive laugh. "Jack Trevor *may* win, but I doubt it—yes, I doubt it!" And he looked meaningly into the girl's dilated eyes.

The threat which these words conveyed to the terrified girl was so full of sinister significance, that she shrank still farther back from the evil face of the man before her, and covered her face with her hands. With a laugh of triumph at the effect his words had produced, Dan Davy turned on his heel and strode rapidly away.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Dolly apprehensively. "What have I done? I am afraid that man meditates some terrible revenge—perhaps not on me, but on Jack. What shall I do? If I tell him, it will make matters worse, for Jack will be very angry. And yet I must warn him, for, if I do not, and anything were to happen to him, I could never forgive myself."

Sorrowfully and in much perplexity the girl went home considering how she could best acquaint her lover with the news of this encounter, and warn him against Dan Davy's possible vindictiveness and treachery.

Jack Trevor and his less successful rival were employed in a large engineering works and iron foundry in the neighbourhood. Davy, who was considered a clever though somewhat idle mechanic, ran the principal boring-machine in the great engineering shop; while Trevor's duty was to drive the huge engine and boiler which set the countless wheels and pulleys of the lathes and other machines which filled the great workshop into motion. Their posts were at some little distance from each other, and, as no good feeling existed between them, they had hitherto, by common consent, studiously avoided one another. The feeling in each man's breast for Dolly Vane had widened the breach between them, and though Jack Trevor felt himself secure in the possession of Dolly's love, he knew the vindictive character of his rival far too well to doubt that he would put into operation any base or contemptible design, which he judged might lead to his own advantage and his rival's discomfiture.

The evening following Dolly's encounter with Dan Davy the girl met her lover.

"Jack," she said, with womanly tact, after they had sat together in silence for some time, "there is something I should like to tell you, but it would make me very unhappy if, by doing so, I became the cause of any act which would lower you in my esteem and make you forget your better self."

"I do not think you need fear that, darling," said Jack, with kindling tenderness in his voice and manner. "Your happiness is ever my first consideration, and all things become subservient to that impulse."

"Then you will promise me, dear Jack," said the girl coaxingly, "that you will not be angry?"

Jack Trevor looked down at the appealing face of the girl at his side and smiled encouragingly into the blue eyes. And so, carefully concealing any personal feeling in the matter and omitting the worst features of the incident altogether, Dolly briefly related her interview with Dan Davy and the fears she entertained that the man premeditated some act of treachery to one or both of them. Jack's honest face flushed with indignation as he listened; but he saw Dolly's face turned to him appealingly, and he restrained any further indication of anger out of sympathy for the girl's evident distress.

"Well, Dolly," he said, after a pause, "the man is a blackguard, and it will be best for you to avoid meeting him as far as possible."

"And you, dear Jack?" inquired the girl, laying her hand appealingly on his.

"I?" responded Trevor. "Well, I shall have a few words to say to Dan Davy to-morrow, but they will be quietly spoken, and you need have no apprehension as to their result. The man is too unmistakably a coward to do aught but snarl."

Dolly felt somewhat relieved by this assurance and earnestly hoped her former misgivings might prove unfounded.

The next day, as the men were crowding out of the great workshop at the close of their day's labour, Jack Trevor put himself in Davy's way.

"I want a word with you," he said briefly.

"You can say it here, then," was the reply.

"It will be better for you, perhaps, if you hear what I have to say where there is a little more privacy," said Trevor significantly.

Digitized by Google

"Do you really think so?" sneered Davy. "Well, I think differently. "If you are too great a coward to speak out here, you had better reserve your eloquence for those who appreciate it."

Jack Trevor smiled. He could see that the man who thus taunted him with cowardice was himself actuated by a similar motive in preferring to remain among his fellows.

"Very good!" he said quietly. "I will speak here and now. You have taken upon yourself to insult and persecute a young lady whose name I need not now mention. As I possess the right—do you hear—the right, to protect this young lady from all such unprincipled annoyances, I give you fair and timely warning. If you choose to disregard it, you will have to reckon with me in a much more summary and forcible way than upon this occasion."

There was an ugly gleam in Dan Davy's eyes as this threat was uttered, while his dark face darkened with concentrated rage.

"You are right!" he hissed through his clenched teeth. "The reckoning shall come between us, Jack Trevor, and, to use your own words, 'in a far more summary and forcible way than upon this occasion.' Beware it does not come sooner than you anticipate!"

With another look of malevolent hatred at the form of his rival, Dan Davy strode through the crowd of his fellow-workmen, who had gathered about the disputants with evident curiosity, and was soon lost to view. Jack Trevor, wishing to avoid further question, also made his way out with as little delay as possible. Had he but realised one-half of the sinister significance in Dan Davy's repetition of his own words, the man's murderous thirst for revenge would have filled him with alarm. But he was as yet all unconscious of the implacable vindictiveness of his rival, as well as of the terrible scheme of revenge which he would ere long put into execution.

The girl sawed at the stout rope with the blade of the knife. Would she do it in time?

It was about a month after the incidents just narrated that it was deemed necessary for the speedy completion of a large and important order that Dan Davy should be asked to work throughout the whole of one night at his boring-machine. Jack Trevor would, of course, be obliged to remain also, in order to drive the main engine and thereby supply the machine with its motive power.

There had been no further collision between the two men, and to an ordinary observer the active enmity of a month ago appeared to have subsided into mere indifference and a mutual disinclination to the further cultivation of each other's society. But, if anyone had closely watched Dan Davy's cruel face whenever Jack Trevor passed him or his voice sounded in his ear, he would have found ample testimony of the bitter and implacable hatred which still burnt, like an unquenchable fire, within his breast.

It was altogether different with Jack Trevor. Dolly Vane had made no further complaint against Davy; indeed, she had not encountered him since, and Jack, inwardly pleased at what he considered a good result of his timely warning, had allowed his resentment to cool, and merely avoided the man from a natural dislike to his society. Better would it have been for him had his knowledge of the man's character rendered him more watchful of his movements and more ready to meet the danger which threatened him.

The great workshop looked very weird and dark when the men had left. A single electric lamp shed a white gleam of light over the revolving wheels of the long low boring-machine at the far end of the shop. All the rest lay in shadow, the dark, uncouth forms of the motionless machines and lathes looming up through the surrounding gloom like huge fantastic monsters of a bygone age. The great engine was rumbling far down at the other end of the long shop, but no glimmering light revealed its mighty outline, and the throb of its pulsating pistons was the only indication of its whereabouts.

The workshop was deserted, save for the solitary figure of Dan Davy, who stood in the circle of white light which flooded the moving wheels of his machine, and accurately set the long, steel tool grinding its way into the cylinder, which he had firmly bolted on the revolving plate of the machine. Then he gauged the bore with his compasses, and, having satisfied himself that all was going on as he desired, he stood upright and listened.

It was a wild wintry night. Outside, the wind swept along in gusts and the driving rain dashed against the dark panes in the glass roof of the great workshop. Beyond the rumbling engine a door led out into the great open space which backed the dark shops, and here the huge boiler which drove the main engine was embedded in its solid foundation of stout masonry.

Jack Trevor stood before the glowing fire and threw fresh coals into the great red maw of the devouring furnace. A thousand sparks crackled and hissed above the glowing fire as the wet coals fell on the red heart of the hot mass beneath, while a crimson glow shone through the open door of the furnace and illumined the darkness for yards ahead. He closed the iron door with a snap, and put down the shovel he had been using, while the fire roared with increasing fury as the imprisoned gas in the black coal broke its fetters and leapt to meet the darting tongues of flame.

Then he made a very thorough examination of both the steam and water gauges. The former stood high, and a faint hiss of escaping steam came from the end of the black arm of the safety-valve. The latter was low, and, as the boiler was not a self-feeder, he turned on the water-cock until he had sufficiently increased its supply. For a few moments the steam pressure abated, but fresh steam was soon generated, and the

Digitized by Google

hand of the steam-gauge began once more to ascend and the steam to hiss more vehemently from its escape.

"She's all right," muttered Jack. "It's a comfort to see something warm a night like this. I'm not over fond of rain, but it's better to stand in it out here by the fire than to take shelter in that gloomy old shop." He lit his pipe as he mused with a straw which he lit on the red ashes under the glowing fire.

He did not see a dark form creeping along the side of the masonry in which the boiler was embedded—a form that moved stealthily and carried in its hand a long, black iron bar.

"I wonder where Dolly is," he muttered. "Safe in bed, I hope, for it must be nearing twelve o'clock. Dear little Dolly! I'm glad that villain has kept out of her way lately! Well, Dolly dear," and he straightened himself as he spoke, and took his pipe from his lips, "if things go all right, as I have every reason to believe they will, we'll be married in the spring."

There was a swift, rushing sound, as of something cleaving the air. A sudden shock seemed to strike Jack Trevor, a great darkness came before his eyes, and he sank like a stone upon the iron plate which covered the ground in front of the great boiler.

When he came to himself it was to feel ice-cold water dashing in his face. Vainly he tried to recall all that had taken place before he fell, struck down by that fatal blow; his brain reeled with the effort. He could see someone before him, and instinctively knew it was Dan Davy. What puzzled him was that he was now on his feet, and yet had no power to move. The reason, however, was not far to seek. It was barely half an hour since his enemy had dealt him that terrible blow, but in that half-hour Dan Davy had not been idle.

Close to the front of the huge boiler, a massive square post was embedded in the ground. This post had formerly been surmounted by a bell, which used to ring out the hour for commencing work as well as the meal-hours, of the men in the different workshops of the firm, but latterly a steam-whistle had been attached to the boiler for this purpose, and, though the bell had been removed, the post still stood in its accustomed place.

The very moment that Jack Trevor had fallen senseless to the ground, his villainous assailant had dragged him to this post, and, lifting him upon his feet, he pinioned the inanimate form of his victim to the post by means of a leather machine-belt which he tore from one of the lathes for the purpose. To make him still more secure, he had nailed the coils of the belt to the back of the post, so that no one could possibly have released himself unaided from such all-powerful fetters.

Slowly—very slowly—consciousness returned to the stricken man, and he gazed in a bewildered way about him. Dan Davy stood with his back to the boiler, eyeing his victim with a savage gleam of wild ferocity in his dark eyes. He laughed derisively as he met Jack's bewildered gaze.

"In a more summary and forcible way than upon this occasion," he said, with a gesture of triumph. "Your own words, Jack Trevor, and for once you spoke the truth. Marry her in the spring, will you? Ha, ha! She'll have to collect the pieces first. You have had your innings, my fine fellow, and now I'm having mine, and I reckon," he added, with a demoniacal laugh, "that this is the end of the match. Now you are curious to know what I am going to do next. Well, watch me, and you will see!"

He flung open the iron door of the furnace, and threw shovelful after shovelful of fresh coals upon the glowing fire within till it roared and raged above the strong draught like a thing of life. Then, catching up a rope which lay near him, he threw one end over the long arm of the safety-valve, and, drawing both ends down with a sudden jerk, bound them securely about the big brass cocks on the front of the boiler. The steam was still hissing softly from the escape, but, as the pressure tightened on the arm of the valve, it was driven back and fettered in its steel bonds. Then the swarthy figure of Dan Davy turned, and, folding his arms across his breast, laughed demoniacally at his helpless victim.

"I think you will do now, Jack Trevor," he said, his eyes blazing with fiendish triumph. "Before an hour has gone by the boiler will have shifted from its present position, and you, in all probability, will go with it. Good-bye, my fine fellow! A safe journey to you to the other world!" And, with another ringing laugh, he went down the long lane between the shops and out into the deserted streets.

Still dazed as he was by the blow he had received, Jack Trevor realised in a flash the terrible purpose of his enemy. Indeed, if instinct had not revealed to him the truth, the low warning hum which came from the great boiler within five minutes of Dan Davy's retreat would have told him all too plainly what he had to expect. Without the chance of escape, the fast-increasing volume of steam must, ere long, burst its steel bonds, and hurl both him and the mighty boiler to instant destruction.

Louder and louder in his ears grew the hum in the great mass of metal as the generating steam protested against its enforced imprisonment. Jack Trevor exerted his utmost strength to burst the bonds which held him, until his face grew purple with the terrible tension of nerve and muscle, and the great drops stood upon his forehead, but all his efforts were of no avail. There was no hope, save in a speedy death.

The warning voice of the fettered steam grew. The hum had risen to a deep, sonorous vibration, which swallowed up all other sound. It could not be long now. Deliverance, he knew, was almost impossible, for the workshops stood in a great plot of deserted land at the extreme end of a dark and little-frequented road which had no outlet.

The helpless man awaited his certain end with as much composure as he could summon to his aid. The steam now began to pound against the steel casing of its prison with loud, imperative throbs of pent-up vitality. Jack looked at the steam-gauge, and a groan escaped him as he saw the hand that indicated the pressure had long since passed the figure at which the great boiler had been tested. Now every additional pound meant new and increasing danger for the fettered man.

The wind still blew with great violence, but the rain had ceased to descend. With one last prayer, Jack Trevor resigned himself to the awful doom which awaited him, as his head sank upon his breast in hopeless despair. At that instant a figure darted round the end of the long dark workshop and stood by his side. The man uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Dolly!" he gasped.

"What is it?" said the girl breathlessly. "Oh, you are bound to the post! Let me release you. I knew you were in danger!" She went towards him as she spoke for the purpose of removing his bonds.

"Stop!" cried Jack hoarsely. "Go away instantly, or you will be blown to pieces. Never mind me. I have no chance of escape now, for it is too late. But save yourself—quick!"

The girl turned and looked at the great roaring boiler. For the first time she realised the terrible danger which threatened them. Then she turned again to Jack.

"I will not go," she said firmly. "If you will not tell me how to save you, I will die with you!"

The man's face grew white as he read the determination in her eyes.

"Come here, then," he said hoarsely. "Do as I bid you, and may God help us! Take the big clasp knife from my right pocket and try to sever that rope which holds the safety-valve down. Do not lose a moment!"

The girl obeyed, and a moment of terrible suspense followed, during which she sawed at the stout rope with the blade of the knife. Would she do it in time? The man held his breath as he waited. Suddenly a great noise filled the air—a mighty roar that deafened the ears and numbed the brain. At first Jack thought their hour had come, but, while the noise still continued, he still remained unhurt. And then he

Digitized by Google

realised that Dolly had saved him from death, for a great volume of blinding steam was pouring from the escape, and the indicating hand of the pressure-gauge was rapidly travelling back to its accustomed position.

"Thank God!" he muttered brokenly. "Dolly, we are saved!"

The girl came up to him where he stood, fettered to the great post, and kissed him rapturously, with the tears in her blue eyes. Then she began to undo the belt which held her lover to the post, drawing out the nails which fastened the belt to the wood by means of a chisel which Jack had directed her to find. When at last he was free, he took her in his arms and asked—

"How was it, Dolly, that you came here?"

A serious look came into the girl's eyes.

"It seems almost miraculous," she said in a low voice. "I had gone to bed and had fallen asleep, but I had such a terrible dream that I awoke with a start. The dream was so horrible and vivid that I could not go to sleep again, so I rose and sat by the window of my little room. I was thinking of you, working all through the long dark night, for one of the men had told me you and Davy were to remain. Presently I saw a man running along the road. When he reached our house he stopped, and, looking up at my window, shook his clenched hands above his head, and laughed so terribly that I shrank back. He could not see me, I knew, but I could plainly discern his features in the light of the gas-lamp which stood near. It was Dan Davy. At first I was bewildered, and then something seemed to tell me you were in danger. I tried to argue the thought down, but it only grew within me, and I made up my mind, helpless woman as I was, to come here and see."

"And you came just in time, dear," said Jack, drawing her towards him in fervent gratitude. "You have saved my life, Dolly, and at the risk of your own."

The girl looked happily into the face of her lover.

"Now let us go home," she said. "I am cold. You must find that terrible man, who, but for the intervention of Providence, would have been your murderer, for he must be punished. Now take me to my home, and come and see me in the morning."

And he did so with a light step and proud heart, since his life was even more than of yore in the hands of his beautiful Dolly. But the man who had planned his murder had already met his punishment, for, in the morning, they found him a raving maniac, wandering about the fields on the outskirts of the town. And thus the frustrated revenge of an unscrupulous rival only served to still further cement the bond of love between Jack Trevor and his fair rescuer, and, as so often happens, even in this world, out of evil came good.

Walter J. Mowbray.

"Cordelia is selling everything to go abroad again." "She is?" "Yes; she offered to sell me her bicycle and her engagement to Mr. Jimp."

"Saw you on a weighing machine this afternoon," said the Funny Man. "Were you thinking of suicide?" "Suicide?" repeated the other man. "Yes; doing a weigh with yourself."

"I've a great story to tell you, chaps," said a man to a group at the club. "I don't think any of you ever heard me tell it before." "Is it a really good one?" asked one of the party doubtfully. "It certainly is." "Then you never told it before," chorused the crowd.

"I thought," said Dawkins, "that you said you didn't think much of Bradbury as a pianist, and here you have taken a box for his recital." "I didn't know," answered Morely, "a better way to show my contempt for him as a musician than by taking a box, and leaving it empty on the evening of his recital."

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

In Addition to £1,000 in Cash.

THE MOST LIBERAL PRIZE EVER OFFERED BY ANY PERIODICAL IN THE WORLD.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE is so huge that it is almost impossible for one to realise at first thought what it really means. Therefore the following hints will probably enable you to grasp the full value of such a regular income:

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE means, unless you are extravagant, absolute freedom from money troubles as long as you live.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE is an insurance against depression and mental worry.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will enable you to dispense charity with a liberal hand.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy you a bigger house and enable you to live in better style.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will cover the cost of taking a cottage in the country and living there in comfort for the rest of your days.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will pay the expenses of months of foreign travel.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy anything you can possibly want, from a piano to a motor-car.

If you want to set up in business you would soon have enough capital by saving the **£5** every week for a time—

In Six Months you would have **£130**
In Twelve Months you would have **£260**
In Two Years you would have **£520**

In fact, there is no limit to the things you can do with **£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.**

THE prize will be paid to the person (perhaps you) who correctly solves a number of pictures which appear in PEARSON'S WEEKLY, under the conditions printed in that paper.

Each picture consists of certain objects, the names of which represent the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom. For example, the hull of a ship would mean "Hull." Every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

A further sum of **£1,000 in cash** will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:—

FIRST CONSOLATION GIFT, £100.

2nd Cash Gift	... ...	£50
3rd	,, ...	£50
4th	,, ...	£25
5th	,, ...	£25
6th	,, ...	£25
7th	,, ...	£25
8th to 57th Cash Gifts	... ...	£10 each
58th to 97th	,, ...	£5 each

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of **£5 a Week for Life** *(which will be paid under any circumstances)*, you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash gifts.

£5 a Week for Life!

Digitized by Google

Cards Will Soon be Out.

"I FEEL lost here in all this noise and hurry of London." "If 'findings is keepings,' Miss Fairmount, I'll head a search party."

Better Allow It Now.

MISS HOMELY: "Do you think I ought to permit Jack to kiss me before we are married?" Miss Beauty: "Yes, unless you prefer never to be kissed."

A Gentle Hint.

HE (sympathetically): "You have a bad cold?" She (huskily): "I have. I am so hoarse that if you attempted to kiss me I couldn't even scream."

No Change About Him.

"DEAREST," she murmured, "I'm so afraid you'll change." "Darling," he answered, "you'll never find any change about me." Which was painfully true in a double sense.

Not Spent So Much.

"BUT, Bertha, it was only last month that I paid a dressmaker's bill of £12, and here is another this month for £10." "Well, dear Edgar, that shows, you see, that I am beginning to spend less."

Why Not the Lips?

"MY queen," exclaimed her adorer timidly, "may I kiss the royal hand?" "My faithful subject," replied the young woman, with the air of one gently chiding him, "what is the matter with the royal lips?"

His Ideal.

"No," said the fair girl, "it's no use. You don't come up to my ideal." "Perhaps not," he answered. "But I don't care if I can only get anywhere near my own." "Your own?" she answered. "What is your ideal?" "You," he whispered.

Making the Home Club-like.

WIFE: "There, dear, here are all the magazines, here are whisky and soda and a box of your favourite cigars, and the papers. If you want anything else, just ring the bell." Husband: "What on earth is the matter?" "Nothing. I merely wanted to make your home as club-like as possible."

Where They Really Wandered.

"WHY do women so often wander so aimlessly in the murky solicitudes of the dead past, brooding over days for ever gone?" asked a young lady of a marrying widower. "They don't, I think," he said. "Rather they wander, especially at this season, in the drapers' shops of the present, often pricing articles which they have not the remotest intention of buying."

He Was a Campanologist.

"DID you hear of that Manchester man who was engaged to seventeen young ladies at the same time?" asked the small girl. "Yes," replied her cousin—"quite a campanologist, was he not?" "I—er—don't think I quite understand." "Pardon me; I should have said he was quite a ringer of belles."

She Liked Herself Next.

MAY: "Next to a man, what's the jolliest thing you know of?" Ethel: "Myself, if he's nice."

It Might be Risky.

MISS HUGGINS: "My father is very good at reading faces." Mr. Kissam: "Then I had better not print any kisses here."

The Unit of Measurement.

MR. HIBORN: "By what unit of measurement could you properly estimate a man's devotion to you?" Miss Lowe: "The carat."

Poor Bashful Man.

THE BASHFUL LOVER: "Miss Emily, I—er—hem!" She (sweetly): "Do you, Mr. Mammasdear? Now, wouldn't you like to join our sewing class?"

She Could Afford to.

THE HEIRESS: "Am I the only girl in the whole wide world you love?" He: "No, dear; but you are the only girl I know who could afford to marry me."

Hope Isn't Satisfying.

HE: "Then I may live upon hope until next Sunday evening?" She: "Oh, poor fellow, is it as bad as that? Here, I'll lend you enough to buy a meal."

Not Had Time Yet.

"I JUST saw Miss Crœsus go into the conservatory with that Italian nobleman. Are they engaged?" "Oh, I hardly think so as yet. Give her fifteen minutes more."

Nest-Hunting.

"I DEARLY love birds," he gently sighed. And then what did she do but hasten to the open piano and softly begin singing, "I wish I were a bird." They are looking for a nest now.

Looking Ahead.

ALGY: "They want six thousand pounds for the lease, Maria. It runs for eighty-nine years." Maria: "Well, don't buy it, Algy! Only eighty-nine years! Fancy dear baby being turned out of his house at ninety-one, and possibly infirm into the bargain!"

Not His Fault.

SHE: "Do you remember how you said, when you were courting me, that if I would marry you I would have nothing to do all my days but sit about and look pretty? And how different it is now!" He: "Well, it isn't my fault if you can't look pretty any more."

Couldn't Speak for Her.

MISS KISSAM: "You seem depressed to-night, Mr. Dexter." Mr. Dexter: "Yes, I am. I went to a fortune-teller to-day to find out my fate, and was told that the girl I loved would not marry me." Miss Kissam: "But, Mr. Dexter, no fortune-teller is authorised to speak for me."

No Romance Left.

"YES—I gave him up," sighed the young woman. "Did he prove unworthy of your affection?" inquired her sympathetic friend. "He—he became a spelling reformer," replied the other, with a shudder, "and signed his name 'Jorj.' It took all the poetry and romance out of the name, and so we parted."

Learnt a Lesson.

"I SHALL say nothing about this to anybody," said the young woman, attempting to soften the blow, "and I need not add that there is no occasion for you, either, to repeat it." "Repeat it!" echoed the rejected lover bitterly. "No! I shall never propose to another girl because of her pretty doll face as long as I live!"

Had Sent it to Him.

MR. LE JECKS: "Well, Miss Coldcash, I suppose you received a good many birthday cards?" Miss Coldcash (sweetly): "Oh, yes; and there was one particularly dainty and artistic. I am sure it came from you." Mr. Le Jecks (delighted): "What makes you think so?" Miss Coldcash: "Because I sent it to you on your last birthday."

The Hobbies of George Mitchell.

⁂

A Pathetic Story of the Winning of a Woman's Love.

⁂

Little George Mitchell had made his money—piles of it—in tallow; and what was worse, he *looked* as if he had!

He didn't drop his aitches exactly, and he had on the whole passable manners; he could even manufacture an inoffensive and grammatical after-dinner speech if he was put to it. But nothing—not the best tailor in London, not the biggest mansion in Park Lane—could make anything of him but a respectable tradesman.

It was his appearance that most strongly betrayed the "risen" man. He had a common neck; and a certain droop of his shoulders and the shape of his hands seemed to say "Business! business! business!" almost as if they spoke aloud. His redeeming feature was a pair of great brown eyes, that reminded one of a faithful Newfoundland dog.

The world of fashion laughed at him, but took him up more or less, because—well, because nowadays it can't afford to sneeze at a private yacht and the best hunters in Great Britain.

It happened while he was making his grand tour that he ran across his fate in the person of the Woman. It was in India that they met. She lived with her father at an out-of-the-way little up-country station. She was beautiful, of course, with the cold, disdainful, passionless type of beauty that is to some men so instantaneously fatal.

It didn't take George Mitchell long—slow of perception as he was about some things—to understand the nature of affairs at the La Mothes' bungalow.

The Colonel's hand was a trifle too shaky at breakfast, and his face a trifle too flushed by the evening, to hide the family skeleton for very long from a visitor. In a short time he took to watching his daughter out of the way, and to pouring querulous plaints into George's ear with regard to pecuniary difficulties, of which he seemed to have a vast collection.

George listened stolidly. He listened also to tedious yarns of the Colonel's poor but aristocratic relations who would do nothing for him—of ancient estates heavily encumbered—of a titled but impecunious brother who could only give him good advice; and he turned things over in his mind and came at length to a conclusion. He stayed at the station for three weeks. There was a ruined temple near that he'd come a thousand miles out of his way to see; and before he left he'd taken the most serious step of all commonplace successful life.

He had laid his stubby hand reverently and timidly upon the fragile fingers of the Colonel's daughter, and he had said very simply and very diffidently:

"You're not happy here, Miss La Mothe. This life jars on you; and you are, if you will forgive me for saying so, so dreadfully poor. Will you let me try to make up to you for it all in the future? Will you be my wife?"

Zoe La Mothe wasn't surprised. She had seen something of the kind looming for days, and she had awaited it with a sort of numb contempt.

"I don't love you," she said slowly; not, however, removing her hand—"but you know that, of course. You have been awfully kind to us, and your offer is a great temptation. I've always longed to be rich, and—and as you have seen, there is nothing to attract me to my present life. If you are really content to take me on my own terms, I will do my best to be—dutiful."

"You—you care for no one else?" he asked quickly.

Miss La Mothe shrugged her shapely shoulders. "I have such a large selection to choose from here," she said bitterly. "A few raw subalterns, a decrepit major, and a doctor who is to be married next month. No, there is no one else."

"Then," said the man of tallow; "I am satisfied."

A year later the shaky Colonel got three months leave, and brought his daughter to England; and by an effort scraped together hard cash to get her a respectable trousseau, and left her thankfully in the hands of the tallow-maker. In return, the tallow-maker paid his father-in-law's debts, gave him some rugged homely advice as to the cause of his shakiness, and left him with a bundle of banknotes in his pocket-book and the tears of the habitual inebriate in his eyes.

Zoe Mitchell did her best to be a dutiful wife at first, but she and her husband had not a single thing in common. His looks provoked her, his ways irritated her; and to see "Mitchell's Superfine Candles" on London hoardings invariably sent her back to Park Lane with a headache.

Gradually she began to go *her* way, and slowly *he* crept back to his. She was a cultured woman, and she collected about her a cultured set. The tallow-maker was not cultured; indeed, he had much ado not to appear absolutely illiterate. And so it came to pass that she grew more and more ashamed of him, and consequently they saw very little of one another. "The beautiful Mrs. Mitchell with the impossible husband" friends—*her* friends—called her. To do her bare justice she really believed that George Mitchell was happy enough in his own way. He never complained. He'd lots of hobbies—queer, plebeian hobbies—that she vaguely imagined quite filled his life; and when at intervals they did meet, he was always perfectly cheerful.

She didn't know that "The beautiful Mrs. Mitchell with the impossible husband" was as familiar a term to him as to her. No, she did not know, because "the impossible husband" was a man who did not easily show his feelings.

But suddenly, one evening, quite by accident, she came across a very different phase of his impossibility—a sinister phase—and it aroused her to something even more than interest in him—to red-hot, shaking indignation.

They were down at their seat in Brackonshire—together, for a wonder—and the valet, who, like all the servants, was fond, in a patronising way, of little George Mitchell—approached Mrs. Mitchell deferentially as she was sweeping in to dinner.

"My master doesn't feel well, ma'am. He's gone to bed. These are his keys. He begs you will look in the third drawer of his desk after dinner, and bring him a packet of private papers tied with red tape, and marked on the outside with a red ink cross."

Mrs. Mitchell slightly raised her pencilled eyebrows as she took the keys. "Tell your master I will do as he wishes," she said carelessly and passed on.

It was a rare chance, indeed, that took her into George's private study. Trade journals were to be found there that disagreed with her, and neat piles of methodically filed bills that spoke of the banality of the counting house. And, worst of all, standing on the mantelshelf, was a photograph of George's late mother. Even the well-trained servants giggled

Digitized by Google

over *that*. She was a fat, vulgar-looking old woman with an improbable cap, and a broad, homely smile; George thought her beautiful!

Mrs. Mitchell dawdled over dinner, and pondered somewhat. She had not asked anyone in to share the meal—she didn't as a rule when George was at home. As it turned out, she might have done so, for now he was poorly, it seemed. She had never known him poorly before. She hoped to goodness he wasn't going to be ill; illness in a house is a great nuisance, she reflected irritably; but probably after all it was only a bad cold.

She finished her last grape slowly, and rose with a rather impatient sigh.

Instead of going to her own boudoir or to the drawing-room, she proceeded to the study, and, still wrapped in thought, she found the third drawer of the desk, fitted the key, and opened it. It was full of business papers duly docketed and tied with variously coloured tape. She selected her packet, and was about to close the drawer, when she noticed, thrust back into a corner, a bundle of private letters. The envelopes were small and softly tinted, and they were bound together with a piece of white satin ribbon. What particularly attracted Mrs. Mitchell's eye was the newness of the paper—the letters looked as if they had only just been put there. One usually associates ribbon-bound correspondence with envelopes yellow with age and fragrant with musk and memories; these were aggressively fresh.

Half mechanically she took them out and turned them over in her hands. They were in a woman's writing—writing not unlike her own. The dates on the post-marks were recent.

Mrs. Mitchell, despite her aristocratic lineage, was particularly correct in her ideas. She went her own way, it is true, but it was a spotless and respectable way.

What were another woman's letters doing in the desk of the man she had married? Her heart began to beat uncomfortably; instinctively her white fingers twitched at the ribbon. After all, she had a right to know George Mitchell's secrets, if anyone had. Was it possible that this man—this little commoner, whom she called husband—had been capable of some vulgar intrigue? She had fancied till now that she knew the worst of him; she had thought of him hitherto as a simple, good-natured little plebeian, but was he also a knave? She flushed scarlet with indignation and wounded pride. Rapidly and angrily, without giving herself time for reflection, she undid the ribbon and opened the letter at the top of the little pile.

There was no address on the sheet. "My own Darling," it began, as if the writer had been too anxious to pour out her soul to trouble about such mundane things as addresses. It ran on for four pages, and was full of tenderness that somehow made the reader intangibly envious. There was nothing in it that could betray the writer's identity—it was just a fond, foolish letter, and it was merely signed "Your own little girl."

With a deeper flush dyeing her cheek, and her white teeth pressed hard on to her lower lip, she tossed it down and took up another. This spoke of devotion, even greater than the first; and again she turned it over eagerly, hoping to see some signature that would, at least, give her a clue.

"Your loving wife," was what she read.

A horrible fear darted into Mrs. Mitchell's heart.

His wife! George Mitchell's wife! What did it mean? What could it mean? Had the tallow-maker saved her drunken father from bankruptcy and given her luxury and wealth under false pretences? Was she only his tool and dupe? His wife in name, perhaps, when—the idea was too appalling! She dropped breathlessly into a chair, gathered all the letters up, and set herself to read them through from beginning to end.

They were all much in the same strain—breathing of the passionate, tender love of a woman for a man, carrying Zoe Mitchell into an atmosphere she could not understand or appreciate; and they ended abruptly, except for some scribbled pet-name. They weren't written by a lady; there were little tricks of speech which betrayed them; but it was obvious throughout that she who had penned them loved George Mitchell to distraction, and believed herself to be his lawful wife—which was worse.

It was obvious, too, that she knew of no rival in the field.

There were little pathetic touches about being his first and last love, and of the happy times they had spent together, and were still to spend.

Zoe Mitchell didn't attempt to understand or to analyse; only a sudden contemptuous pity took possession of her—pity for the unknown woman, who, like herself, had been fooled by an illiterate hypocrite of a man.

She finished the last of the packet, and her breast heaved with the intensity of her wrath and mortification.

Acting on impulse, she picked up the stray sheets, and walked rapidly out of the study and upstairs to her husband's bedroom.

Without waiting to knock, she pushed open the door and passed straight to his side.

George Mitchell was sitting up in bed supported by pillows; his face was a strange livid hue—his breath was coming harshly; but she noticed none of these signs.

"I want an explanation," she began in the low, concentrated tone of intense and bitter anger. "I ought to have asked for it before, it seems."

His eyes which had lighted a little at her entrance, grew dull again.

He raised one hand feebly in protest.

"Can't explanations — wait?" he whispered. "I wanted you; I have some important work to do—I am not well."

"Well or ill," she cried harshly; "I intend to know the meaning of these"—she held out the letters to him. "Who is this creature?" she asked rapidly. "Why does she call herself your *wife*?"

He did not answer; only he looked at her beseechingly.

"*Who* wrote them?" she persisted with increasing rage; "I *insist* on knowing."

He stretched out his hand and took the bundle of notes from her and laid them on the bed, turning them over and over with fond, feeble fingers. There was a half smile on his face as he did so.

"Do you mean to answer me?" she demanded icily. "Are you *afraid*?"

The taunt in her last words roused him.

"No," he said, looking up at her suddenly; "no, I am not afraid. I have nothing to be afraid of, because—because *I wrote them myself!*"

She shrank back a step, as if she thought he had taken leave of his senses.

"*You?*—what do you mean? Is this some senseless subterfuge? If so——"

"No, it isn't," he interrupted gently, and his pale cheeks flushed a little; "I did write them—I did indeed, Zoe. It doesn't matter now what you know. You see, I loved you so—so tremendously, and I did so long for a bit of love in return. I'm not blaming you, my dear—don't think so. I knew it couldn't be, of course. You were straight with me from the first, and you never pretended it could. But I've always been a queer, fanciful sort of fellow, though I don't look it—I used to think and ponder over just what I'd like you to say, supposing—supposing you *could* have cared, you know; and then I took to writing it down, and I tried to copy your hand, just to fancy how loving words would have looked in it;

Digitized by Google

I know how foolish all this must sound." He glanced at her apologetically.

"Go on," she said in a dry, strangled voice; "go on."

"I got more and more silly," he proceeded nervously; "and I used to write letters and post them to myself, and try to imagine—especially when you were away, as you generally were—that they came from you. You'd be surprised how getting them used to hearten me up. I've known my pulses leap and jump when I've seen one of those envelopes on the breakfast table, and for a bit I'd half believe that it really *did* come from you. Of course, it was ridiculous and childish, but I took to keeping them, and——"

"Stop," she cried, and it was an exceeding bitter cry. "Oh, stop."

She sank down on her knees, and took one of the rugged hands in both her own, bending her hot face over it in an agony of remorse and shame.

"What *must* you think of me? Oh, what must you think of me?" she whispered.

The little tallow-maker was terribly distressed.

"Don't, dear," he repeated again and again; "don't! What do I think of you, do you say? Why, exactly what I always have thought—that next to my mother you are the most beautiful and wonderful woman on this earth—and the best. I'm not blaming *you* for anything, Zoe; don't think for a moment that I am. You have nothing to reproach yourself with."

He tried to raise her head, but the effort made him pant.

"George," she breathed, looking up at him all at once with swimming, startled eyes, and for the moment forgetting herself; "you're very ill. What's the matter with you? What can I do?"

"Don't you trouble, dear," he said huskily. "It's a chill of some sort, I think. I've sent Benson for the lawyer, for somehow I feel as if I wasn't coming out of it, and I want to make everything right for you afterwards. I ought to have done it at the time of our marriage, but I kept putting it off."

"But a *doctor?*" she demanded in sharp, horrified surprise; "haven't you sent for a doctor?"

"I didn't think it was much use," he said meekly. "I've been feeling queer for a long time now, off and on, and I think this must be the finish."

She read his face with penetrating, anguished eyes.

"You don't care to live?" she said in a stricken tone; "you think I don't *want* you?"

He did not answer, but instead, he fidgeted evasively with the bedclothes.

"George," she cried passionately, standing up beside his bed, very tall and white and determined; "you shall *not* die. Do you hear me? You shall *not*."

It was a terrible struggle—so terrible that three great specialists shooks their head more than once. On an already weakened constitution double pneumonia with complications is apt to be a desperately serious matter.

"But with a nurse like that wife of his," they said, "his friends will, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that no single stone has been left unturned."

And gradually—very gradually—there dawned in George Mitchell's darkened room the first will-o-the-wisp ray of hope. And in due course—only it was a long and weary business—he did creep back to life; but it was a very frail ghost of him that leant for the first time on his wife's arm after months of desperate suffering.

* * * * *

And once again "the beautiful Mrs. Mitchell with the impossible husband" became the topic of comment in Society, just as they had been in the first days of their married life.

"She's posing as positively *fond* of that little horror, if you please!" said Lady Ponsonby de Darrell to her particular friend. "I know all the La Mothes well, and I always said, my dear, that they were a little *mad*. Why, Enid, tells me that when Zoe ran down for the inside of a week to Elva Fletcher's wedding, she absolutely wrote to her chandler every day! Can you imagine anything more absurd?"

Chris Sewell.

Your Editor Chats.

OUR NEW SERIES.

Last week I promised to tell you something about a new series of articles which will shortly start in this paper. The circumstances under which it was written equal in interest those under which "The Confessions of Cynthia" and "How I Chaperoned Belinda" were put into manuscript. This series, however, is quite different from the previous ones, inasmuch as the chief character in the story is the person who writes the series.

Everyone has heard of the "self-made man," but few people have heard of the "self-made girl." This series deals with "The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl." It is really the story of a girl living in a country village who is filled with a desire to make a name for herself in the world, and therefore comes to London, practically penniless, and by her beauty and brains builds up for herself a great name.

The series will be a short one, and will be followed by another series absolutely different from anything which has already appeared. Society and its doings will be left for a time, and fresh ground broken. "The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl" begin in *Short Stories* for March 7th.

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Our new serial has been specially written for us by Mr. R. Norman Silver, whose previous tales—"The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told Off Duty," and other stories—are well known to the readers of this paper.

The opening instalment, which will be a very big one, crammed with striking situations, will appear in *Short Stories* for March 7th.

OUR NEW COMPETITION.

The preparations for starting this competition are now practically complete, and I am sure, when you see it, that it will strike you as being one of the most delightful and profitable forms of recreation yet devised. The prize will be a cash one, and the time occupied in doing the competition will not interfere with the time you may presently occupy in other competitions. This competition will start in *Short Stories* for March 7th.

So you see altogether that *Short Stories* for March 7th will be a bumper number, and that it will be crammed from cover to cover with startling prizes and splendid fiction.

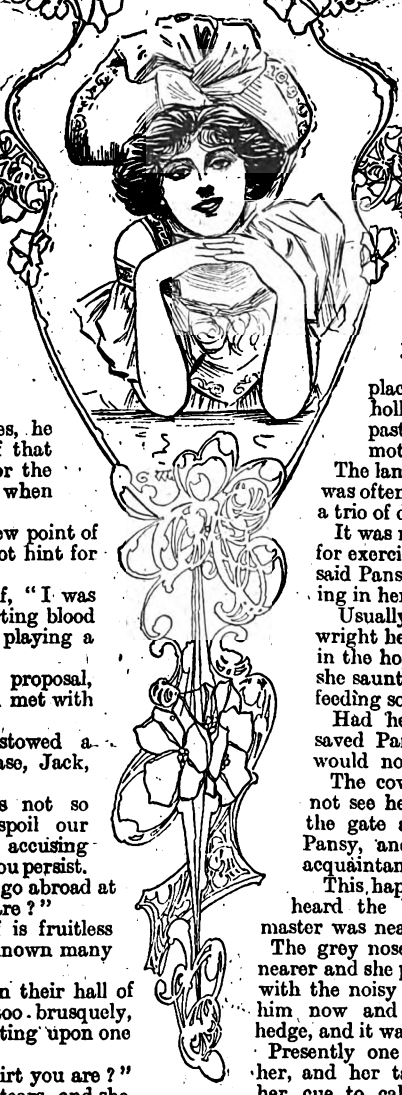
There will be a very great rush on that issue, and it will be advisable for you as the time draws near just to give your newsagent a hint that he must keep your copy for you, otherwise he might be inclined to sell it to anyone who may rush in before you have time to get round.

Your Editor.

The winner of the £10 offered in the third "Dayton" Competition is Mr. J. Willcock, 72 Kirglake Street, Liverpool.

Digitized by Google

Love's Last Laugh.



The Tale of a Country Courtship.

It was only a question of weeks, possibly months. You will guess, if you read a little way, and the details of the matter are of small concern to the world.

Still, Tom Morleigh was far from thinking that Pansy was as good as his, although he had reached her heart, as he thought a long way.

Like most of his gender in such cases, he revelled for a while in the placid belief that when the time came she would be his for the asking. The shock of disillusion came when he offered his hand.

Her prompt rejection gave him a new point of view in regard to women, but it did not hint for a moment that the cause was lost.

"It's the old story," he told himself, "I was too sure." The incident stirred his sporting blood and made him resolve to win her by playing a stronger game.

In due season there came a second proposal, and a third came in quick order. Each met with a definite negative.

Upon the second sally Pansy bestowed a charitable smile, and remarked: "Please, Jack, don't be silly."

The next time he tried it she was not so patient. "You seem determined to spoil our Summer," she said, as though she were accusing him of a black conspiracy. "Really, if you persist, there is nothing for mamma and I but to go abroad at once. Have you any idea how rude you are?"

One of the tasks a man soon tires of is fruitless proposing. Romance and reality have known many noble exceptions.

Morleigh was not cut out for a seat in their hall of fame. He answered her last question too brusquely, of course, but love and hate are ever waiting upon one another.

"Have you any idea what a heartless flirt you are?" were his words. It was Pansy's cue for tears, and she took it copiously, making the while a hurried exit, or rather an entrance through the French window.

Morleigh remained standing on the verandah a moment, and, thanks to his changing point of view, took new heart. He began to pat himself for his keen penetration.

"Those tears are all right," he said, gleefully. "I'll have another go."

The day came, and he looked in at "Elmwood," but the maid, with blighting alacrity, announced that Miss Arkwright was not in.

As she said it, a man's laugh that he knew well and detested plagued his ear. It came loudly, aggressively, it seemed to him, from the dining-room.

"Even that silly ape would not sit and guffaw to himself," he reasoned. "Of course she's with him."

Despite the new eyes with which he had begun to survey womankind, the outlook seemed serious, even hopeless. He climbed into his trap and drove down the avenue of elms, convinced that he was cast for the *role* of one who had loved and lost.

"And that bounder wins! By Jove! It isn't right at all! What in thunder does she see in him?" and more of this tenor until he drove into his own stable-yard and threw the reins to his man.

A fine grove of firs at the east end of his place was bordered by a lane high hedged with holly. On its other side stretched the level pasture lands that belonged to Pansy's mother.

The lane wound its way to the sea shore, and Jack was often seen there in the days that followed with a trio of dogs frolicking about him.

It was remarkable how often he took those dogs for exercise and a bath since the day that the maid said Pansy was not in and he heard the ape laughing in her drawing-room.

Usually he kept an eye cocked over the Arkwright hedge—one had to be pretty tall for that—in the hopes of seeing her, for it was in that field she sauntered now and then, when the cows were feeding somewhere else.

Had he looked to-day as usual he would have saved Pansy a big fright, but their engagement would not have been announced so soon.

The cowman was the primary cause. He did not see her in that field, of course, when he opened the gate and let in the cattle; but the cows saw Pansy, and straightway approached to make her acquaintance.

This happened at about the moment that Pansy heard the bark of Jack's dogs, and knew that the master was near at hand.

The grey noses and swishing tails came nearer and nearer and she pressed closer to the hedge, moving along with the noisy dogs on the other side. She could see him now and again through a narrow opening in the hedge, and it was good to know that he was there.

Presently one of the bold Jerseys was walking beside her, and her tail almost brushed her back. This was her cue to call for help, even upon a man who had bored her with silly proposals.

"Jack," she cried.

He started and caught a glimpse of her blue skirts between the hedge rifts.

"Jack!" came her voice again. "I am—I am at home to-day. Won't you look in—jump in—over the hedge—quick—I've something to tell you."

It was an impossible leap, but there are more things than locksmiths that love laughs at. One is a holly hedge when the man is determined and is not afraid of torn clothes and a scratched face.

The dogs managed to dash through with him, pell-mell, and had a fine chase after the Jersey, who took to her heels at this rude interruption of her friendly *tête-à-tête* with the maid.

Somehow, their engagement was understood from that moment, and he did not have to bore her by proposing. So you were right in guessing from the way Pansy carried on at the outset that it was only a matter of time—and golden opportunity.

Henry W. Thomas.

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

The Release.

"Now, who talks first?" Brett cried, once the door was fairly closed behind them.

"I do," burst forth Fairholme. "My story will not take long to tell, and if I do not get it off my chest, I shall simply explode."

"We must not have any more tragedies," said Brett, "so proceed."

"Well, thanks to your foresight, I found the two servants and your ex-policeman waiting for me on the platform at Charing Cross. As I only carried a handbag I had no trouble with the Customs, and we walked straight out of the station. In less than five minutes we were standing outside the building which contained the invalid lady's flat. Your agent told me that, so far as he knew, there were no other persons in the place except the tenant and her two servants, an elderly French or Italian married couple. Our collective wits could not devise a plausible pretext for gaining access to the lady, so I determined to settle the business in the brutal British fashion. We marched quietly up the stairs to the second storey, and your assistant pointed out the right door. There were only two flats on that landing, and the other one was apparently empty. Your man had made a somewhat important discovery since he wrote to you. This empty flat had been taken by the agent who acted for the parties opposite, and although the place was not tenanted, the landlord was, of course, satisfied, as the rent had been paid in advance. This seemed to indicate that the place was left vacant simply to prevent the others from being overlooked."

Brett marked his appreciation of Fairholme's sagacity by a nod, and the earl continued:

"I rang the bell and promptly put my ear to the keyhole. It seemed to me that a couple of doors were hastily closed, and then someone slowly approached. The outer door was opened and a man's head appeared. I could only see his face and a portion of his left shoulder, because the chain was on the door, and the opening was not more than eight or ten inches. Speaking in broken English he said—

"'Vat you vant?' His accent showed that he was a Frenchman.

"I answered in my best French, 'I wish to see madame, your mistress, at once.'

"'It is impossible,' he said in the same language, and simultaneously he tried to shut the door in my face. I shoved my foot against the jamb and prevented him. At the same instant my own servant and I—as, if there was to be trouble, I thought it best to keep the others out of it—applied our utmost force to the door and succeeded in snapping the chain. It might have been a tough job, as you know that to force a way through anything that yields slightly and yet holds fast is much more difficult than to smash a lock or a couple of bolts. Luckily the flats were jerry built, so the chain broke, and so suddenly that the Frenchman was pitched violently backwards. We nearly fell after him. The ex-policeman was a splendid chap. His first idea was to jump towards the switch of the electric lights and turn on every lamp in the place.

"I shouted, 'Talbot, are you there? It is I, Fairholme.'

"I got no answer, but a woman darted out of a room which proved to be the kitchen, screamed something which I could not catch, and handed a revolver to the Frenchman, who was just struggling to his feet. That was where my prize-fighting butler came in useful. Before you could say 'Wink' he gave the man an upper cut that settled him effectually for the next minute. Almost with the same movement he caught the woman a slap over the ear that upset her nerves considerably. She had a revolver in her hand too. It fell to the floor, and Smith, your servant, seized both weapons.

"The ex-policeman called out:

"'I do not think we are making any mistake, sir. They would not act after this manner if they were on the square.'

"I must say it seemed to me that so far it was we who had been acting in an extraordinary way, but there was no time to discuss the ethics of the case then. Whilst my butler and Smith took care of the couple, your assistant and I hastily examined three rooms. They were empty, save for a small quantity of furniture. The fourth door resisted our efforts, so, of course, we burst it open. And the first thing that met our eyes was poor old Jack lying on his back on the bed, and glaring at us in a way that made me think at first he was mad."

"I should think so," interrupted Talbot. "I would like to see your face if you were trussed up as I was—not able to speak a word—and a fiendish row going on in the passage outside."

"You were gagged," questioned Brett, "and your wrists and ankles were secured to the four corners of the bed, your limbs being distended in the form of an X?"

Fairholme glanced round admiringly. "Of course," he cried delightedly, "I knew you would guess it. That is the pleasant way these Turks have of securing their prisoners."

"It is an awfully uncomfortable one," said Talbot. "My joints are still stiff at the mere recollection of it. I have lain in that way, Mr. Brett, for countless hours. Occasionally the brutes would allow me to change my posture, but the moment anyone came to the door I was strapped up in an instant and a gag slipped into my mouth. What used to make me so furious was the knowledge that if only I got the chance of a second I could have broken that Frenchman's neck, and escaped, but he and his wife always took such precautions that I never had the liberty to do more than reach with some difficulty the food that they gave me. However, I must not interrupt."

"I really have not much more to say," went on Fairholme.

Digitized by Google

"You may be sure it did not take me long to release Talbot, and what do you think his first words were when he slowly sat up in bed and tried if his legs would bend?"

"I cannot guess," said Brett.

"He said: 'Have they got the diamonds?'

"I answered 'Yes.'

"'But it was impossible,' he said. 'They could not have mastered all those policemen.'

"'But they did,' I replied and then and there, before he would budge an inch, he made me tell him the whole story. Just as I had ended we heard a scuffle in the passage. We went out, though Jack was hardly able to walk at first. It was Smith wrestling with the woman, who was a regular wild cat, and who would, even then, have done us any mischief in her power. There was nothing for it but to tie her hands behind her back, and then fasten her securely in a chair. After this was done we took council as to our next movements."

"Wait a little," said Brett. "How many rooms were there in the flat? You have accounted for four."

"I forgot," said Fairholme. "The place had six rooms. The small apartment in which Jack was confined was a sort of dressing room, and the bedroom beyond looked out into the well of the block of flats. They had carefully nailed the blinds of this dressing-room, so that not even a chance puff of wind could blow it aside and reveal its secret to anyone in the flats on the opposite storey or higher. The remaining room was empty. Your friend the policeman subsequently searched the place from top to toe, but he found nothing. The only document of any importance was an address on a card which he discovered in the Frenchman's pocket."

"Ah," said Brett, "what was that address?"

"Here it is."

The earl produced a small piece of pasteboard on which was scribbled, "Monsieur Jean Beaujolais, chez Monsieur Henri de Lisle, 41 Rue Bonnerie, Paris."

"That is important," said the barrister. "Why did you not wire it to me last night?"

"I had a reason," said the earl eagerly, "but that comes in with Jack's part of the story." And he turned towards Talbot, who, thus summoned on to the stage, began to explain matters.

Jack Talbot's Story.

"I UNDERSTAND, Mr. Brett," he said, "that you are accurately acquainted with all that transpired until the moment when I entered the Albert Gate mansion on that remarkable night?"

"That is so," said Brett.

"Well, when Inspector Sharpe met me at the door on my arrival he told me that his Excellency Mehemet Ali, with three strange gentlemen and the junior members of the commission, awaited me in the dining-room. I went in and was surprised to find the three visitors, for during the preceding month not a single stranger had entered the house save a member of the Government and one or two important officials of the Foreign Office, who came with me out of sheer curiosity to see a collection of remarkable diamonds.

"The strangers bowed politely when I was introduced. Two of them spoke neither French nor English, but the third man spoke French fluently. He had, by the way, a somewhat peculiar accent, different from that to which I was accustomed in the Turks. It was softer, more sibilant, and impressed me as that of a man who was accustomed to speak Italian. He was a good-looking chap, about my height and build, and, were it not for his brown skin, one would not have regarded him as a Turk. One side of his face was deeply scarred with a sword-cut, but, if anything, this did not detract from his appearance, and it gave a manly aspect to an otherwise effeminate face."

Brett could not help smiling involuntarily.

"Are you sure it was a sword-cut?"

"It certainly looked like one."

"And his skin was very brown?"

"Oh, quite. Indeed it was a shade deeper than that of most Turks. I have seen very many of them. Although dark-featured they are often pallid enough in reality, and their deep-hued complexion is due more to their black hair and eyebrows and dark eyes than to the mere colour of the skin."

Brett smiled again.

"I think," he said, "I will show you the same gentleman in a somewhat different aspect. But proceed."

"The explanation given to me by Mehemet Ali was both extraordinary and disconcerting, especially at such a late hour. He told me that the three gentlemen to whom I had been introduced—I am sorry, by the way, that I cannot remember their names, as they were all Mohammeds, or Rasuls, or Ibrahims, and the dramatic events of the night subsequently drove them from my mind—had been sent post haste from Constantinople on a special mission. They had indeed only reached London that night, and they bore with them a special mandate signed by the Sultan himself, directing Mehemet Ali to hand over the diamonds to their charge, and to at once return with his assistants to Yildiz Kiosk.

"There could be no questioning the authenticity of the Sultan's instructions. The document was in his own handwriting, was indorsed with his private seal, and conveyed other distinguishing marks which rendered his Excellency assured on this important point. He told me that he was compelled to obey implicitly, and were it possible he would have started from London that night. This, however, was out of the question, but he had not lost a moment in sending for me, and acquainting me with his Majesty's wishes.

"You will readily perceive that the affair placed me in an awkward predicament. I was, so to speak, representing the British Government in the matter, and the Foreign Office had pledged itself, through our Ambassador at Constantinople, to undertake all the precautions for safeguarding the diamonds with which you are acquainted. It seemed to me that, notwithstanding the urgency of the Sultan's order, I should not be doing my duty to permit the transfer to be made in such an irregular manner. So I said quite plainly that the matter could not be settled that night. They must all wait until the morning, when I would have an opportunity of consulting my department, and Mehemet Ali, together with his aides, could leave for Constantinople by the evening train, after my superiors had been acquainted with the Sultan's wishes.

"Turks are difficult people to understand. It seemed to me that my decision gave some satisfaction to Mehemet Ali, who was undoubtedly very much upset by the queer manner in which he had been deposed from his important trust. At once an animated discussion took place."

"In French?" interrupted Brett.

"No; in Turkish."

"Did the gentleman with the sabre-cut on his face take any part therein?"

"Not in the least. He sat and smoked cigarettes in the most unconscious manner possible, leaving his two associates to carry on the conversation."

Digitized by Google

As the barrister appeared to have no further question to ask at the moment Talbot continued :

"Several times Mehemet Ali appealed to me to change my mind and formally ratify the transfer at once. I was quite firm in my refusal, and did not hesitate to describe the Sultan's demands as ridiculous. I was rendered more determined, if anything, in this attitude by a growing certainty in my mind that his Excellency himself approved of my attitude. Ultimately, it seems, they hit upon a compromise. The whole party would remain together all night in a sort of dual control, and then the change of guardianship would take place next day in accordance with my views as to what was right and proper. I must admit I was intensely relieved when this decision was arrived at. Looking back now over the events of the night, I can perceive that from that moment the gang who effected the murders and the robbery had me in their power, for they had completely succeeded in allaying my suspicions, and I can only plead in extenuation of my short-sightedness that Mehemet Ali himself, and the other gentlemen with whom I had been acquainted during the past month, were willing accessories to the arrangement."

"I do not see," said Brett, "that you have the slightest cause to reproach yourself. You acted quite properly throughout, and I am sure that when all the facts are known your status at the Foreign Office will be improved rather than diminished by this incident."

The other man's face flushed with pleasure as he heard these words.

"Thank you," he replied simply. "I certainly took every precaution that suggested itself to me. Subsequently I was the victim of circumstances. The French-speaking Turk, as I have told you, took no part whatever in the negotiations, and when he became aware of the *modus operandi* determined upon——"

"By the way," said Brett, "how did he become aware of it?"

"Oh, Mehemet Ali told him in French."

"Didn't that strike you as curious?"

"Most certainly it did. But the scoundrel explained it afterwards by telling me that, although a Turkish subject, he had lived in Algiers and France since he was a child, and had quite forgotten his mother tongue. But he was employed in a confidential position in the Turkish Embassy at Paris, owing not only to family influence, but to his intimate acquaintance with the French language."

"Ah," said Brett, "Monsieur Henri Dubois has a ready wit."

The Surprise.

"What!" cried Edith, who naturally enough, was following each word with the utmost keenness, "do you already know his name?"

"Not only his name," replied Brett, "but his identity, Miss Talbot. You shall see him in another skin and without the sword-cut. It is possible, however, that before we meet, this distinguishing mark may be replaced by a fractured skull or a bullet wound."

Fairholme suddenly clenched his right fist and examined his knuckles, his unconscious action causing the others to laugh.

"Is he a Frenchman, then?" said Talbot.

"Unquestionably—a most modern product."

"And his name is Dubois?"

"Yes."

"All right. In future I will allude to him by his proper title. Well, Monsieur Dubois came over to me with the easy confidence of a man who was sure of himself.

"'This affair bores me,' he said. 'I see no reason why I, who am in no way concerned with the Sultan's collection of precious stones, should sit up all night keeping guard over them with these very earnest gentlemen here. I am going to my hotel. I have sent my portmanteau to the Carlton. Will you honour me by driving there and telling me something about your wonderful London as we go?'

"The man looked at me with a meaning in his eyes that conveyed quite plainly the intimation :

INDIGESTION

MRS. MARIA JANE WALLIS, 14 Suffolk Road, Ipswich, writes: "For 16 years I suffered from Indigestion and Bad Breath. I could not sleep at night. Food which I ate gave me severe pain; I also had very bad headaches. I went to several hospitals, and was attended by more than one doctor. I heard of Bile Beans, and obtained some. After the first few doses I began to feel some benefit. I persevered with the Beans, and am pleased to say that I am now completely cured."

Bile Beans for Biliousness cure Headache, Influenza, Constipation, Piles, Liver Troubles, Bad Breath, Rheumatism, Colds, Liver Chills, Indigestion, Debility, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Chemists or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., on receipt of price, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per box.

ONE BEAN ONE DOSE.

BILE BEANS for BILIOUSNESS

Kaputine THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia. Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

The Editor of the "Family Doctor," the People's Medical Paper, IN ONE OF HIS COMMENTS, SAYS:

"After a careful examination of Kaputine, and learning its component parts, we should certainly recommend it as a Safe and Reliable Remedy for Headache."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-, of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield, for 12 stamps.

Digitized by Google

"'We can talk quietly in the cab, and I can explain much to you that is at present hidden.' Unfortunately I fell in with his suggestions.

"We crossed the dining-room together. We were searched by the police in the hall, much to his apparent surprise, and then we drove off through St. George's Place.

"He at once aroused my curiosity by telling me of a wide-spread plot to dethrone the Sultan. An essential part of the conspiracy was to obtain possession of the diamonds before they had been cut, as they were an heirloom from the Prophet, and it would be a terrible thing in the eyes of the more fanatical section of the Mohammedans if they were tampered with in any way.

"This sounded reasonable enough, as the same story had been dinned in my ears for several weeks.

"He made out that for reasons of State the Sultan had decided to change the Minister Plenipotentiary charged with the secret Mission to London.

"Altogether he talked so candidly, and with such an air of treating the whole business as the bugbear of a timid monarch, that I readily believed him."

"At last we reached the Carlton. We got out and he paid the cabman, who drove off round the corner; then my new acquaintance explained to me that he placed no greater trust in his fellow-countrymen than did their ruler. Therefore he had led them to believe he was staying at that hotel, whereas he had in reality taken up his abode in the flat of a French family with whom he was acquainted. If I would come with him for a moment he promised to place me in possession of certain documents which would render easy my explanations to the Foreign Office next morning.

"I accompanied him without hesitation, secure in the knowledge that a strong force of police were guarding my charge at Albert Gate, both inside and outside the house. We went to the mansions where he said he lived. The place had a perfectly respectable exterior, and is situated, as you know, in a reputable thoroughfare. We ascended to the second floor, entered the flat, and were ushered by a middle-aged French-woman into a sort of sitting-room.

"Dubois turned to a writing-desk and unlocked a drawer.

"'Here are the documents I promised you, Mr. Talbot,' he said; but, to my amazement, he whipped out a revolver and held it within two feet of my breast.

"'If you move, or attempt to cry out, you are a dead man!' he cried.

"At the same instant a door behind me opened and some three or four persons entered. I was so furious at the trick that had been played upon me that I disregarded his threat and sprang at him, but he did not fire. Flinging the revolver behind him on the writing-table he closed with me. Before I well knew what had happened I was tied hand and foot, gagged, and placed helpless in a chair. A few minutes later, after a muttered consultation between my captors, I was taken to the room in which Fairholme found me, and I never left the place until nearly nine o'clock last night.

"It was a most ghastly experience. I would sooner die than go through it again.

"If ever I get within measurable distance of Monsieur Henri Dubois I promise you that I will repay him with interest some of the agony which he inflicted upon me. I never thought I should hate a man as I hate that Frenchman. I do not want to kill him. I want to torture him!"

This was the first sign that Talbot had given of the anger which filled his soul. For a moment no one spoke. Edith stifled a sob, and Sir Hubert Fitzjames broke the tension by swearing as vehemently as ever did the Army in Flanders.

"You have suffered," said Brett quietly, "but not in vain. It is only by the manner in which these blackguards treated you that we have obtained so much knowledge. Your capture was a necessary part of their scheme. I only wonder now that after you had served their purpose they did not kill you. It was not out of pity, believe me. The fact that you were spared confirms me in the opinion that the Albert Gate murders were a gigantic blunder, never contemplated by the expert criminals who planned the theft. But continue. What happened afterwards?"

Talbot almost summoned up a smile as he said:

"Really, the next thing was so grotesque that were not the whole business so serious you would be compelled to laugh at it."

Talbot's Double.

"Looking back now to those first ghastly hours when I laid on the bed tied hand and foot, I find it difficult to recall any definite impressions. It would be absurd to say that I suffered, either mentally or physically. I was sunk in a sort of stupor of rage, and my bonds did not hurt me so long as I kept still. Curiously enough, my thoughts were somewhat altruistic. Instead of speculating upon my own fate I rather wondered what would be the outcome of the whole mysterious business. I could not bring myself to believe that, cleverly as the rogues had outwitted me, they would be able to similarly 'dupe' a strong body of Metropolitan police, not to mention Mehemet Ali and his assistants.

"At last I fell asleep, dozing fitfully at first, but finally giving way to the deep slumber of exhaustion.

"I was awakened by someone shaking me, though not roughly. It took me some time to recover my scattered senses, and at first I was almost unable to move, owing to the constrained position of my limbs. As well as I could judge it was not yet daylight, for the electric lamps were turned on, and I subsequently found that such rays of natural light as penetrated into my room during the day did not arrive for a considerable time.

"Thenceforth, of course, my sole method of judging the progress of time was by the alternation of meals and the difference of light between day and night.

"Someone assisted me to assume a sitting posture, the cords attached to my wrists were relaxed, and I was firmly held by two men—one a Turk whom I had not seen before, the other the Frenchman whom you found in the flat.

"At the foot of the bed were standing Dubois and a closely-veiled female—a young woman, as well as I could judge, and a person of tall and elegant stature, who, it would appear, spoke only French.

"Dubois addressed me calmly. 'I hope,' he said, 'you are in a better temper, my dear Talbot?'

"'It does not appear to me that the state of my temper is of any material significance,' I answered.

"'No,' he replied nonchalantly. 'The game is in my hands, and will probably remain there for a considerable period. But I do not wish to be unkind. You have, I am given to understand, a highly respectable uncle and a very charming sister, who will no doubt suffer much perturbation owing to your mysterious disappearance. Now, you may not think it, but I am a very humane sort of fellow. Consequently, I am quite agreeable that you should write them a brief note, omitting, of course, all superfluous information such as dates, addresses, and other embarrassing facts, but simply telling them that you are well. I will guarantee its safe delivery.'

"Naturally, I jumped at the offer. The veiled lady supplied

(Continued on page 190.)

Digitized by Google

The Cure of Deafness After Specialists Fail.

In the December "Supplement" to the "Journal for the Deaf," the Editor notes a case of deafness of many years' duration, pronounced incurable by one Aurist, and discharged uncured by a celebrated London Hospital after an operation and eight months' treatment had failed. In face of such a failure it is surprising to find a perfect cure by the Drouet Method, vouched for as follows by the patient, Mr. T. De Courcey Rayner, of 128 High Street, West Norwood, London, S.E.:—"I am grateful to be able to say that my hearing seems to be all right now, as I can hear my watch quite distinctly from the other side of the room." Those who wish to read the full details of this case, as well as a large number of similar instances, can obtain a free copy of the "Supplement" and of "The Journal for the Deaf" by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The "Journal" also contains a Special Report Form by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to the treatment of Deafness, and Ear, Nose and Throat diseases. The Editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination during the Consultation hours, weekday mornings, 10 to 12, afternoons, 2 to 4. For personal consultations a fee of 5s is charged.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM
(CLOTTED); absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free. Supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.**

SEND A POST-CARD NOW
By return of post, you will receive
H. SAMUEL'S BIG FREE ALBUM.
A Magnificently Illustrated Guide, showing how by discarding shopkeeper's profits and **going straight** to the Factory
YOU SAVE POUNDS UPON POUNDS,
getting goods of the highest value and
POCKETING MIDDLE PROFITS YOURSELF!
Contains nearly 200 Pages, over 3,000 **Engravings** of Astounding Bargains. Ladi s' Gold Watches, 20/-; Gent's Silver Watches from 8/6; Gold Gem **Rings, 3/6;** Cutlery, Clocks, and **all Household requirements at**
LOWEST FACTORY PRICES.
A GRAND SERIES OF FREE PRIZES.
MAKE YOUR SELECTION WHEN ORDERING.
Send Post-card Now! We Send Next Mail.
H. SAMUEL, Dept. 29, MARKET ST., **MANCHESTER.**

To CURE Drunkards

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

STAMP COLLECTORS.
Send for our new 64-page list of Foreign Stamps, Albums, &c. Over 250 illustrations. Best value anywhere.
ERNEST WOOD & Co.,
Chorlton-cum-Hardy, MANCHESTER

RUBBER STAMPS.
Self-inking Pen & Pencil
RUBBER STAMP WITH YOUR NAME, in this style:-
Cecil A. Lawrence.
4½D. POST FREE.
ERNEST WOOD & Co.,
Chorlton-cum-Hardy, MANCHESTER.

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles
10 Guineas AND 15 Guineas } Or from a Guinea per month.
The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.
TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.
45, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY
BUNTER'S Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.
Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d. **NERVINE**
"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE
KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS
Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints, etc.
For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.
Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box.

Order
E. & T.
PINK's JAM
Undoubtedly the Best.
PURE.
No Artificial Colouring or Chemical Preservative.

Digitized by Google

me with a sheet of note-paper and an envelope, and I scribbled the unfortunate letter which was subsequently posted in Paris and caused such a sensation. I had only one hand at liberty, so Dubois politely offered to seal the envelope for me, first, however, reading carefully what I had written.

"'That is quite correct,' he said; 'it will relieve their feelings and prove at the same time highly serviceable to me, as the letter will be posted in Paris and not in London. You see, my dear Talbot, how readily you fall in with my plans. You are as putty in my hands. Now, I suppose, being a brave Englishman, you would sooner have died than written this letter if you had guessed it would prove of material assistance to me?'

"I fear I used some very bad language to Dubois, notwithstanding the presence of the lady, but he paid little heed to me, and the pair at once undertook the most curious proceedings I have ever witnessed.

"They had before them a table set out with all sorts of paint, paste, and powders, such as one might expect to find in an actor's dressing-room.

"Seating himself astride a chair so that the light fell full upon his face, Dubois submitted himself to the skilful hands of the woman, who forthwith began to make him up in an exact resemblance to me. The right side of his face was towards me, but when, in obedience to her requirements, he turned somewhat, I noticed to my astonishment that the scar which I have mentioned had completely disappeared, and then it dawned upon me that his Turkish complexion had also vanished, leaving him a particularly white-skinned Frenchman, with a high colour.

"Ah," said Brett, leaning back in his chair and attentively surveying the ceiling.

"You must remember," went on Talbot, "that my wits were somewhat confused by the extraordinary circumstances of the hour. Having been so suddenly awakened from a sound sleep, and subsequently annoyed by the incident of the letter, it took me some moments to recognise these discrepancies in his appearance. At first, so to speak, I knew him immediately as Dubois, but the more I looked at him the less confident I would have been were it not that his voice and manner supplied unerring indications of his identity.

"The lady proceeded with her work in the most business-like fashion, and to my intense amazement he quickly assumed a marked resemblance to myself. Not such, perhaps, as would bear close scrutiny, but rather the effect attained by a skilful artist in a rapid sketch, or caught by a fleeting glance whilst passing a mirror.

"'What is the game now?' I cried, when the true nature of their purpose dawned upon me.

"'Oh, just the same,' replied Dubois, grinning, 'I merely wish to puzzle the thick-headed brains of you Englishmen a little more. That is all.'

"'Halloa!' I cried, 'you understand English?'

"'Yes,' he answered coolly. 'It is frequently necessary in my business.'

"'Well,' I said, 'there can be no doubt that you are an accomplished villain. What you intend to achieve by masquerading in this fashion I utterly fail to understand. You can never be such a fool as to think that you will be able to gain admittance to Albert Gate by impersonating me. Were you even to succeed you would still be as far off as ever from securing your booty, which, I suppose, is the Imperial diamond and its companions.'

"'Really,' he said, with a sneer, 'I thought that you, Mr. Talbot, were endowed with a little more intelligence than the average. *Pardon*, Mignon, for a moment.'

"He rose from his chair, unfastened a case which he took from the breast-pocket of his overcoat, and showed me the diamonds which had been the object of so much care and solicitude on my part during many weeks.

"'You see,' he continued, seating himself again, whilst the lady resumed her task without a word, 'the business has been satisfactorily accomplished, Mr. Talbot. The diamonds are here; so are you. Unfortunately his Excellency and the secretaries are with the Prophet. You will, I am sure, express my regrets to the police, to the Foreign Office, and to all concerned, that the Sultan's commissionaires should have been so unceremoniously dispatched to Paradise. It was not my fault, believe me, nor was it altogether necessary. I am in no way responsible for the bungling measures adopted by my Turkish assistants. You see, in Constantinople they are accustomed to these drastic means of settling disputes.'

"He rattled on so pleasantly that I hardly grasped the true significance of his words, so I replied with almost equal flippancy:

"'I will be most pleased to convey your regrets to the proper authorities. May I ask when I shall be at liberty to do so?'

"'Ah,' he said, 'there you puzzle even my intelligence. It will certainly be days, it may be weeks, before you can communicate with your friends.'"

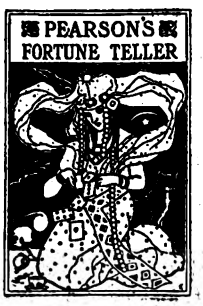
(Another instalment next week.)

She: "Anything that is worth winning is worth working for." He: "Yes, but the question is, will your father thaw or will I have to keep on working for you after I've won you?"

He: "You have only to command me. I will do anything you say." She: "Anything?" He: "Yes, I'll drive over that precipice into the river if you bid me." She: "Then stop, please, and let me get out."

"That professor says that Shakespeare's women are not intellectual." "Of course not. Look at Ophelia, going out in the woods and picking flowers when she might have made Hamlet buy them for her."

"Gertrude, I've brought you home two bushels of artificial violets." "Two bushels! Have you lost your mind?" "No, but I heard you say you wished you had as many on your hat as that girl next door."



PEARSON'S FORTUNE-TELLER.

By Professor P. R. S. Foli.

Crown 8vo, cloth, price 1s., *post free* 1s. 2d.

Some of the subjects in this interesting book are:

Augury by Birds—What Birds Foretell—Astrology—Gipsy Fortune-tellers—Antiquity of Card Reading—Charms—Christmas Customs—Facts About and Instances of Clairvoyance—Crystal Gazing—The Crystal Globe—Three Kinds of Vision—Magnetic Precious Stones—Divination by a Wedding Ring, by Dominoes, by Palmistry, by Rods, Teacups, and by the Wheel of Fortune—The Divining Rod—Odds and Ends of Omens—Advice and Hints for Beginners in Fortune-telling—Gipsies—Hallowe'en Charms—Lucky Stars—Mesmerism Supersedes Witchcraft—Lines on the Hand in Palmistry—Precious Stones and their Meanings—The Koh-i-noor—Psychometry—Rings and Bridecake—The Voice of Rings—Wedding Rings—Teacup Fortune-telling—When to Expect a Visitor—Picking up Horseshoes—Good and Bad Luck—Quaint Ceremonies—Snap-dragon, etc., etc.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To the Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of Pearson's Fortune Teller" for which I inclose the sum of one shilling and twopence.

Name.....

Address.....

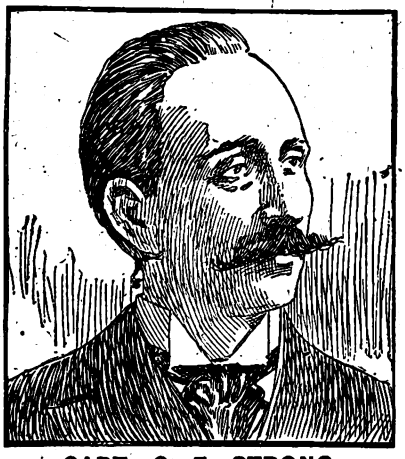
Digitized by Google

INSTANTANEOUS HYPNOTISM.

Remarkable Experiments of Captain C. F. Strong, of Dryden, N. Y., Discloses the Tremendous Power of Hypnotic Influence.

How to Control the Minds of Others Without Their Knowledge.

"I can produce hypnosis instantaneously by the mere passing of my hand and a single word," says Capt. C. F. Strong, of Dryden, New York. "So far I have been able to control every one whom I have tried to influence. I am now treating a case of paralysis with remarkable success, and will effect a permanent cure. My own success with the new science has been most phenomenal, and I believe that every man that wishes to get the most out of life should understand the science of hypnotism and personal magnetism. It is a subject that can be easily mastered by any person of ordinary intelligence. Some time ago I wrote the American College of Sciences of Philadelphia for a copy of their free book on hypnotic influence. To my delight and surprise I found that this wonderful power largely depended upon the mastery of a few secrets which were fully and completely explained to me."



CAPT. C. F. STRONG.

"After studying the instructions for a few evenings, I selected three young men as subjects and found that I could control them perfectly. Money could not purchase the knowledge which I have already gained. Hypnotism develops within one a power and a force of character which cannot be acquired in any other way. I believe it is far more valuable than medicine in the treatment of most diseases and bad habits. It cures where medicine fails."

Five thousand copies of the handsomely illustrated work to which Capt. Strong refers are to be given away by the American College of Sciences absolutely free for the purpose of acquainting the public with the practical uses and marvellous benefits to be derived from a study of the sciences of hypnotism, personal magnetism, magnetic healing, etc. The book explains how people have been secretly influenced without their knowledge; how hypnotism may be used to develop a wonderfully magnetic personality. It treats on new processes for developing will power; how to influence people at a distance; how to make others carry out your ideas and think they are carrying out their own. How people have achieved success and grown wealthy through the practical use of hypnotic power.

The work is handsomely illustrated by half-tone engravings, and is by far the most remarkable publication of its kind ever issued. Every page is brimful of intensely interesting and practical information. It is a book that should be in every home; it is enthusiastically endorsed by the most prominent ministers of the Gospel, lawyers, doctors and business men of this country. Remember that it costs you absolutely nothing. If you want a copy write to-day. Address American College of Sciences, Dept. W L 10, 420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.

FREE BOXES TO ALL

5,000 Test Boxes to be Given to all Who Apply—John A. Smith and His Remarkable Cure for Rheumatism and Gout.

If you are a sufferer from Rheumatism or Gout, send your name to John A. Smith, 1007, Montague House, Stonecutter Street, London, E.C., and he will send you a box of Gloria Tonic; also the most elaborately-illustrated book, "Rheumatism: its Causes and Cure," and 300 recent cures. This book contains many illustrations from actual life, and will tell you all about your case. Never before has a remedy been so highly endorsed as Gloria Tonic.

Deformity of the hands in general Chronic Articular Rheumatism. Type No. 1.

If it is properly used, it should cure Rheumatism, no matter if of one or fifty years' standing. Remember, this remedy has cured thousands whom hospitals and doctors failed to cure. It has cured hundreds who were enslaved to crutches, and who never expected to walk again. Decrepit persons of 70 years and over, among them some who were even unable to clothe or feed themselves, were completely cured through this wonderful remedy. This is not mere idle talk nor deception, but a fact which I can prove by references from 5,000 persons. It recently cured a gentleman of 74 who had been a sufferer for 30 years, and whom seven physicians failed to cure.

Deformity of the hands in general Chronic Articular Rheumatism, Type No. 2

Gloria Tonic contains no poisons such as Opiates, Salycilate, Calomel, nor any other preparation of Mercury or Narcotics, and will not harm your stomach, heart or liver. Send your name to-day, for I am anxious that everybody should have a test box of this wonderful remedy. Send no stamps nor money.

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Taking His Arm.

"Ought a girl to take her lover's arm without waiting for him to initiate the process?" asks "Dora," who has been walking out with a young man for six months, but he has never once taken her arm. Would it be forward if she took his arm without waiting for an overture from him?

* * * *

I think a man who has been walking with a girl on terms of intimacy for six months and has never offered her his arm must be either very lukewarm or very shy. "Dora" knows which defect it is in his case. If I were "Dora" I should certainly take his arm, and teach him in whatever other way she may like, the lesser arts of love-making, which are not to be neglected.

A Girl Above Him.

"Charlie" paid attentions while on his holidays to a lady much his superior in position. Despairing of ever being able to offer her marriage, he has discontinued the attentions. But all the time he believes she is very fond of him and wonders why he has turned cool.

* * * *

It is quite right of "Charlie" not to pursue an attachment which cannot have a satisfactory result to both parties. But he should not allow the girl to suspect him of infidelity. It would be better to tell her the whole circumstances, and leave it to her to instruct him in his conduct. If she is in a good position, perhaps she will have some means of helping "Charlie" to improve his own, and thereby pave the way for a union some time or another.

Cure For Shyness.

"Lena" tells me she suffers very much from shyness and self-consciousness towards other people. This means that she does not get the attention she would like from the opposite sex. What is the best cure for this?

* * * *

No doubt it is a form of disease, brought about by a disordered nervous state. A chat with your doctor might put you in the way of getting over the habit, perhaps, better than my advice. Probably shyness and self-consciousness arise because you are in the habit of thinking too much about yourself. Try to forget your personality. This you can do by interesting yourself in other things.

* * * *

Talk to people with a view of gaining their confidence. Become a good listener to other people's conversation. Read as many books as you can, and think over them. Take up some hobby, whether it be cooking, singing, playing the piano, or sketching, to keep your mind occupied. Then you will find that self-consciousness of yours gradually disappearing, because you will realise after all what an unimportant thing self is beside the really great and interesting matters of life.

The Worried Husband.

"My husband worries a good deal over business," writes "Martha." "But often I want his advice on home matters. Ought I to tell him of the little troubles that take place in the house or should I keep them to myself?"

* * * *

If your husband is worried over business, certainly he does not want on returning home to begin again over less important matters. If you can keep your own counsel in domestic matters, by all means do so. Spare him as much small trouble as you can, or his health will break down, which would perhaps be unfortunate for you.

Chance Acquaintances.

"Effie" met a young man while out for a walk. They got into conversation, and he asked if he might call on her and take her out again. She did not know anything about the man. Do I advise her to communicate with him?

* * * *

I suppose, "Effie," you were able to judge from the man's manner and appearance whether or not he seemed genuine. Of course only too many of these chance meetings turn out to be the reverse. I should not advise you to communicate with him until he gives you satisfactory proofs of his position and hints as to his intentions.

"How D' You Do?"

"When any one says 'How d' you do?' to me at a party, how is it correct to answer," asks "Arthur," who is only seventeen, and therefore inexperienced in social customs. "Should I say 'Very well, thank you,' or reply with another 'How d' you do??"

* * * *

Do anything except appear formal. If the person who greets you is much older, reply "Quite well, thank you," taking the greeting as extended to you in the light of a favour. If it is merely a chance acquaintance, of about your own age, answer the inquiry as you like. But boys usually have an instinctive way of getting through such little complications, and that way is generally the best liked socially.

Cousins and Kissing.

"W. J." writes me a pathetic letter. He is eighteen, and is blessed with an over-supply of female cousins and aunts. At one house he visits he has no fewer than six of the former, whose ages range from six to twenty-seven. "Ought I," he asks, "to kiss these?"

* * * *

Poor "W. J.!" Really, I think I should draw the line at all except those between seventeen and thirty. A young fellow cannot really be expected even by cousins to kiss on such a large scale. There is no rule compelling you to kiss your cousins. Most men observe the practice or otherwise, just according to the nature of the cousins. I advise you to do the same.

A Tea-Shop Problem.

"Ettie" meets a young man friend at a tea shop several nights a week. He usually comes over and joins her. When they go out he insists on paying for her refreshment. Ought she to allow him to do so?

* * * *

No, certainly not. It is neither fair to him nor to yourself. If he asks you to have tea with him, of course, he must pay, but when your meeting is quite casual, it is no affair of his. Next time he offers to, stand on your dignity, and say that you will be so very annoyed if he insists on paying your bill. That will at once put the matter right.

Cynthia

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

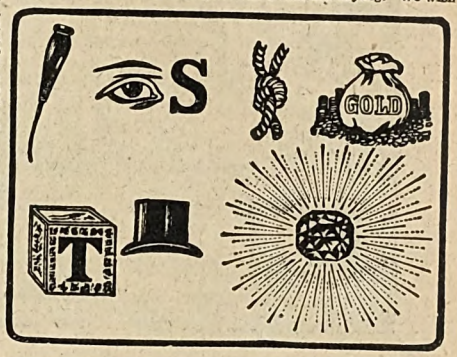
Digitized by Google

£400 TO BE GIVEN AWAY

During the past two years we have arranged several great contests for advertising our business in which the cash and other prizes have amounted to over £10,000. These contests were instructive, amusing, and profitable to all concerned. Some of the public when we first advertised these contests believed they were all humbug, but when they found that the cash and other prizes were paid they were sorry they did not compete. Of course, we did not blame them, for almost everybody has been so duped in contests that when they see one, they immediately jump to conclusions. In arranging our contests we have met with immense favour, and can show 10,000 testimonials, which speak for themselves. We assume that if you enter one of our contests, though you may not win a prize, you are satisfied if you know that it has been conducted fairly, that you have had the same opportunity as the winners, and that the money has been actually paid. This we will prove by making known the full names and addresses of winners.

Now, sometimes our contests seem very simple, and perhaps the one below may appear so, but on this point we wish to put you on your guard. Don't say "What a fool that man is. Does he take his readers for children?" No, we do not, but still you are apt to make a mistake and "jump at conclusions." What we want you to do is to solve this rebus correctly; take your time about it, even consult authorities, or consult your friends, and then if you think you are right post your answer. Probably very few will send in the right solution. Remember there is only one correct answer—the original quotation, but the prizes are worth the effort. Find the words and arrange them correctly, and remember that some of the most brilliant men of letters living have on examining this rebus given an incorrect answer

We shall give £75 in Cash for the correct reading of this rebus which represents a learned saying. We wish you to understand that there is no trick or catch about this puzzle for it is a veritable quotation from a famous author who died in the second decade of the 17th Century, and one that has been often repeated. If you cannot find and arrange the six words in this rebus correctly, but only find five, you will participate in a Second Prize of £50. Now here are £125 being given in two prizes alone, and someone is going to win the money. Is it not worth a trial? There is only one easy condition, which by the way does not involve your selling anything or putting your hand in your pocket for a penny. About this we will write you on receiving your solution.



An envelope containing the correct answer has been sealed and deposited with our bankers, and will not be opened until after the close of the contest. In the event of more than one correct solution, we shall appoint a committee of three from among the contestants to award the cash *pro rata*. The expenses of the committee will be paid to London, and £1 per day allowed to each while away from home. You may be asked but not compelled to act as one of the committee.

In connection with this contest we are going to give away other Cash prizes, namely Ten Prizes of £10, Twenty of £5, and Seventy-five Prizes of £1, the conditions with regard to which will be duly sent. You have the opportunity to secure any of the above-mentioned cash prizes without cost to yourself, and we shall send you when you answer this, the names of winners in past contests, a list too long for publication here! Every promise in this advertisement will be scrupulously carried out, and all will be treated with even-handed justice. Send your answer at once, with two stamps for postage, copy of one of our publications, testimonials, etc. If you are not satisfied with the contest you can demand and will receive the return of even this 2d., as well as the postage spent in answering this advertisement, for it is well known that we always follow the most straightforward methods. If you wish you can send 6d., when, besides the journal, conditions, etc., we will forward a charming gift that is the rage of London, and will surprise and please you. Do not delay, as the day of closing will soon be announced. Address:

NOVELTY PUBLISHING CO., Dept. 81, **8 Bream's Buildings, London, E.C.**

The Most Nutritious.

EPPS'S

Grateful—Comforting.

COCOA

Breakfast—Supper.

SONGS COPIED.

Legible as print, 5d. page; transposed correctly 6d. page. MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon. Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½% repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-: Colonies, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

DAILY EXPRESS

ONE HALFPENNY.

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.,** you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at **home at a very slight expense.**

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

GIVEN AWAY

With this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 473)

A PAPER PATTERN

of this

CHILD'S PETTICOAT.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

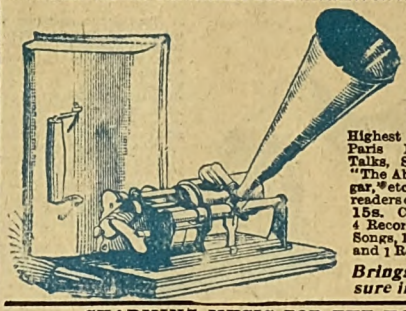
MACKINTOSH'S

Is DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

Crosfield's STAR
Pure Cane BRAND
GOLDEN SYRUP
ENTIRELY FREE FROM GLUCOSE OR ANY INJURIOUS ADMIXTURE

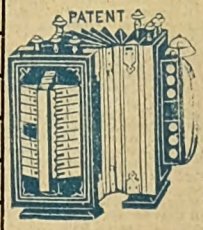
"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."
CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.
A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.



CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.
CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. **No Home should be without one.** *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*
Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, " 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, " 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, " 16/6
Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount
Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—
CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.
Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

"MATCHLESS"

DON'T
PURCHASE FOREIGN POLISHES
which as a rule set up ACID and are of a very "STICKY" nature, thus causing more labour in polishing.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH
is wholly made in England. It spreads evenly over the surface of the Metal, can be easily removed, and produces QUICKLY a LASTING brilliancy.
Guaranteed free from Acid, Poison, or Grit.

METAL POLISH

Manufacturers THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co Ltd LIVERPOOL

Digitized by Google

Short Stories.

No. 737.] Week ending February 14, 1903. [Price One Penny.

The name she wrote was not the familiar Nita Lestrange, but the unknown Benita Bennet! Where had he heard that name before?

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "The Case of Benita Bennet." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

HYPNOTISM

Its Increasing Use in Daily Life, by English People.

No Longer a Secret Art, But Now In the Hands of Thousands.

A London Publishing House Distributing Free Books on Hypnotism.

Some Strange Secrets of Personal Influence Laid Bare.

The London office of a well-known publishing house is creating a deal of surprised interest here in the subject of hypnotism and allied science by the novel method of giving away books absolutely free. By merely writing to the Psychic Research Publishing Company, Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C., you can, according to their advertisement, receive by return post a most remarkable, fascinating, and instructive illustrated book called "The Power Within." This book and accompanying literature contain some most startling information, setting forth not only how to set about it to learn hypnotism at your own home, but revealing the fact that this mysterious art is now actually being used to advantage by English people in daily life.

According to the publishers, the aim of this startling little free book is to answer such questions as occur to all interested in the mysterious relation between mind and matter.

Such questions as these, for instance:—Can I learn how to hypnotise? Why is the art not more widely known? Just how should I set about it to learn at home, and practise it? Is instantaneous hypnotism possible? What is "personal magnetism," and how is it acquired? What is the mysterious secret of the wonderful success and influence of certain people who seem most ordinary in other ways? Is there really a scientific mode of life or thought which attracts health, success, and happiness? Is it possible to thus radically change one's whole life in a few days, as many claim to have done? Is it true that humanity in general is, in a sense, hypnotised by conventionality and thus blinded to splendid opportunities for success and happiness which lie on every hand? What can I do to arouse myself from this "hypnosis of custom," and rise to the attainments which my natural ability would warrant? What must I do to become a hypnotist? To develop a magnetic, attractive, forceful character? To acquire courage, ambition, cheerfulness? To kill fear and worry? To make myself a source of happiness and inspiration to my friends?

The reader will readily see that a book, especially a free book, dealing with such vitally interesting subjects as these is arousing a lively demand, and the edition provided by the Company is being rapidly exhausted. To obtain this book, which is entitled "The Power Within," it is only necessary to send your plainly written name and address, enclosing a penny stamp for return postage, to the Psychic Research Company (Dept. 437), Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C.

As the nature of the contents of this book is of such vital interest and importance to many, it is requested that no one write out of mere curiosity. It is desired to supply the book only to those having a genuine wish to be informed on these subjects.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Costumes

THE WINTER 'ELEGANT' PARCEL.

Lady's .... Complete Outfit. 36/-

CONTAINS:

Pretty Flannelette Blouse with Velvet Collar and Cuffs, Black Costume Skirt with deep fashionable flounce and 9 rows of cording, Pair Model Corsets, very Durable Coloured Moreen Underskirt, Pair Black Cashmere Hose, Cream Lace Scarf, and Black Silk Shaped Belt with Clasp.

TERMS.

Send only 6s. with order, and if the parcel meets with entire approval, complete the purchase in five more monthly payments of 6s. each. If you are not PERFECTLY SATISFIED, return the goods, and your deposit will be refunded.

Important. When ordering please state Length of Dress Skirt in front from below waist band, also size of corsets worn, or waist measurement over Dress.

Please send a Post Card for our No. 5 CATALOGUE of Drapery, Costumes, Capes, Jackets, Mantles, Boots and Shoes, etc., etc. Sent to your address Free on receipt of Post Card.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms and particulars. No Risk. ... Good Commission.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

Kaputine THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia. Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

C. E. POPPLESTON, Esq., B.A., Mus. Doc., writing from Exeter College, Oxford, says:

"I have suffered continually from severe Headache. A medical friend advised me to try Kaputine. I did so, and in a few minutes my Headache had left me. It is a splendid remedy."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-, of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield, for 12 stamps.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 737.] [ONE PENNY.

Week Ending February 14th, 1903.

The Case of Benita Bennet.

The Story of the Righting of a Wrong.

Containing the Incident depicted on the Cover.

"You certainly don't look much like a *blushing* bride, Nita." And Peggy Carpenter looked discontentedly at the lovely, but marble-white girl who stood gazing at the wedding-dress outspread on the bed. "You don't appear very joyous, either. If *I* were going to be married to-morrow, I should be nearly off my head with joy."

"Things are different with me," replied Nita Lestrange. "Ronald's people are so opposed to our marriage that I can't feel very happy about it."

"Ronald's people," repeated Peggy, very scornfully. "His ill-tempered old grandmother, who wants him to marry an American heiress, and his twin-brother, who has never forgiven him for coming into the world ten minutes ahead, and who doesn't want Ronald to marry at all."

"You can't wonder they don't want him to marry me," remarked Nita, turning away from the bed, "a penniless girl, who earned her living as a paid companion."

"And who was so good, faithful, and devoted, that her employer left her a thousand pounds. I'm so glad auntie left you that, dearie. The two thousand she left me makes it possible for me to marry as soon as I'm out of mourning for the dear old lady. Can you fancy me a curate's wife, Nita?"

Nita shook her head as she looked at the sparkling little face full of mischief and glee.

"It seems too commonplace a marriage for such a little gay fairy," she said.

"Oh, I'm a very common-place person. For romance apply to Miss Nita Lestrange. How romantic was your meeting with auntie, for instance. You picked her up when she slipped on some orange-peel, and she was looking for a nurse-companion, and you were just the person for such a post. So you took to each other on the spot. Wasn't that romantic? Why, she might have been some wicked old wretch or you a bold adventuress for all either of you knew, for neither of you went in for anything so common-place as references."

Nita's pallor had changed to a vivid scarlet, and without replying, she urged her friend to come downstairs now that they had inspected the wedding finery.

All rights reserved.

"And your meeting with Lord Loughton," went on Peggy, as they descended the stairs. "What could be more romantic? Two damsels on a lonely road assailed by a sturdy beggar; the gallant knight on his—well, not steed exactly, for it was his motor-car—to the rescue. Naturally he fell in love with——"

"Oh, do be quiet, Peggy," interrupted Nita. "Come with me to your father. I want to thank him for letting me stay with you till my marriage and for all his kindness."

The Carpenters had been indeed Nita's sheet-anchor, for after her employer's sudden death she had no home to receive her until her marriage. But the kind old rector, the brother-in-law of Nita's late employer and father of her staunch little friend, Peggy, had offered her a home and the protection of a father so long as she required them.

Lord Loughton's family were bitterly opposed to his marriage with an obscure and fortuneless girl, but he was his own master, and brooked no interference.

Lovely as a dream looked Nita as she moved up the aisle in her snowy robes, followed by Peggy as bridesmaid. The wedding-party consisted only of the bride and bridegroom, the two Carpenters and Harry Searle, Peggy's *fiancé*; for Ronald's grandmother and brother absolutely declined to be present, and he would have no other guests.

The ceremony concluded, the party adjourned to the vestry to sign the register. Lord Loughton, his fair, sensitive face aglow with pride and happiness, bent forward to watch Nita sign her maiden name for the last time.

How he loved that firm, large writing of hers, the clear writing that seemed indicative of a true, sincere nature. But—what did this mean? Under his watching eyes was formed a name he did not know; not the familiar Nita Lestrange, but the unknown Benita Bennet. In startled alarm he repeated the name aloud. She turned and faced him.

"This is my name," she said firmly.

He had turned very white, but he said nothing.

The name, Benita Bennet, seemed familiar to him, but at the moment he could not remember where he had heard it.

Digitized by Google

After they had left the church it suddenly flashed across Loughton's memory that Benita Bennet was the name of a girl who had been the principal in a notorious Society scandal some years before.

The coachman had orders to drive the bride and bridegroom direct to Lord Loughton's town house, where his grandmother, the Dowager Lady Loughton, and his brother, Gerald, were staying. On arrival there the bride was introduced, and shortly afterwards Loughton brought up the name of Benita Bennet. At mention of this his newly-made wife turned very white.

"Benita Bennet," said his brother. "I've heard that name before. Oh, yes! I remember the name—and the case—perfectly well."

"Dear me, yes," chimed in the Dowager, "I remember the case distinctly, but why mention it now?"

"Because that is the name my wife—whom I knew as Nita Lestrange—signed in the register when we were married just a short hour ago."

"You don't mean to say that's the girl," said the Dowager, and she examined Nita curiously through her lorgnettes.

The girl looked like a hunted creature at bay. Her great, dark eyes went from one hard, cruel face to the other in a kind of terrified and hopeless appeal.

"The case of Benita Bennet. Surely it was a Society scandal some years ago," said Gerald; "about five, I think. You were abroad at the time, Ronald, I remember, and would probably have only heard the name. Miss Bennet was then a very young girl, not yet introduced, I believe, but staying with a relative at a country-house, where she distinguished herself by stealing some jewellery from a fellow-guest, called—let me see—ah, Harcourt—Mrs. Harcourt.

"The case made a great sensation; the thief was so young, well-born, and rarely beautiful. The defence was kleptomania, of course, but it failed, and the prisoner was sentenced to a term of imprisonment, eighteen months, wasn't it?" turning insolently to Nita, who sat staring with great, miserable eyes at him as he recounted her disgrace. "Anyhow, she served her time, Ronald," he went on. "And *that's* the woman you've married."

Lord Loughton's fair, boyish face, looked ghastly, drawn and grey with horror and despair. Nita flung herself on her knees before him, and raised her lovely face in frantic appeal to his.

"Ronald, Ronald, I am innocent. No one believed me then—not even the counsel who defended me—and I was helpless—so young—only a child, just seventeen. Ronald, believe me; oh, believe me; I am innocent, Ronald—I——"

Her voice failed her, but the pleading, anguished eyes spoke eloquently.

Into the tense silence fell Gerald's cool, deliberate accents.

"That is a rather large order, Ronald, isn't it? It would be awkward for your wife to meet in Society the judge who condemned her, the counsel who defended or prosecuted her, or any of that house-party of five years ago."

Ronald started up.

"I can bear no more," he said, in a stifled voice. "Gerald, I leave you to arrange matters. She—my wife—must be liberally provided for, but I will never look on her face again."

As the door closed behind him, Nita rose to her feet, and faced Gerald, very pale, but calm and dignified.

"I will accept no allowance," she said quietly, "and I will never cross my husband's path again. Let a cab be called for me and some wrap brought to cover this mockery," glancing down for a moment at her wedding-dress, "and I will go out of your lives for ever."

Gerald Hilton had not a particularly grateful disposition, but at this moment he felt inclined to fervently thank "whatever Powers there be" for this most unexpected turn in his brother's affairs.

He had always hoped that Ronald would remain unmarried. Knowing his twin's sensitive, ultra-refined nature, he calculated that it would be almost impossible to find a Society woman of to-day who would not jar on it, and Ronald being as delicate in health and organisation as Gerald was robust, the latter had always reckoned on succeeding to the title and estates enjoyed by his senior by ten minutes.

When Ronald, at barely twenty-six, found his ideal woman, Gerald's hopes had fled, but now his prospects seemed brighter than ever. Ronald was married, certainly, but to an impossible woman, from whom he had separated almost literally at the church-door. Yet he was not in a position to get a separation, and could not marry anyone else.

The one fear was that he might forgive the woman whose sin had not been against him, except in her concealment of it, who was so beautiful and whom he loved. Therefore, Gerald's work must be to keep the two apart. This proved an easy matter. From Nita came neither word nor sign, and Ronald never mentioned her name.

* * * * *

"Where are those picture-books for the little one who was burnt at Smithers'? I'm going there now," said the Reverend Harry Searle, bustling into the pretty, cosy little room where Peggy sat at needlework, with her son and heir in the high chair at her side. She looked up with just the old, bright smile.

"Benita took them to her this morning with some fruit and jelly," she answered. "Auntie Nita never forgets the children, does she, Boykins?" And Boykins nodded a golden head in corroboration.

Three years had passed since that terrible wedding-day. Nita had sought refuge with her friends, the Carpenters, and told them the whole miserable story.

She had been but a child of seventeen when, staying with a married sister, she had been accused of the theft of Mrs. Harcourt's jewellery, and a bracelet belonging to that lady was found among Nita's own trinkets.

She had borrowed the key of Mrs. Harcourt's box where the jewel-case was kept on the pretext that the lock of her own Saratoga was hampered, and she wanted to try if Mrs. Harcourt's would open it.

When accused, she only cried piteously, and protested her innocence. Found guilty, and condemned to a term of imprisonment, she was disowned by her family—she had no mother, poor child—and thrown on the world with a capital of fifty pounds sent her in a cruel letter by her father. Before this sum was exhausted, a sudden turn of fortune's wheel threw her into Mrs. Carpenter's hands, and from that time the world had gone well with her.

Peggy had married Harry Searle a few weeks after Nita's marriage, and Nita went with the young couple to the large East-end parish where there was work enough for all who cared to help others. There Nita found balm to heal her wounded heart, or at least to still its aching, and the poor people grew to love and trust her, and to look on her almost as an angel. Sister Benita she was called, for she found it wise to wear the uniform of a sisterhood working in the neighbourhood.

"Yes, Nita has gone to see after that poor baby," went on Peggy, "so do sit down and rest a little. You need not go out again till after lunch, need you? You and Nita are terrible people—not a bit of repose in either of you."

Digitized by Google

Her husband laughed, as he dropped into a seat, and began to help the baby to build a brick castle.

"Well, I can spare an hour or so, if Nita's gone to Smithers', By-the-by, Loughton's back from South Africa."

"I know, and without a wound or hurt of any kind. Nita's mind must be more at ease now the war is over."

"You think she loves him still?" asked Harry.

"Oh, yes, and always will. I wish he could have believed in her innocence as we do."

"She ought to have told him her story before she accepted him," said Harry, very soberly, and he rose and began to pace the room. "The finding out that she had gone by a false name in the way he did was a great shock. I don't think we can blame him."

"Don't you think things will ever come right then?" asked his little wife wistfully.

"Yes, I believe they will, but we must wait. If Nita could ever be *proved* innocent, he would forgive her concealment of her past, no doubt, but I'm afraid that will never be."

They were both silent for a time.

"Well, I must go and see that poor woman I told you of last night," said Harry, rousing himself at last.

"What woman?"

"Julia Bazaroff. She has led a terrible life, and is dying of cancer. She has been a thief all her life, she tells me, and belonged to a gang of foreign criminals such as are the pest of the East-end of London. She used to get a place as lady's-maid by means of references supplied by these scoundrels, and then rob her employers. I promised to bring you to see her. Will you come now?"

Peggy was soon ready, and the husband and wife went off together. Julia Barazoff was a mere skeleton of a woman, and terribly near death. Her former friends had all deserted her, and she was grateful to Peggy for her visit.

It was so lonely, she said, and she was nervous alone, and had so much on her conscience. She was eager to confess her misdeeds to the sympathetic little woman who had no word of reproach for her.

These misdeeds were all much alike; stories of thefts, places obtained by fraud, burglars admitted to the promises; deeds which sometimes resulted in prison, but more often not, for she had been very expert and skilful, contriving frequently to implicate, or at least cast suspicion, on innocent fellow servants. She was very penitent, she said, and felt deep remorse.

"But the worst thing I ever did, and the thing I'm sorriest for," she began again, after a pause, "is this. I once got a girl, quite young, and a lady, sent to prison for a theft I had committed. She was such a pretty young thing, too.

"My mistress was a careless woman, who used to leave her keys about, and was so easy to rob that it wasn't any credit to do it. She took me with her on a visit to a country house, and there I robbed her of her jewellery.

"I managed to put the blame on the sister of the lady of the house, a bit of a half-grown thing, as unsuspicious and confiding as a baby. I put a lock of hers wrong, and advised her to borrow a key of my mistress to try, and when it wouldn't do, and she went to put back the key, I got her lock all right and slipped in a bracelet. Poor child, her eyes still haunt me!"

"Good Heavens! Are you talking of Benita Bennet?" burst in Harry, jumping up in excitement.

"That was her name. Do you know her?"

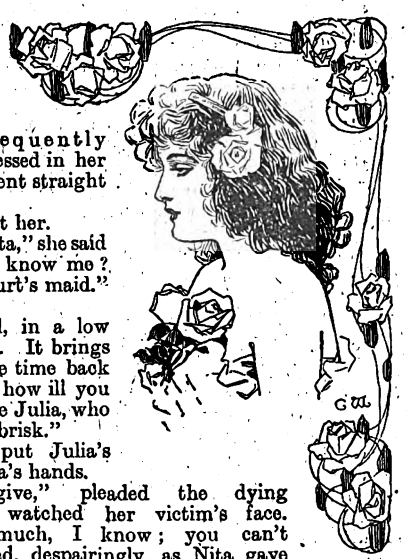
"Indeed, I do, Julia; if you are really penitent you will repeat your statement to the husband of that unfortunate lady. He discovered that she had been in prison for theft, and discarded her."

"Yes, I'll do that," answered the sick woman, wearily. "No punishment could be worse than the pain I'm suffering now, and I shall soon be gone anyhow."

Her eyes were glazed with pain and the approaching end, and Harry thought it prudent to write out her confession at once, and get her to sign it before two witnesses fetched from another room. Then he turned to his wife.

"Loughton's in town now," he said, "so I'll wire to him to come here at once, and I'll leave a message at home for Nita to come on to you as soon as she gets back."

Nita arrived before Harry returned, and thinking Peggy wanted someone to nurse a dying woman, as frequently happened, came dressed in her sister's garb, and went straight up to the bed.



Julia stared up at her.

"Little Miss Benita," she said feebly, "don't you know me? Julia; Mrs. Harcourt's maid."

Nita shuddered.

"Yes," she said, in a low tone, "I remember. It brings that awful, horrible time back to me. Poor soul, how ill you look! And you are Julia, who was so strong and brisk."

Peggy silently put Julia's confession into Nita's hands.

"Forgive, forgive," pleaded the dying woman, as she watched her victim's face. "Oh, it's too much, I know; you can't forgive," she added, despairingly, as Nita gave the paper back. But the injured girl bent over the woman who had blighted her young life, and answered softly, "I forgive, Julia; I forgive as I hope to be forgiven."

Harry was a long time absent. Instead of wiring to Lord Loughton he had decided on going for him, and asking him to come and hear the dying confession of a woman who knew something of his wife. Ronald's whole heart was yearning for the wife he had cast aside, and he gladly accompanied Harry in the vague hope that some good news might await him. He entered with his guide to find a dead woman on a bed, and a sister of mercy kneeling by the pillow. His old friend Peggy came to meet him, and handed him the dying confession of Julia Bazaroff. He cast his eyes over it, and uttered a cry of exceeding anguish.

"Oh, my wife, my innocent, martyred Nita!" he cried. "Oh, how shall I find her, how shall I gain her forgiveness? She can never forgive me; I can never hope she will."

The sister of mercy rose from her knees and came forward.

"Ronald," was all she said.

"Nita, Nita, be more generous to me than I was to you. Grant me your forgiveness."

And with a sweet, grave smile she put her hands in his.

"We will not talk of forgiveness. There is nothing that I could not forgive you, for I love you, Ronald."

Vera Serkoff.

OUR NEW SERIAL *which will start in a few weeks' time, is a tale of intense dramatic and love interest. The plot is entirely new, and will be dealt with by Mr. R. Norman Silver in his usual powerful way. The element of love enters very strongly into the story. No lover of fiction should fail to read this tale, which will start in the issue of* Short Stories *dated March 7th. Readers will remember that, among other things, Mr. Silver contributed "The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told Off Duty," and "The Brains of the Force" to* Short Stories. *It will be well for you to place your orders early for the March 7th.* Short Stories, *as besides the Serial there will be other new and attractive features which are sure to occasion a great run on the paper.*

Digitized by Google

PIETRO'S DREAM OF LOVE.

The Story of a Brave Little Italian Boy.

His name was Pietro Antonini. You could see it on his little fruit cart, painted in beautiful, big, yellow letters, "Pietro Antonini, Fruiterer."

Pietro was very proud of that handsome cart with his own name on it. On fine, bright mornings he stood behind it with the conscious air of a man of property, feeling that the world was a very pleasant place.

But there was one great sorrow in Pietro's life. His left leg was twisted and shrunken and short, and when he walked, at every step he gave a sudden plunge downwards to the left, very much as if he had stooped to pick up something and then thought better of it.

Many times, as a child, he had wondered why his father seemed to dislike him, until one day he heard him answer gruffly to somebody's question, "No, I have no children; only a cripple." Then he understood, and the iron entered his childish soul, and the scar remained through all his life.

With the advent of the cart the bitterness of being useless departed. It is no wonder that he loved the cart. Still he felt keenly that he was different from other people. Oh! the anguish of isolation in "being different!"

Pietro had established his cart on Vere Street and College Street, and the children from Vere Street school patronised him daily. At first they had laughed at his grotesque gait and called him "Jumping-Jack." One day a lady, who was one of the teachers in the Vere Street school, found him in tears, and her tender sympathy drew out the cause of his trouble.

"Do not cry, Pietro," she said. "You are handsomer than any of them. You have beautiful soft dark eyes like a woman's, and you have black, silken curls that anyone might envy. And you have something that is more than all these things, you have a beautiful soul."

Pietro listened and was glad to know this; but what were silken curls and a beautiful soul compared with strong, straight legs? And he put his head down on the edge of the cart. That was two years ago, when he was only fourteen. He never cried now. He only folded his lips very tight, and if the tears sometimes filled his dark eyes they never fell, and one would not call that crying, would one?

In June, when school closed, Pietro moved his cart to a new corner. On the second morning two young girls on their way to work stopped beside his cart while a waggon passed, and one said to the other, "They say you will marry that Ross, Ninette."

Ninette tossed her head and laughed.

"They are mistaken. Why, he has a club foot. I would never marry a cripple!"

Pietro turned with a sudden pain in his heart and looked at her and thought he had never seen such a merry face, and such white, flashing teeth.

"Besides," added Ninette, with a saucy glance at Pietro "I do not like blondes. I like dark eyes and black curly hair."

Pietro was glad that his box cart hid his shrunken leg so completely, and he smiled back at the girl whose gaiety was so infectious.

Her words lingered with him all day, and in the evening, when she passed on her way home, he stood up very straight on his sound leg, holding the other bent under him, and returned her nod and smile.

The next morning he took his place earlier than usual and polished up his apples, turning their reddest sides outward, and arranged his oranges in a neat heap. He patted the bananas with a loving hand, smiled at the cheerful red apples, and hoped Ninette would notice how nice the cart looked.

She came tripping on alone. "Good morning—Pietro," she added brightly, seeing the name on the cart.

"Good morning, Ninette!" answered Pietro, whereat the girl laughed and nodded her head at him roguishly.

"You are very pretty," said Pietro boldly.

"And you are very impudent," she retorted, smiling, however, as if she liked such impudence.

Pietro felt his heart thrill as he looked into her bright, dark eyes, and he leant over the cart and held out one of his finest oranges. "Will you please, please to take it!" he cried eagerly.

Ninette's face lit up with pleasure, and she took the orange and hurried on her way, turning to press it mischievously to her lips. Pietro was delighted. He did not know that Ninette was a born coquette, and that in spite of her brief years she was an adept in these captivating little arts and graces. His lonely heart went out to this bright-eyed, sparkling, vivacious creature, and every day he watched for her, morning and evening, and stood up very straight until she had passed.

Seven o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening now became the hours for which Pietro lived. All the intervening time was spent waiting, waiting for those "Heavenly hours," as he called them, that brought Ninette.

How the world changed! He no longer noticed the sad faces, the shabby figures that passed him; he found so many happy faces to watch, they seemed in sympathy with him in his joy, just as the sorrowful ones had drawn him in his loneliness.

Even the rainy days that had once been so insupportably dreary became occasions to be looked forward to and rejoiced in, for then he spread a tarpaulin tent-wise over the cart and Ninette came close under its shelter and leant over the cart very near him.

It was under the tent on a rainy day, when Ninette's laughing face was upturned within a foot of his, that Pietro suddenly leant over and kissed her.

Digitized by Google

"Oh, Ninette, I love you, I love you so! You are the whole world to me! Can you love me a little? Oh, say that you will, and then we'll be married, and I will take care of you always. Ninette, darling, will you?"

Had Ninette been able she would have coyly eluded Pietro and made him wait several days in tantalising suspense for his answer, but he held her hands tightly in his and his grave, dark eyes searched her face in their earnestness, so she said soberly, "Yes, Pietro, I will."

Pietro did not sleep that night. From heights of ecstatic happiness he plunged into depths of despair, for had not Ninette said that she would never marry a cripple, and he, weak, miserable coward that he was, had with infinite care concealed from her his deformity. He had seen her only on week days behind his cart and she had never guessed.

Ah, merciful saints, how could he tell her now and see her turn from him in horror! He remembered how as a little fellow he had prayed the Blessed Virgin every night for a month to heal his crippled leg, and every morning had slowly drawn it forth from under the coverlet with breathless expectancy, ready to look with awe upon the miracle, and each time overwhelmed with the keenest disappointment; until at last his faith had wavered, and in his passionate despair he had smashed his little statue of the Virgin, and then spent many hours in bitter repentance for his sin.

He knelt now and prayed with fervour. He did not expect a miracle, but who knew what might happen?

The days passed and still he could not bring himself to tell Ninette. A few more days of happiness, he said, just one more day.

How he hated himself! Yet how could he bear to give up Ninette? He did not dare to hope that she would love him after the disclosure.

One rainy evening they stood together under the tent, the light from the electric globe on the corner falling upon the gleaming wet pavements and trying in vain to pierce the fog that was silently enveloping the city.

Drops of mist like little pearls clung to Ninette's black hair and the red scarf she had pushed back from her forehead. Pietro's heart swelled painfully.

"Oh, Ninette!" he cried. "How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like the stars. I don't deserve you, I don't deserve you!"

"You say that so often, Pietro," Ninette answered. "I am sure I don't know why. The girls at the shop think you are the handsomest boy they have ever seen. They are, oh, so jealous and envious. And, Pietro, to-morrow is Sunday and you must come and see me. I have told my mother all about you and she wants to see you. Don't say that you don't deserve me! I am not so good as you, Pietro."

The words went to Pietro's heart like a stab and his lips whitened.

"Ninette, oh, Ninette! We can't be married. I have deceived you. Oh, Ninette, it was because I loved you so, I could not bear to tell you. You could not love a cripple, and—I am only a cripple. Look!"

He came out from behind the cart and hobbled rapidly up and down the wet pavement, his grotesque figure and jerky plunging gait looming curiously through the foggy twilight. He did not spare himself now, in a feverish eagerness of self-abasement he exhibited his deformity in all its ugliness.

"That is why I always stayed behind the cart. That is why I never saw you on Sunday evenings! See how I hobble! Oh, I am a wretch!" His words died away in a cry. "Oh, Ninette, don't hate me for it!"

Ninette looked on in horror and amazement. Could this wretched little, jerking cripple be her Pietro, the Pietro who always stood up so straight behind his cart and looked so tall and handsome that the girls envied her? Ah, what would the girls say? A cripple! She put up her hand and hid her face to shut out the dreadful sight.

Pietro's outstretched arms dropped to his side, the pleading look died out of his beautiful eyes; if deep in his heart he had retained a little hope that Ninette might still love him, it was gone now.

"Ninette," he said quietly, "I give your promise back to you. I know you are not for me." His voice quivered a little. "But don't be unhappy about me. You can go away and never see me again. You must go, Ninette."

"Yes, I will go away," said Ninette drearily. "It is not your fault, Pietro, and I don't hate you for it; but I can't stay—now. Oh, no, no. I could not! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

Pietro stood and watched her slim figure disappear in the the grey mist, the light falling upon his white face and clasped hands, and upon his tented cart, and the slippery, glistening wet pavements, and the shadowy figures moving through the foggy night.

Darkness had likewise descended upon his heart and upon his bright dream of happiness. After a time he moved back to his cart and began putting away his wares.

Then something happened. A wild scream pierced the air, a noise of flying hoofs and tearing wheels filled the street, and people scurried hither and thither as a carriage drawn by two terrified horses came swinging along at a frightful pace.

One instant Pietro shrank back against his cart, the next he had sprung at the horses' heads and was clinging to the bridle.

His light figure swayed to and fro, the hot breath of the horses fanning his face, their loud snorting filling his ears like a roar. A few more plunges, then a crash and a pause, and Pietro lay white and still beneath the horses' feet.

A dozen hands grasped the heads of the trembling animals and lifted the poor little bruised form from the ground. A spark of life still flickered fitfully, and they bore him to the great hospital near by. Brave they said he was, but it was only reckless bravery.

He opened his eyes after his leg had been set and his head and arm bandaged, but suffered silently and uncomplainingly. That was a strong proof of bravery.

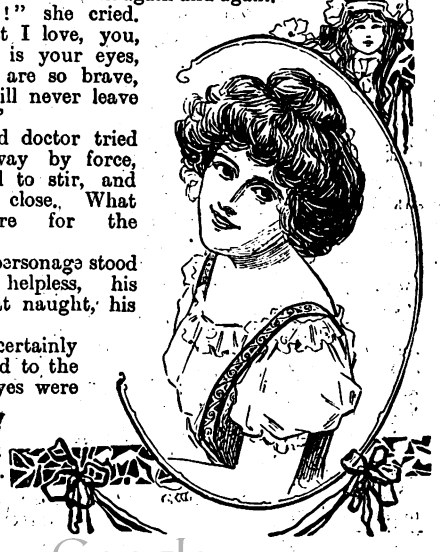
Two days he lay, white and listless, sinking slowly, and the doctor said quietly to the nurse, "There is no hope."

Pietro knew, but he smiled faintly and looked up with wide, wistful dark eyes. He was not afraid to die.

On the third day came a little black-haired Italian girl, with a red scarf wound about her head, and demanded to see Pietro.

The doctor warned her not to excite the patient, and she walked quietly by his side to the bed, then she threw herself on her knees and flung her arms around Pietro's neck and kissed him again and again.

"Oh, Pietro!" she cried. "It is you that I love, you, you. It is your eyes, yourself! You are so brave, so good! I will never leave you any more!"



The astonished doctor tried to drag her away by force, but she refused to stir, and Pietro held her close. What did they care for the doctor?

The august personage stood alarmed and helpless, his authority set at naught, his anger defied.

"It will certainly kill him," he said to the nurse, whose eyes were wet with tears.

But the doctor was wrong. Pietro recovered.

Venita Seibert.

Digitized by Google

= A = Daughter's Devotion.

The Tale of a Sacrifice of Love and Ambition.

"Why, father is going off to Hambleton!" thought Jean Southwell in surprise, as she looked across the yard of the old farm and saw her father getting into the dog-cart. "He didn't tell me he was going, and he told me that I should go with him if he went before market day!" she murmured disappointedly.

She tripped from the room into the open and across the grass towards the yard in order to interrogate her father, but she slackened her steps as she became aware of the fact that Mr. Spilling, the solicitor from the nearest village and an old friend of her father, was climbing into the conveyance. She was mystified, but the feeling of vexation that her father should have forgotten his promise mastered all other sentiments and she hurried on again.

She reached the gate just as the dog-cart passed. Mr. Spilling raised his hat gallantly; Mr. Southwell glanced at his daughter as if he were not quite conscious of her presence, and the trap went past her and down the somewhat rough lane that led to the high road.

Jean could hardly credit her senses. Her father was so fond of her that it was past belief that he could treat her so unkindly. Disappointment gave place to sadness at her father's off-hand manner and, with tears welling to her eyes, she returned to the house to seek her mother.

"What is the matter with you, Jean?" asked Mrs. Southwell, with assumed cheerfulness hardly in accord with the girl's distress.

The cheerfulness was so apparently unreal that it increased Jean's trouble.

"What is the matter with father—and you, mother?" inquired the girl anxiously. "Father has gone off to Hambleton with Mr. Spilling, and you know that he promised to take me; but he scarcely noticed me as he passed and now you—Oh, mother, dear, what is it?"

Mrs. Southwell would have liked to keep up the attempted deception, but she saw that it would be useless to pacify Jean by evasive replies. The best course was to break the news to the girl as gently as possible.

"Jean," she said earnestly, folding her only child in her arms, "you must not be vexed with your father for passing you. He is in great trouble, dear, great trouble, and he has gone with the lawyer to see——"

"Trouble, mother?" Jean returned, wonderingly. "What is it?"

So far as Jean had ever known, things had gone very smoothly at the farm; her childhood had been a sunny one, farming had been remunerative—at least, she had not been aware of any scarcity of money, she had had all she wanted in moderation and the Southwells were regarded as prosperous. What was the trouble? The presence of the lawyer suggested that money had something to do with it, yet the last year's crops had been good and had sold well.

Mrs. Southwell hesitated and her lips quivered; it was so hard to see this fresh young face, surmounted with the wealth of dark brown hair, clouded with sorrow.

"Your father has been unlucky in various ways, Jean, and misfortunes never come singly. A long time ago he became security for a debt incurred by his brother, who died soon afterwards, and to meet his obligations he had to mortgage the farm and the implements. Lately, other troubles have befallen us, and now the crisis had come. He must raise £200 within the next week or——" Mrs. Southwell's voice faltered and she could not continue; she could only stroke the mass of hair and try to prevent her own tears from falling too fast.

"Two hundred pounds!" echoed Jean. "That is a lot, but surely there are people who would lend him that money! I have heard people talk of their credit being good for such or such an amount, and surely father's good name is sufficient!"

"You do not know the world, my dear!" sighed her mother. "And your head was not intended for business—not yet, at any rate! A man's credit is good when he has something to offer as security, or when people think he has; but your father would not borrow on false pretences, even if he could, and he has nothing to offer as security. Everything is mortgaged, even the furniture! He has gone to see if he can, by any chance, find someone who will help him on the strength of his character as a hard-working, scrupulously honest man; if not——"

"What?" demanded Jean, looking up in fear.

"We shall be sold up and have to leave the farm!" replied Mrs. Southwell. But the next instant she cried: "No, no! Let us hope that it will not be so bad as that! I cannot bear to think of it!"

Mrs. Southwell gave way and wept silently. They had tried to hide this coming sorrow from Jean, striving to keep bright in front of her and hoping to ward off the threatened blow; but it had come at last. It was Jean's turn, after a few seconds of silent weeping, to make an attempt to play the part of comforter.

"Perhaps father will get the money, or someone will guarantee it!" she cried, kissing her mother tenderly. "It must be so!"

Mrs. Southwell dried her eyes and set to work resolutely on her daily duties, bidding Jean take heart and forget all till her father returned.

"Perhaps it will be as you say, Jean dear! Surely we shall be spared the sorrow of leaving the old home!"

Jean went to her own little room, seated herself in a plain, but cosy armchair and became absorbed in thought. If this thing happened, then it meant more to her than appeared on the surface, more than her parents suspected. Nay, the blow had already fallen!

She shuddered as she remembered. Percy Morton's father would never let him marry the daughter of a man in such low water as Robert Southwell; if Percy insisted, then his tyrannical father would cut him off and Jean would never permit her lover to make such a sacrifice! Morton had already intimated that he was not pleased with his son's attention to Jean, because he wanted the young fellow to marry someone in a much better position; he had said that in order to nip in the bud any growing affection that might be springing up between the two, but neither he nor the Southwells knew the exact circumstances. Jean was so happy that she scarcely knew for herself. She experienced a strange thrill when Percy approached, and, understanding old Morton's intention to see that his son married a woman in good circumstances, she had formulated plans in a vague manner. And now it all came home to her with cruel clearness.

She loved Percy; this sorrow seemed to have awakened her to the full consciousness of the fact. And Percy loved her, she was sure of it! Yesterday evening he had spoken so tenderly, so lovingly to her, and she half-feared that he was about to seal a lover's compact by bestowing upon her the first kiss, but the gamekeeper coming round the bend in the lane had caused them both to assume a very demure aspect.

Digitized by Google

Jean felt her face reddening as she lived those few seconds over again. Jean Southwell, the only child of a fairly well-to-do farmer was not really good enough for old Morton, but Jean Southwell, the daughter of a bankrupt, was an impossibility!

And the plans she had thought of—ah, they would fall to the ground if her father could not raise the money! She stared into space, and the darkness came on and enveloped her, but she knew it not.

She aroused herself to find her limbs stiff and cold, as she heard the sound of the dog-cart. She crept downstairs and waited for her father to enter the cosy parlour. The fire was burning brightly, the lamp was alight, and the tea was ready. How happy they would all be over this evening meal if he had succeeded! How she would work to help him to clear off this incubus! And if he had failed? She tried to banish the thought, but her heart sank like lead when he entered, for the sight of his face was sufficient. He sat down in his chair, refusing the cup of tea which his loving wife offered him—sat with his face hard set and stared at the opposite wall. Jean watched him, the tea was forgotten and the hours went by in silence.

The grandfather clock struck ten, the strokes echoing all through the house. Mrs. Southwell touched Jean on the shoulder and motioned her to retire for the night. Jean arose, walked to her father and threw herself upon him clasping her arms round his neck and kissing him again and again.

"Dear, dear father! Let me help you to bear this sorrow! I am no longer little Jean; I am a woman and can aid you in your trouble!"

"Heaven sent you to comfort us, little Jean!" he cried brokenly, as he pressed her to him and returned her caresses. "We are wrong to take this trouble so badly, Jean; your mother and I ought to feel some gratitude for the love of a daughter like our sweet darling! I am a poor man to-night, little one, but I would not exchange your love for all the gold they could bring me. Mother," he added, turning to his wife, his face lighting up with great joy for the time, "come and share the love which is poured out to us from the heart of our daughter!"

Jean slept little that night; her brain was on fire and she cried again and again as she saw the sweet visions of other days fading away, but by the time that the tardy sun shot its rays into the bedroom she had settled upon the course to be pursued and was firm in her intention to adopt it.

The breakfast was a silent meal, and when it was over the members of the Southwell family went their several ways, to perform their daily duties. An hour later, Jean harnessed her own pony to a light cart and started ostensibly for the village of Felsham; she not infrequently made this journey, and on this occasion her mother was too much absorbed to ask questions.

Once on the road, however, Jean followed the direction that led to Tanwich, a medium-sized town about eleven miles away. Smut, the pony, was a spirited creature, and the envy of many a farmer in the district; Jean knew how to manage her, and the many predictions that the girl would come to grief through driving Smut seemed to be as far from realisation as ever. In rather more than an hour Smut was pulled up outside a small, well-situated house on the farther side of the town, and Jean alighted.

Her knock at the door was answered by a trim maid, who showed Jean into a well-furnished, but very stiff-looking reception-room, while she informed her mistress of Jean's visit. Jean was then conducted upstairs to another room where a thin, stern-visaged woman sat writing a letter.

"Take a seat, Jean," said the lady of the house, in a voice that had no expression, no inflection, but was as cold and hard as her face. She did not look up while speaking, but continued the writing of the letter on which she was engaged. "I am busy."

Jean was about to apologise for intruding when the other cut her short.

"Now, what is it?" demanded the lady of the house in the same hard voice when she had finished the letter. "Why have you come to me? I am not usually troubled, so I suppose you want something."

"Yes, Aunt Jane," replied the girl, flushing painfully. "You were good enough to send me a letter on my birthday last week, promising to give me a good piano and to pay for lessons in music and singing, to finish my musical education and bring out the talent I possess, so you said."

Aunt Jane nodded. Not a muscle of the set face moved; it was like stone, and appeared to have lost the power of changing its expression. Emotion of any kind seemed not to affect Aunt Jane, and her features remained fixed like those of a mask. She was the maiden sister of Jean's father, and brother and sister had quarrelled soon after Jean's birth; no one knew the cause of the quarrel exactly, but they had never met, except by accident, since that time and they had never exchanged a word since then.

Jane Southwell had been godmother to her niece, and that was how the girl's name came to be Jean. Miss Southwell had suggested her own name, Jane, but the suggestion was not entirely approved, and a compromise was arranged by transposing the letters to make "Jean."

"How much did you intend to pay for the piano, Aunt Jane?" asked the girl hesitatingly.

"Fifty pounds," replied Miss Southwell, after a long pause, during which Jean's heart beat very quickly.

"And how much did you think of expending on lessons?" was Jean's next inquiry.

There was another pause, and Miss Southwell replied: "Possibly one hundred pounds."

Jean clasped her hands in mingled joy and fear.

"Aunt Jane," she said earnestly, "would you give me the money—now—instead of the piano and the lessons?"

"Explain yourself!" was the cold rejoinder.

"Father is in difficulties, and unless he raises two hundred pounds within the next few days, we shall be sold up, and have to leave the farm. He cannot raise the money. I have thought it all out, and I am trying to raise it myself."

"And give up all the prospects that stretch out before you? You have the talent that will make a celebrated singer and musician. You have no right to spoil your future for the sake of anyone," declared Miss Southwell.

"I will give up anything and everything for my father and my mother!" asserted Jean stoutly, although the thought of giving up the cherished ambition almost caused her to falter. Oh, it was hard! "I have thought it all out."

"You have thought that I would do this, instead of what I offered to do?" continued Aunt Jane. "And I suppose you have also included in your calculations a vague notion that I would, a little later, give you a piano and pay for lessons all the same, so you would get the money for your father and get the benefits for yourself in addition?"

It was a cruel speech, such as could come only from a man or woman soured by time and loneliness. Jean sprang to her feet with a cry of protest.

"I would not accept the benefits from you afterwards if you offered them on your bended knees, Aunt Jane!" she cried hotly. "I would not accept even the promised gifts, after that speech, but for the sake of my parents!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed a voice near the door. "Well, said, Jean!"

Both women turned and beheld Percy Morton, who had entered unobserved, and had heard the latter portion of the conversation. He crossed to Jean and took her in his arms, despite her struggles.

"Miss Southwell," he said, respectfully but firmly, "you have no right to speak to her like that!"

"And you have no right to interfere!" snapped Miss Southwell. "And no right to enter till you had a reply to your knock. Leave me to settle my family matters as I think fit."

"Yes, yes, go!" said Jean hurriedly, as the manly young fellow was about to reply. "Please go, *do!*"

Percy Morton left the room and went downstairs to wait till Miss Southwell was disengaged and could attend to the particular business that he had to deal with. He had not

Digitized by Google

heard enough to understand Jean's trouble, but he could easily tell that she was in deep trouble and he was anxious.

Miss Southwell bent a scrutinising glance on Jean, who had dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands. There was just the faintest indication of a change in the stony countenance for a moment, but it quickly vanished. She took a cheque-book from a drawer and wrote out a cheque for £150. Then she spoke.

"Here is the money!" she said, when she had finished. "Take it!" as Jean held out her hand and began to pour out her thanks. "And remember, as you cash this, that you are giving away the natural gifts with which you have been endowed."

Poor Jean did not need to be reminded of the fact, but she accepted the cheque with deep thankfulness. Aunt Jane would not listen to her expression of gratitude; but, just as Jean was about to close the door behind her, the elder woman recalled her niece.

"Jean," asked Miss Southwell softly, as the girl stood wonderingly in front of her, "do you think you could kiss me?"

Jean hesitated for a second through sheer amazement, then stooped and kissed the thin lips willingly.

Scarcely comprehending what she was about, Jean ran down the stairs towards the front door, but a detaining hand was placed on her shoulder.

"What is it, Jean?" asked Percy Morton. "Why are you running away without telling me?"

"Oh, Percy," cried the girl, the bitterness of the sacrifice coming home to her again. "I cannot tell you. I must go!"

The maid came up to say that Miss Southwell would see him, and Jean darted away. She was in the trap and off at a gallop.

Smut's sides were all of a lather when she reached the lane leading to the farm, and she was making for the entrance when Jean pulled the rein and sent her onward along the road. In three minutes they had reached the Kiln Farm, where she asked for Mr. Ince.

"Hallo, Miss Jean!" said Ince heartly. "What is it now?"

"How much will you give for this pony?" asked Jean slowly. "You have often said you wanted it."

"Now, now," said Ince deprecatingly. "How many more times are you going to tease me like that?"

"This is a genuine offer, Mr. Ince," returned the girl quietly. "The mare belongs to me, and I want some money badly. How much will you give?"

"If it's a deal, then I'll give you £30!" said Ince promptly. "It's a good price, but she's a good animal, and my gal has set her heart on one like it."

"Give me the money and she's yours! You can send for her this afternoon."

"Done!" said Ince. Then, as an uneasy thought came to him, he added: "You aren't going to do nothing wrong—I mean, you aren't—I say, Miss Jean, honour bright, you aren't going to elope or run away from home and be silly with the money, eh?"

Jean laughed so merrily, in momentary amusement, that the farmer was reassured, and departed somewhat shamefacedly to write out the cheque. That was rather a laborious task for him, but he accomplished it in five minutes and brought it to her.

"I haven't got it in gold, Miss Jean, but that's as good if it's got my name at the bottom, which it has! I expect you can't give me a receipt for it?"

"I'll send one with the mare, when you have her fetched away!" said Jean. "Good morning, Mr. Ince."

The farmer looked after her doubtfully; he was still doubtful whether it was a merry trick of Jean, but he comforted himself with the reflection that the afternoon would soon arrive and the matter be settled. As she had accepted the money, he could probably enforce the completion of the transaction.

Jean reached home and unharnessed Smut. She threw her arms round the creature's neck and laid her head against Smut's, crying bitterly.

"Oh, Smut, Smut, I have sold you! Can you ever forgive me? But it was for their sake!"

She entered the house and went straight to her mother.

"Mother, dear, when father comes in to dinner give him these—from me!"

She handed to her mother the envelope in which Ince had placed his cheque; it now contained the two cheques which she had received that morning, and four £5 notes of her own money. The envelope was sealed, but Mrs. Southwell guessed that it contained the wherewithal to save them. Jean hurried away before her mother could make inquiry, and she waited for her father to come in from the fields. Waiting she fell into a reverie; she realised now the extent of her sacrifice. On the walls of her bedroom were portraits of Patti, Jenny Lind, and other great singers, with counterfeit presentments of great musicians. She almost worshipped music, those who could produce it and those who could give expression to it. She herself was gifted, and now her chance of developing the talent was gone! And her lover was lost to her also; the path that had opened itself before her, but was now closed by her own act, would have secured the consent of old Morton, to whom celebrity would have been like strong wine.

"Jean!"

It was her father's voice; but not as she had expected to hear it. Stern, harsh, it was; not affectionate and grateful. She went down, and found him with his hat on.

"Jean, where, why did you borrow this money? You have gone to my sister, who will glory in my misfortune; you have gone to my neighbours. They have all lent the money, because they thought me solvent or in order to degrade me. I will not borrow of those people, and you should not have lowered me in this way. I will return it myself. Tell me where you got the notes, so that I may return those also!"

"Father, it is not borrowed!" said Jean, gently. "It is all my own money. Let me tell you!"

She told him. Robert Southwell folded his daughter in his arms, and, when the lump in his throat had decreased sufficiently to permit speech, he said:

"Bless you, Jean! You make me proud of my offspring!"

That very afternoon Mr. Southwell went off to Hambleton to pay his debt and gain a further respite. There was time now for him to pick up and meet other liabilities as they became due, and he might ultimately free himself. But he did not stop at Hambleton, and it was late at night when he returned.

Jean's efforts had weakened her, and she was ill for a week, but the loving care of her mother hastened the recovery. When she descended to the parlour for the first time she saw a splendid piano there, and on the lid was a note addressed to her. Opening it, she saw that it was in the handwriting of Aunt Jane; it read—

"*Please accept this from one whose exterior is of stone, but who has discovered that she has a heart, owing to a great act of self-sacrifice made by another! Accept this from one who offers it on her bended knees!*"

"Poor aunt! Dear aunt!" murmured Jean brokenly. Then her ears caught a sound that made her start. "Smut!" she gasped.

"Yes, Jean, the mare is outside, ready to be stroked by her mistress," said her father joyfully. "Aunt Jane said I was to buy her back at any cost, and old Ince parted with it because it was for you."

Jean walked slowly to the pony, which showed its delight at being near its mistress once more.

"Your aunt is a good woman under her stony surface, Jean," said Mr. Southwell gravely. "And that hardness is due partly to me and partly to the cruelty of Fate, which deprived her of her lover by death. I ought not to have been so easily offended, and I ought never to have left her to pass so many years in loneliness! She has softened now, and has heaped coals of fire on my head by setting me up again, paying off the mortgage and otherwise assisting me. And it is all through your actions. They all know what you did, and even old Morton said I had a daughter to be proud of. Fancy that! Why, here he comes, and Percy with him! I declare, mother, Jean is blushing!"

D. Merriam.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

SHEILA KENWYN. Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF. A celebrated Russian beauty.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

We Stay at Trouville.

I DIDN'T show Hervé what I felt, but greeted him with an easy smile.

"Where are you staying?" I asked. "And who would have expected such an apostle of the Romantic to come to a place so worldly as Trouville?"

"I am with the Baron at his château—you know it, Lady Peggy, the most charming place in France. Rolla will be delighted to hear you are so near; he will insist on your coming to his place at once."

"The Baron is always charming," I said effusively. "Tell me, Alphonse, what are you doing to-day? Can you spare me a few hours? I want a talk with you."

"I am at your service," he said gallantly. "Where shall we go?"

He glanced along the sea front, with its mob of great ladies and adventuresses, princes and blacklegs, reigning sovereigns and famous actresses, and gave a shrug at the mass of varicoloured, noisy life.

"Come to the hotel," I said. "We can speak there in peace."

I had a long and somewhat trying interview with the artist. It was my object, of course, to forestall Belinda's appeal to him on Vera's—or rather her own—behalf. I knew Hervé very well; as I have said before, I had had opportunities of studying his character in the days before Fame had discovered him. His was not a temperament that required diplomacy. It was better to come to terms with him at once. I plunged into the subject, and asked him straight out if he still cared for Belinda.

He smiled whimsically, and talked in an airy fashion of the sea and the sun, comparing the girl, I suppose, to them.

"Whether you love her or not, Alphonse," I said abruptly, "I am sure of one thing. You would not let your feeling interfere with your regard or respect for another woman?"

He gave a gesture of protest.

"The thought is impossible," he said.

I smiled. Then, in a few brief words, I told him how matters stood.

"The Princess is so foolish as to care for this engineer—this David Carr, and he reciprocates her attachment. Belinda is confident that it is merely a passing aberration on Vera's part, and thinks that if you would use your influence, and reason with the Princess, she would——"

He interrupted me passionately.

"No," he cried, "a thousand times no. The suggestion is intolerable. I could not offer such an insult to the woman. I—forgive me," he said gravely. "I spoke with heat. Explain to Miss North, if you will have the goodness, that I should not dare to approach the Princess on such an errand."

I nodded acquiescence, and, shortly after, he departed, bearing all sorts of friendly greetings to the Baron.

That evening I received an invitation for myself and Belinda to Rolla's château, *La Caprice*. I mentioned it to Belinda, telling her at the same time that Alphonse Hervé was there.

"He asked me to tell you," I said quietly, "that he should not dare to approach the Princess on such an errand as you mentioned in your letter."

She flushed and bit her lip.

"I did not write as carefully as I should," she said. "It is difficult to express one's exact meaning on paper sometimes. He will understand better when I speak to him."

"I should not advise you to mention the topic," I replied.

Belinda was unshaken in her determination, however, but, as I could with safety leave the result of her appeal with Hervé, I did not continue the dispute.

Early next morning we started for *La Caprice*. For beauty and loveliness the château has no equal, even among the many summer holiday houses up and down the green coast. This year it was very gay and very charming. The Baron and his sister were keeping open house, and it was full of people. White-sailed yachts anchored in the bay, riding parties and driving parties made its avenues bright with colour and movement; groups of exquisitely-dressed women wandered in its gardens; life went like a song.

As for our amusements, they were many and varied. There was a troupe of actors from Paris for its theatre, concerts at which artistes world-famous, violinists, *prime donne*, tenors, performed for our delight.

Every evening at nine o'clock a stately dinner, like a royal banquet, was served to the accompaniment of music, which was worthy of more attention than we gave it. Then there were moonlight water parties, fishing parties, and later on

Digitized by Google

shooting parties, not serious and engrossing, as in England, but animated and picturesque.

Then there were card parties, held for the most part in our own rooms, at which we lost and gained fortunes with a shrill laugh and a shrug of the shoulders, with champagne as an accompaniment. Mrs. Dawtrey, the latest thing in English beauties, and her rival, Sarah Givins—a girl from Yankeeland, gave one or two vastly amusing receptions.

Sarah, known as "Toffy," because her father made his pile in molasses, on one occasion performed a skirt dance, clad in a *risqué* costume of gossamer; Mrs. Dawtrey, a truly wonderful woman, who, having passed her fortieth birthday, contrived to look like twenty, following with an exhibition of her skill with a pocket-pistol. Tilting her chair on two legs, she leant back, a cigarette in her mouth, and took shots at the crystal drops on the chandelier.

Each drop as it fell, and shivered in atoms on the floor, was greeted by shrieks of applause. She certainly was a wonderful shot, and when, having exhausted the chandelier, she turned her attention to the pictures on the walls, and neatly sent a bullet through a masterpiece of Corot, why, as Toffy said, it was good for trade.

After all, the great thing to avoid in life is boredom, and Mrs. Dawtrey, with her pretty, foolish, painted face, her false curls in a sunny circlet above her kohl-washed eyes, with her heart set on a cotillion, and her name in the mouths of the clubs, never bored one.

As for her manners, well, you middle-class people might pronounce her vulgar, we say she was *chic*. It is not what you do in Society, but the way you do it, and when she and Toffy chased Reggie, the Baron, and half a dozen other men down the corridors at three in the morning, with knotted towels, shrieking and screaming at the top of their voices, we applauded to the echo.

It was a gay life at *La Caprice*, but a wearing one. Even my nerves felt the strain, and I was obliged to have recourse to ether. It has a wonderful effect; as the ether moves in your veins your eyes grow brighter, your brain grows clearer, you feel light-hearted, bright as a girl in her teens. One evening I had to take a more than usually large dose.

Then, with the spirit giving me new life, I hastened down to mix in the gay crowd that never pauses, never thinks in its pursuit of pleasure.

I found Belinda talking to Alphonse. She was looking very exquisite, with a proud tilt of her head, and a haughty curve of her lips that well became her. She did not get on at all well with the women at *La Caprice*. I told her that among the guests were some of the greatest ladies of Europe. Her reply was characteristic—

"They paint their faces," she said scornfully, "black their eyebrows, and dye their hair. They talk loudly, and talk scandal, and gossip in a shrill voice. I think they're horrid!"

Alphonse seemed to share her thoughts, judging by the glance he cast at Toffy, who, with her feet on an ottoman—showing a liberal allowance of ankle, her hands behind her head, was chaffing a group of men. Toffy was a very lovely young person of transparent colouring, with very small features, and very slight form, with artistically coloured red-gold hair, and a wonderful impertinence. Very few girls would have the courage to adopt such an attitude as hers in a drawing-room, fewer still possess the ankles.

Up to the present Alphonse, with my assistance, had steered clear of a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with Belinda. While still admiring her, his feelings for Belinda had undergone a change. She was no longer a goddess, merely a beautiful young girl. Had she left well alone, and contented herself with various tactful allusions to the Princess, Alphonse might have swung back to his allegiance to Vera, and so have cleared the way for Belinda's reunion with David. As it was, however, with the painful directness of her character, she plunged into the middle of her subject.

"Alphonse," she said gravely, "have you written to Princess Zouloff of late?"

The artist flushed, and his fine brows met, frowning in quick resentment.

"No, mademoiselle," he said sharply.

"Are you not going to write? Ah," as he showed signs of wishing to end the conversation, "you must hear me out. You think I am wrong in speaking so openly? Believe me, I have no desire to give you pain, or to treat *her* name with any discourtesy. But," she turned and faced him, a flush tinging the whiteness of her skin, "but, even before you or her I must think of the man I love.

"He is the whole world to me, there is nothing, nothing I would not do for the sake of my love. Won't you help me?" She bent towards the artist with a pleading gesture; "you are brave, and clever, and kind, and I am so young, so helpless in my ignorance, my inexperience.

"David has not changed in his regard for me; do not believe it, whoever tells you to the contrary. He was hurt, I think, at a letter I wrote him, a foolish letter, telling him that if he chose he could consider himself free. He never answered, but," her voice choked, "but the next time I saw him he was—with the Princess."

"And you still believe in him, still believe he cares for you?"

"Yes"—she spoke proudly—"yes, and shall do until he tells me himself that it is all over."

"You have great faith, mademoiselle."

"And you, monsieur—have you not faith also where you love?"

He shrugged.

"Not like yours," he muttered. "I—I— Listen"—he drew near the girl. "I loved a woman for years, loved her with the passion of an artist, the fervour of a devotee. She deceived me; at least"—he paused—"I had not such faith as you," he said, with a half mocking smile; "and in the face of what I heard and saw, I judged her inconstant and light-minded. Since then, I have not loved until three months ago I met a fair-haired girl with wonderful blue eyes." He gazed at her with meaning and she coloured at his look.

"You didn't really love the girl," she said after a pause. "Even if you did, you have got over it. Yes, oh yes," she laughed, and laid her fingers on his arm; "you are quite restored now. See, you do not even change colour when I look at you," and half mockingly the shameless girl bent her gaze on him—Belinda was undoubtedly progressing.

"Sooner or later your heart will go back to that other woman whom you so dearly loved. How do I know?" She nodded sagely. "I speak from experience. However angry and hurt you feel, sooner or later the love will come back. I have felt indignant with David. I thought he had deceived and trifled with me. But that is all over. I doubt him no longer. I am content to wait. And you——"

"I wait also," said Alphonse.

She sighed, and let her hand fall listlessly at her side.

"How rarely a man loves as we women understand it," she said slowly. "With us it is *his* happiness that makes ours; if he is hurt we suffer, and immediately desire forgiveness for a fault we oftentimes have not committed.

"With men it seems far otherwise. It is their own feelings not ours they study. If their pride is in arms, in arms it will stay until the woman who loves them pleads for pardon. Not an inch of the way will they go to meet her; they will not even say in what manner she has offended.

"Why do you not go and ask the woman you say you loved to give you an explanation? No, you shake your head. You are too proud—too mean. You will not run the chance of a rebuff, whereas the women——" She paused, and in a low voice murmured:

"She cares for you and your absence hurts her cruelly." Then, with a slight inclination of her head, she rose and joined Farringdon, who was, as usual, hovering near her.

Digitized by Google

Much discomposed at the turn her conversation with Alphonse had taken, I followed. Somehow or other the artist must be got away from *La Caprice*, away from Belinda's influence.

Chance helped me to accomplish this. Mrs. Dawtrey on the strength of a flirtation with Alphonse, commenced and ended one winter in Rome, laughingly claimed him as her property. Hervé, the hero of a hundred intrigues, fell into the jest. He became her most devoted slave, and fetched and carried in the most approved fashion.

Belinda, disgusted at his conduct—she never would understand the customs of Society—pointedly avoided him, and spent most of her time with Farringdon.

Baron Rolla, much to my surprise, had not renewed his attentions to Belinda. It was not that she had ceased to attract him, that was quite plain, but for some reason that for the moment baffled me. An interview I overheard gave me the necessary clue.

It was late one evening, after dinner. The actors in the little playhouse in the grounds were performing a French comedy, which was highly improper without being witty—sufficient reasons for my own and Belinda's absence.

I saw her off with Farringdon and set out for a stroll by myself, thinking to come across the Baron—Rolla was a good-natured man and in odd moments could be persuaded to give a Stock Exchange tip likely to be of substantial service.

I discovered him with Celia Dawtrey. They were sitting in one of the pavilions for which the grounds of *La Caprice* are famous. The place was shaded by thick trees, and as I lingered in the moonlight their voices literally forced themselves upon my ears.

"I can't do it, Celia," said the Baron in his deep voice. "I've lent you hundreds and thousands of francs already. You are insatiable, like a brigand, you want to pillage everybody."

Celia's pretty painted face turned old for a second in the moonlight.

"I must have the money, Victor," she said, her teeth chattering with agitation. "I——"

He stopped her with a gesture.

"Very well, you shall have it, but on one condition. You must leave here—and very shortly."

"Leave *La Caprice!* Leave you, Victor!" She clasped her hands about his arms, lowering her lids, so that the vindictive gleam in her light eyes should not be seen.

"Oh, you will console yourself for my absence. I do not wish you to be here—you——"

"I understand," she said with a mocking laugh. "You fear I shall interfere with your plans in regard to that girl. You are afraid I shall tell tales and spoil your chance. Why," she laughed mockingly in her shrill treble, waking the echoes of the night; "why she won't look at *you*. She thinks you are old, ugly and——" Celia grew hysterical with mirth—"*fat!*"

"All the same, you'll go," he said between his teeth, "if you want me to lend you the money."

"And what if I refuse the money and decide to stay?"

"You won't, Celia. When did you ever refuse anything? Come, my dear, be reasonable, and decide to start for the Austrian Tyrol within the week."

"So that is it," said Celia, with a little stamp. "I have wondered at the change in you, and—and——"

The Baron lost patience and stopped her roughly. It was evident to me that the little Dawtrey's reign with him was over. She was a clever little creature and deserved well of Society, because she never created scandal. Her intrigues were known and at the same time were not known. She lived three months of the year with her husband in their house in Chesham Place, and they were generally spoken of as a devoted couple!

Mr. Dawtrey was always stingy and like a bear, but he knew how to behave. He was mostly absorbed in foreign speculations which took him to out-of-the-way spots. He was large, ugly and solemn, but he did well in his place like the great Japanese bronze that sat cross-legged in the hall. Above everything else he never questioned his wife—so long as she was not talked about outside her set, it was plainly his duty to keep silence.

The Baron evidently made the required loan, for Celia appeared at the card table some hours later with a substantial roll of notes. As usual, she played wildly and recklessly, plunging for all she was worth. Whatever she had originally intended to do with the money she borrowed from Rolla, her present intention was evident, she meant to risk it at play.

Note after note slipped from the roll. We were playing in Toffy's rooms, and the Yankee made it a rule that all debts should be settled at the time. She had quietly but firmly refused to allow a very great lady indeed to postpone payment, pointing out that cards were for profit as well as for pleasure!

Celia was playing against Rolla, who, with a bland smile, was winning back all the money he had lent her a few hours ago. When the money was exhausted she rushed from the room with a strange look on her face. Belinda followed her. Not knowing what the misguided girl was about to do I thought it better to overhear their conversation.

Belinda had drawn Celia into a small room some short distance down the corridor.

"I've had your note," she said, "but I don't understand it. What do you mean by saying I have driven you from this house?"

"It's true, quite true," flamed the other. "Rolla has told me to leave, to leave *La Caprice*, for fear I should prejudice you against him. He wants to make you his wife, to buy you as he buys his pictures, his statues, his houses. Your indifference merely increases his determination."

"He is prepared to play the saint to win you, and because I know that he is something very different he wishes me *gone*. And I"—she threw out her hands with an impassioned gesture—"I am poor," she said, "and I have had to borrow money from the Baron. I have had to beg him to lend me some this very night.

"Do you know why?" She came close to Belinda, gazing at her with a pathetic earnestness, that would have made her fortune at the Porte St. Martin—"it is because my boy, my dear boy, is in trouble. He is at Sandhurst, his father is strict, he has lost money, he——" Celia broke down in a torrent of tears.

"You poor thing," said Belinda, as quick to console her as she had been to champion Midge long ago, "I am so sorry for you. Of course you must help your boy, and as for Rolla—I shall tell him what I think of his conduct. I used to like him, but now——" She gave an expressive gesture.

"Yes, but look here," said Celia, "I've lost nearly all the money he lent me. I had hoped to double it at cards to-night, but luck was dead against me. I can't pay the Baron back. I shall have to go."

"I'll pay the Baron," said Belinda impressively. "At least I'll let you have the money to pay him."

"You dear," purred Celia. "You dear, sweet thing. I always declared you were too good for words."

Belinda shook herself free from Celia's ardent embrace, and somewhat gravely produced a small *porte monnaie*, from which she abstracted a packet of notes—her month's allowance of pocketmoney. Celia caught at them greedily.

"It's not nearly enough to pay Rolla," she said glibly, "but it will help to turn my luck to-night. If one can hold out long enough you know the luck always changes—always."

Clutching the money she turned back to the card-table. I linked my arm in Belinda's, and read her a lecture on her folly.

"You've embroiled yourself to no purpose," I said angrily. "Celia will make mischief all round. You're a very silly girl."

Digitized by Google

"She was in distress about her boy," said Belinda. "No one could help being sorry for her."

"Her boy!" I echoed, with a laugh, "why she doesn't see him from one year's end to another. The poor image hardly knows what his mother is like. Celia's much too occupied with herself to think of seeing her son."

Belinda looked grave but made no answer. She returned to Toffy's boudoir and, against her usual practice, seated herself at the card-table, with the intention of taking a hand.

Celia took the chair next to her. The notes lent by Belinda went the way of those furnished by the Baron. Luck was persistently against the little woman, as it was in favour of Sarah Givins, who simply raked in money all the time. There was a feeling of suppressed excitement in the air. Celia's face turned a ghastly pallor underneath the rouge, and her eyes looked hollow in the electric light. Alphonse, who had regarded Belinda's presence at the table with evident discomfort, leant forward and in a low tone urged me to send the girl to bed.

"She shouldn't be here," he said, "the atmosphere is too feverish. Look"—he glanced round the table, and the contrast between the girl with her pure, sweet face, and the women about her with their painted cheeks, their blackened eyebrows, and the air of rapacity which gleamed from their eyes, struck one sharply.

"Surely," said Alphonse, "we have played enough. See the day is already dawning." He rose, walked to the window, and flung up the sash. The rosy light of dawn quivered over land and sea. The leaves were shivering in the morning breeze.

From the alleys dusky with citron and lemon-trees came the scent of the roses; and the wash of the waves upon the shore made music. In the soft touch of the early morning light the women at the table looked strange and haggard, like creatures of another world.

I caught sight of my face in the glass, and for a moment I had a strange contraction at my heart. I felt old, horribly old; a fear of the future darkened my sight; my nerve, my will were all I had to help me from slipping from my place in society.

Once fall out of the ranks and you never regain your place in the gay procession. It sweeps by you, treading you underfoot, with a careless, high-pitched laugh from the women and a shrug from the men.

The thought quickened my resolve to earn, by whatever means, the £20,000 promised by Hardy North when I should have married Belinda.

Toffy's high voice roused me.

"I guess we won't play any after now," she said, "I'm getting sleepy."

The rest agreed—all except Celia.

"Nonsense," she cried, "it's absurd to end now. Come, I *insist*," and she eagerly gathered up the cards.

The Yankee took up the challenge and the pair commenced to play *écarté*, the others standing round to watch. The luck was still with Toffy, Celia had lost all but a few notes. At last, with whitened lips and a catching of the breath, she laid a card upon the table.

"My ace beats your king, and——"

"Stop." Toffy leant eagerly across the table. "You have a card concealed," she said. "Look!" And she motioned towards the other's flimsy handkerchief.

"Lift up that handkerchief, one of you," she cried. "I swear there's a card underneath."

It was a critical moment. The women stared resentfully at Toffy and malignantly at Celia. They resented the accusation even more than the crime. Such things are not altogether unknown in our set—but we contrive to hush them up. Toffy, of course, was an outsider.

Rolla, in response to the Yankee's words, stepped forward to lift the handkerchief, when, like a flash, Belinda interposed.

"There is no card here," she said, raising the flimsy piece of lace—"no card at all."

Even as she spoke Toffy, with a mocking laugh, pointed to her frock! There in the folds of her bodice—Belinda's bodice—was the missing card!

(Another exciting instalment will appear next Tuesday.)

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

In Addition to £1,000 in Cash,

Offered by THE BIG BUDGET.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE is so huge that it is almost impossible for one to realise at first thought what it really means. Therefore the following hints will probably enable you to grasp the full value of such a regular income:

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE means, unless you are extravagant, absolute freedom from money troubles as long as you live.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE is an insurance against depression and mental worry.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will enable you to dispense charity with a liberal hand.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy you a bigger house and enable you to live in better style.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will cover the cost of taking a cottage in the country and living there in comfort for the rest of your days.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will pay the expenses of months of foreign travel.

£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE will buy anything you can possibly want, from a piano to a motor-car.

In fact, there is no limit to the things you can do with **£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.**

THE prize will be paid to the person (perhaps you), who correctly solves a number of pictures which appear in THE BIG BUDGET, under the conditions printed in that paper.

Each picture consists of certain objects, the names of which represent the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom. For example, the hull of a ship would mean "Hull." Every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

A further sum of **£1,000 in cash** will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:—

FIRST CONSOLATION GIFT, £100.

2nd and 3rd Cash Gifts	...	...	...	£50	each.
4th to 7th	,, ...	...	...	£25	,,
8th to 57th	,, ...	...	...	£10	,,
58th to 97th	,, ...	...	...	£5	,,

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of **£5 a Week for Life** *(which will be paid under any circumstances)*, you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash gifts.

A GRAMOPHONE FOR A REQUEST.

It is not everyone who can afford to buy a piano, or even a musical instrument of any sort, and to such persons a Gramophone—which is another name for a talking and singing machine—would be a much-prized gift.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by just asking for it.

A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers whose requests the Editor considers best. No request must contain more than twenty words.

Post-cards only must be used, and they should be addressed to the Request Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta St., W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, Feb. 17.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Digitized by Google

A BRAVE COWARD.

Telling of How a Man Showed His Courage.

When Jack Stanley and Eva Coleman went spinning along the street behind his beautiful grey trotters, everybody envied him and the handsome girl who was soon to become his wife. How happy they looked, laughing and chatting gaily, as the trotters glided swiftly, almost noiselessly, by!

As they drove out of Grayson Place, where their new home was building, and turned again into the street, the inspiring strains of martial music fell upon their ears, and the next moment a company of soldiers swept round the corner, marching towards them with military precision.

Jack was compelled to give his entire attention to the spirited team, which seemed determined to reach the next street by taking a short cut through a garden, the gate of which was open, but his affianced looked with great admiration at the stalwart forms and sunbrowned faces of the soldiers. After they had passed she exclaimed:

"What a grand sight! How nice men look in uniforms! Oh, I love soldiers!"

"Yes, that was a fine-looking body of men. We have a splendid lot of fellows in our Army."

"Especially since the war, when so many men enlisted," said the girl. Then, without waiting for any reply, she asked abruptly, "Why didn't you volunteer, Jack?"

"Oh, I don't know, Eva," he said. "I did not think it altogether necessary; there were enough fellows without me."

"If I were a man," was the rejoinder, "and my country needed me, I would certainly respond, for I think it the duty of every able-bodied young man to fight for his flag. To me it shows a lack of proper spirit when he does not."

The blood surged hotly into Jack's face at Eva's remark, for he thought of the hard battle he had fought when he unwillingly remained still while his friends and schoolfellows were enlisting. When at last they went away without him, it was one of the bitterest trials of his young life.

But how could he do otherwise? His father, who seemed failing rapidly, needed his help—needed the strong arm of his only son to lean upon. And when his gentle mother added her tears and intreaties to Jack not to leave them, he gave up all thoughts of enlisting, and plunged more deeply into the management of his father's business. They were left alone some months later, and Jack was thankful that he had remained at home to support and comfort his sorrowing mother.

And now Eva, his promised wife, had intimated that it was lack of courage which had kept him back—that he was a coward! The words were like a knife thrust in his heart.

The drive ended; the "good-night" at the gate was spoken abruptly, leaving them both very unhappy over their first quarrel.

Just at this time the large bodies of unemployed were causing a great deal of uneasiness. Their disturbances were not felt very keenly in the West End, the riots and hostile demonstrations being confined chiefly to other parts of the city.

So it was without thought of danger that Eva Coleman boarded a 'bus to go on an errand, little realising that she was going directly into one of the districts where many of the unemployed lived, and with whom most of the residents sympathised.

When she alighted from the 'bus she was almost immediately surrounded by a crowd of hooting men and boys, who shouted vile epithets at her, and followed up their words with a volley of sticks and mud.

The thoroughly frightened girl started to run away, the mob following closely. In her terror she sought refuge in the nearest open door, which proved to be that of a public-house but from which she was roughly pushed back into the street again by the cowardly proprietor of the place.

At that moment a man knocked off Eva's hat. For a brief moment the mob turned its attention to the stylish piece of head-gear, placing it upon a stick and raising it above their heads, where it was immediately pelted with mud.

At that instant a woman, who had seen from her window the beginning of the disgraceful affair, ran into the street, pleading with the mob to desist and not attack the girl, but in vain, and both she and Eva were struck by flying missiles as the crowd closed in round them, hooting and jeering and yelling:

"Down with the aristocrats!"

Then came a lull in the attack, followed by a sudden confusion in the mob of howling wretches, as a man rushed frantically among them, scattering them in every direction by furious blows about him, and cutting a wide path as he went to the rescue of the helpless women.

Eva's heart beat wildly with gratitude to this brave stranger, who had with such magnificent courage rushed single-handed into the fray, with only a stick, picked up as he ran, for a weapon.

As she looked, a prayer of thankfulness upon her lips, she saw the man reel from the effects of a blow upon the head, and sink to the ground. For an instant she had seen his face, white and ghastly, and a cry of horror escaped her; it was Jack, her Jack, whom she had but the evening before called a coward.

Some one in the crowd yelled, "The cops are coming!" And the ruffians fled into side streets and alleys, disappearing quickly, as a posse of policemen, who had responded to a riot call, came round the corner.

In a moment the wounded man was lifted tenderly into an ambulance and hurried away to the hospital. Eva, dishevelled and tearful, was filled with dreadful misgivings concerning his welfare, and wanted to follow him and ascertain for herself his condition; but the brave woman who had come to her rescue opposed this, and succeeded in prevailing upon the anxious girl to wait until a conveyance could be had.

When the carriage came, Eva gave instructions to the driver to call at the hospital and wait until the result of Jack's injuries could be learnt.

She experienced a feeling of intense relief and happiness when told that he had received but a slight wound.

"He was only knocked senseless," explained the hospital surgeon, noting the look of anxiety on the girl's face. Then he added reassuringly, "He's come round all right, and as soon as they get the cut on his head fixed up, he'll be able to go home."

Eva did not wait for Jack, nor did she leave her name, so when he was told of her call he could only surmise that it was she, but was not a little puzzled to know how she could have heard of the affair so soon.

That evening a note was handed to the young man, who sprang to his feet with a fierce look in his eyes, and an exclamation that would have shocked Eva, if she could have heard it, when he learnt that his sweetheart, the girl who was soon to be his wife, was the victim of that cowardly assault, and to whose rescue he had hastened.

He strode up and down the room with clenched fist, vowing dire vengeance upon the mob and particularly against the brute whom he had seen push the girl back into the very face of that awful crowd.

Then, regardless of the strips of court plaster upon his forehead, he seized his hat and rushed away to Eva's home.

It was a very tearful and penitent face that was upturned to receive his kiss, and a sobbing girl clung to him brokenly imploring his forgiveness for her cruel words of the evening before.

"You are right," she said after a while. "It requires courage to be a soldier, but sometimes it requires higher courage not to be one. If I——"

He stopped her with a kiss.

Laura Ellen Beale.

Digitized by Google

The Wrong Mr. Miller.

The Story of a Correspondence and a Love Affair.

"*My dear Mr. Miller,—I promised you once—it was quite a while ago, to be sure, but then it was a promise—that some day I would write a letter to you. To-day seems a good time to do it. I am in very low spirits, and decidedly irritated against life in general. The thermometer is below freezing-point, and the street is filled with racing clouds of dust.*

"*Here, in Ilkley, when the wind blows, everybody quarrels with life, and I am no exception. And as you used to be a very bracing person to quarrel with, the idea of writing to you seems a happy one, even after four years.*

"*I take for granted that you are still in London. London is so unlike Ilkley! People live in London—they spend whole existences there, and are buried there when they die. Here, in Ilkley, people visit; they don't live.*

"*In four years everything changes; one's whole visiting list fades away like a dream, and changes like a kaleidoscope, into an entirely new set of acquaintances and intimates.*

"*I have had thirteen intimate friends in four years, and all lost to me now forever!—is not that a striking reminder of the transitoriness of life? One is in Mexico, one in Rome, one in a convent at Paris, two in New York, one in India, one in Scotland, one in Egypt, two in Ireland, and three have died.*

"*Everybody who does not die here goes away, before long, to the ends of the earth, as you see. In comparison, London must be a place of solid and enduring social relations. I am in the mood to-day to envy the rooted security of a Londoner!*

"*Do you remember how you used to laugh at my father's investments in mining stocks four years ago? Well, they have turned out a stroke of financial genius, after all, and made our fortune.*

"*It is rather exciting being rich—and rather dull, too. And now, having kept my promise most generously, to the extent of six pages, it is time to stop. I hear you echo the sentiment—but I am, notwithstanding,—Sincerely yours,*

"ISABEL BROWN."

The young man smiled as he laid down the letter on his desk, amid the business papers that crowded it.

"She was a clever girl!" he said to himself, "but I never thought she would write that sort of letter. Too impersonal, somehow. She writes a very pretty hand, though."

Perhaps it was the four years perspective into which the attractive acquaintance of a summer at Llandudno had receded, that gave this effect to his mind.

At any rate, he remembered her as she was that last afternoon, when they stood on the cliffs looking over at the breakers below. They had not been impersonal at all that day, but very much the opposite—and he had realised since, more than at the time, how very near he had been to being in love with her, and how much one week more of intimacy might have meant to them both.

How he had hoped that she would write—though she had only smiled at his request, and promised that some day she might. He had not forgotten, and he had really never liked any other woman so well. And now she had written. Why? Was it just one of those little inconsistent impulses of hers that he had found so charming four years ago—or did it mean more? The only answer to that question, manifestly, was to answer the letter at once.

And though the business correspondence was attended to promptly that day, yet a summer afternoon, and a speaking pair of dark eyes, were more in the writer's thoughts than was at all necessary.

It was surprising after the answer was sent, and the correspondence begun thus tentatively, how soon it grew and throve, and increased.

Miss Mabel Brown's postman, hastening along the Ilkley roads, brought at shorter and shorter intervals, longer and longer letters from London; while Mr. George W. Miller's desk in the large city offices of that wealthy firm of which he was junior partner, was never long without a specimen of Miss Brown's handwriting.

It was a revelation at both ends of the line, how much one could put on paper for a sympathetic reader, and how intimate a knowledge one gains of a special correspondent from week to week.

Mr. Miller soon learnt that he had never really known a girl before—that is, never understood one—and that Miss Brown's opinions, Miss Brown's tastes, Miss Brown's individuality exactly and continually satisfied and delighted him; while Miss Brown felt that she could never have believed that George Miller could develop such attractive traits and such a thoroughly congenial set of ideas and aspirations.

They were a revelation to each other—first a monthly then a weekly, then almost a daily revelation. It matters not how often such a discovery is made, in each new case it is equally astonishing and suggestive, and leads inevitably to the further discovery that letter-writing has its limits, and needs the supplement of personal intercourse to perfect its delights.

The end of it was that, six months after Miss Brown's letter to him, Mr. George Miller himself arrived at Ilkley, one September morning, with three of Isabel's last letters in his inside coat-pocket, and a pre-occupation so great that he paid no attention to anything that happened on the journey.

Isabel, on her side, was not in the least surprised when he was announced at her home, for his last letter—well, she was quite ready to welcome him, and prepared to descend the stairs without any symptoms of astonishment, except that her heart was beating with most inconvenient quickness, and her cheeks were as red as the heart of a June rose.

This being the state of the young people's feelings it is somewhat strange to be obliged to chronicle that when Miss Brown entered the drawing-room, and Mr. Miller rose eagerly at her approach, they should have stood looking at each other as if turned to stone.

For fully two minutes not a word was interchanged; then the lady, with a gasp, sank down into the nearest chair and covered her face with her hands, while the young man, bending over her, murmured awkwardly:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Brown—is it Miss Brown?"

"Yes, it is!" returned the girl, sitting up defiantly, her blue eyes ablaze and her slender figure full of angry grace.

Digitized by Google

"What right have you, sir, to ask me such a question, when you are masquerading under somebody else's name yourself?"

"I was christened George Wharton Miller," returned the young man, with equal bitterness, "and my parents are, therefore, responsible for the 'masquerading.'"

"Wharton!" cried Miss Brown. "I never heard of you before! I never wrote to George Wharton Miller—the right name is George William Miller!"

Mr. Miller sat gravely down in the nearest chair—she was certainly distractingly pretty—and regarded her with a return to his Londinian calmness of manner.

"Your letter was addressed to George W. Miller," he said slowly, "and the postman made a natural mistake, since our firm is the most important of the name. Probably there are ten George William Millers in London. But that doesn't explain how Miss Isabel Brown, of Ilkley——"

"Oh—why, of course—I never thought!" cried the girl, embarrassment succeeding anger—"that is, of course, I thought your answer was to me; but my cousin, Isabel Brown, used to live in Ilkley, until two years ago, when she—she married, you know, and went to live in Liverpool. I never thought, of course, oh, isn't it dreadful! And where is George William Miller—he ought to be in London, somewhere!"

"I dare say he is, at this moment," replied George Wharton Miller, with increasing mastery of the situation. "And I don't see anything to do but to leave him there, and leave Miss Isabella Brown, that was, in Liverpool, and think no more about them. Our correspondence has been with each other, after all, you see, and not with them."

"Oh!" said Isabel. "But—but I've known George Miller really, for years—it was easy to write to him."

"I don't believe," said the other George Miller, judicially, "that you know him half so well as you know me."

Miss Brown blushed. She did not look angry at all, and was, decidedly, prettier than ever—much prettier than Isabella had ever been. Had he really known Isabella at all? No, certainly not; Isabella had never corresponded with him.

"I am sure," he went on, rather stumbling this time, "that I know you better than I do any other woman in the world. Haven't I told you—well, just everything, in my letters? And you really cared, you know—you said so. It's the personality, the—the soul, that goes into a letter. We know each other, and I—why, I can't let you go, just because I'm not acquainted with you! Don't you see—don't you feel——"

"Yes," said Isabel faintly. "But—but—you're such a perfect stranger, you know!"

And then suddenly a mirthful twinkle sparkled in her blue eyes, a distracting dimple hovered in her cheek, and she began to laugh—an irresistible, contagious, musical laugh—which swept the young man along in its merry current till he finally joined in heartily.

They laughed until the tears came to their eyes; they could not stop; the inexhaustible perfection of the joke opened before them in new waves of merriment.

It was a laugh of deep and sympathetic comradeship; and when they ceased, exhausted with mirth, and looked into each other's eyes, it was as if they had known each other for years.

"But wasn't it queer," said Isabel, an hour or so later, "that Isabella should have met you at Llandudno, and I should have been there later that season, with your namesake in the party?

"Do you know, I always wondered why you referred with such earnestness to Llandudno, because—I actually snubbed him, most unkindly, that summer. My letter was really a kind of tardy apology to him—and he never got it."

"Do you wish he had?" said George.

"When I am better acquainted with you, perhaps I can tell," said Isabel, with a demure smile.

And George knew, then and there, that the letter had come to the right address—for him.

Priscilla Leonard.

Your Editor Chats.

In three weeks' time we shall publish the first instalment of Mr. Norman Silver's New Story. In this number also will appear particulars of a brand new competition which will create an enormous amount of interest, and for which everyone will be eligible. And, finally, the third attraction will be the new series of article stories dealing with "The Confessions of a Self-made Girl."

Altogether, the number dated March 7 will be a splendid one in every respect, and there will unquestionably be a very large rush for it. Therefore, it will be well for you to mention to your newsagent the fact that you want a copy reserved for you.

A correspondent signing himself "Ginger" asks why the heroines in *Short Stories* never seem to have red hair. Red hair, he maintains, is the most beautiful hair, and people with red hair are always strong and good.

It has certainly never struck me before that the chief characters in our stories have been devoid of hair of so charming a hue. However, I will see what can be done in the matter, and no doubt you will shortly find a story in which the hair of one of the chief characters is of the colour you require.

I have received a very interesting letter from a Manchester correspondent, who, after saying quite a number of kind things about the paper, goes on to say:

"Now, dear Editor, can you tell me why Short Stories is like a bicycle? No? Give it up? Because in the short complete stories one may discern the frame of the machine from which its whole build and material may be judged. Then the serials can be likened to the wheels, ever revolving and whirling on into new and stirring scenes. The Editor's Chat forms the handle bars, by means of which the machine may be governed and rightly directed. The storyettes, jokes, anecdotes, etc., are the different bearings which fit in and strengthen the whole structure, and, well oiled by the splendid prize competitions offered weekly, make it run very easily and without any hitch."

A Middle-class Mother writes: "In this week's instalment of 'How I Chaperoned Belinda' I see that Lady Peggy Carstairs has made a most envenomed attack on middle-class wives. I am a middle-class wife, and I do not consider Lady Peggy an authority upon the matter—how could she be? It is very easy for a woman in her ladyship's position to talk and write upon a matter she cannot possibly know anything about, unless she has at some time been a district visitor, and I should hardly imagine that was in her line. Middle-class wives, I would like Lady Peggy to know, are very much happier and their husbands are much more content than the wives and husbands in Lady Peggy's own sphere, where divorces and scandals are commonplace occurrences. Perhaps middle-class wives are not so well groomed as their aristocratic sisters, but then they have to work. All the thousand and one petty cares of a struggling household are theirs, and out of the riches of their love they have to eke out the wretched pittance that their husbands win. They must stint themselves that he can keep up appearances. They must go on scanty commons that their children appear well dressed. Small wonder that they are not always smiling, but at least their smiles are genuine, and are not bought or sold."—I shall be interested to receive opinions on this subject from other readers.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

The Story of a Cruel Ordeal.

"It is all a mistake!" declared Harcourt Dorrington half audibly. "Maggie engaged to John Allinson! Yes, there it is, plain enough!"

He stared at the announcement in the newspaper, unwilling to believe what he saw there. He was in love with Maggie Rosslyn himself; she knew that he was in love with her, for he had told her so when he last saw her, a month previously, but she had stopped his declaration with a frightened gesture, and he had desisted because he thought that he had been too abrupt; and now he discovered that the prize had been taken from him by John Allinson.

What did her frightened gesture signify? Was it that she was prepared to accept Allinson and Harcourt's outburst had come as a surprise to her? Perhaps she had wished to spare him, but had not had the courage to tell him that she loved someone else?

"No!" said Harcourt Dorrington decisively. "She has been forced into an engagement with him. I cannot believe that a bright nature like hers would ally itself willingly with a quiet, scientifically-minded man such as Allinson. What inducement can there be? He has a good position with the mining company as scientific adviser, but my position as manager is equally good. If he had been a man from outside the county, one who could take her to live amid gaiety, there might be some reason for the choice, but she must live near here. Moreover, I do not believe that she wishes to leave the dear old Cornish spot where she has lived all her girlhood."

As Dorrington speculated on the reasons which had led Maggie to give her hand to Allinson, the feeling of disappointment grew stronger and stronger till it engendered a sentiment of jealousy and revenge.

"Why should he have her?" he muttered angrily. "I'll see her and find out the truth; if she has been cajoled and forced into it, I'll upset it." Then another thought crossed his mind. Suppose that it was really her own choice? A nervous tremour passed through his whole frame; he shut out that thought, as an ostrich tries to avoid seeing the true state of things by burying its head in the sand.

He was aroused from the preoccupation which absorbed him by hearing a loud knock at his office door. In answer to his "Come in!" the door opened to admit John Allinson.

"I thought you were not here, Dorrington," observed the visitor with a smile "I knocked three times! Busy, I suppose!"

He was a man of strong build, handsome face and quick, kindly eyes. He resembled an athlete more than a student, yet there was a modesty about him that denoted the retiring habits of a man of books and scientific experiments rather than the man of sport. At times, John Allinson was positively shy.

"I was thinking, Allinson," replied Dorrington, just a little awkwardly. He tossed the newspaper aside, hoping that his visitor had not noticed the page at which it had lain open. "What's the trouble? Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes. It seems that Miss Rosslyn wishes to explore the old Pengrave Mine. I have—she has learnt something of the geological formation of the mine, and she would like to go through one or two of the passages. It's very interesting, you know. Of course, these tin mines are very ancient; the Pengrave Mine was probably worked in the time of——"

"Yes, yes, I know!" interrupted Dorrington. Allinson's presence and the mention of Maggie had irritated him. "I am not sure that we can give her the desired opportunity. It is not unattended with danger, Allinson, and the Directors are rather strict about it."

"I know, but I do not think there is the slightest danger in the part we propose to explore." Dorrington noticed the pronoun *we*. "The mine must be entered from the Treherne Mine, through the long, narrow passage that connects them; it would not be possible to descend through the sloping boring half a mile away; the earth is too loose there now."

"That opening is probably blocked by earth, which would prevent the improvised door at the end from being opened," remarked Dorrington. "You can go through the Mole Run, from Treherne to Pengrave, if that isn't blocked. When do you propose to go?"

"This afternoon," replied Allinson. "We had better have somebody to accompany us, and I thought you could tell a man off for that duty."

Several thoughts chased themselves through the mind of Harcourt Dorrington, and when he replied his voice was not quite steady.

"I think I had better come with you myself, Allinson. There may be a little scrambling over heaps, and Miss Rosslyn would, I suppose, prefer to have a gentleman to assist her, with you, if assistance is required. Besides, I may take the liberty of saying that there are points which I may be able to explain also."

"Precisely!" admitted Allinson slowly. The suggestion was not pleasant, but he could say nothing. "Then it is fixed for this afternoon. At what time?"

They soon settled that and other details, and Dorrington was left alone to meditate on the chances of the afternoon visit to the old mine.

Dorrington, returning from a tour of inspection, reached the mouth of the narrow passage, termed the Mole Run, at

Digitized by Google

the appointed time to a minute, and found Maggie Rosslyn and her betrothed husband waiting for him.

"You are very bold, Miss Rosslyn, to venture upon this journey," said Dorrington, with a pleasant smile. "I hope you have come prepared for getting a fair amount of earth and dirt on your clothes!"

"Oh!" laughed Maggie. "I have nothing on that will spoil!"

She was immensely relieved to find him so frank and friendly. She had been shy at meeting him, remembering what had passed, and she was thankful that he had accepted the situation.

Dorrington's heart had leapt on beholding once more the girl he loved so passionately. The clear-cut features, the graceful figure, the mass of beautiful hair arranged so elegantly formed a picture which burnt itself upon his brain. As he passed by her to take the lead, he brushed lightly against her dress, and the contact almost unnerved him. He had to make a great effort to conquer the almost irresistible impulse to take her in his arms and kiss her.

He entered the Mole Run, followed by Maggie Rosslyn, with John Allinson bringing up the rear. Although he had spoken of earth and dirt to Maggie, and of scrambling to Allinson, he did not expect any difficulty or that the path would be encumbered to such an extent as to make their clothes unclean. The last subsidence had taken place more than a quarter of a century since, and the paths had been cleared by successive exploring parties.

The Mole Run, at the point of connection with the Pengrave Mine, was very small—so narrow, in fact, that the members of the little party had to stoop very low in order to get through.

As he helped Maggie out into the wider cutting, Dorrington again felt the impulse and again conquered it; but he was not so strong this time, and he could not prevent himself from giving a slight pressure of his hands upon hers, a pressure that lasted longer than it need have done.

Maggie shivered and turned to Allinson, who had just emerged from the Mole Run.

"I really do not think this is going to be so enjoyable as I imagined!" she began. She was going to add that she would rather go back, but the look of disappointment in Allinson's face, seen by the light of the lanterns held by all three, caused her to alter her tone. "I suppose I shall get accustomed to the darkness and the uncanniness of the place in a minute or two!" she concluded.

"Of course, you will!" agreed Allinson, with a look of loving anxiety. "Now, you must begin to take note, Maggie. Here, for instance, is a specimen of a geological stratum which presents peculiar features."

Science took possession of him, and he explained this and that, never doubting that his companions were listening. Dorrington contrived to hinder Maggie's progress, so that Allinson got in front and gradually left them some yards behind.

Under pretence of assisting her, Dorrington held her hand.

"Round here is a short cutting, rather circuitous, which I remember," called out Allinson. "It's worth seeing! Come along!"

"Suppose you go first and see if all is clear!" cried Dorrington before Maggie could answer, and detaining her as she was about to hurry forward. "It might not be safe!"

Allinson disappeared in the cutting, and Harcourt held his lantern aloft in order that the light might fall full on her face.

"Who forces you to marry him?" he demanded abruptly. "You do not love him; you cannot! He does not love you as I do!"

"Mr. Dorrington!" cried Maggie, drawing herself up to her full height. "Your conduct is——"

"My conduct is that of a man who is consumed by the flame of a great love!" he said in a low voice, terrible in its intensity. "I loved you—I love you! You knew it, you know it now! Why did you spurn my love and give yourself to him? You owe me an explanation, and I demand it!"

"You have no right to demand it!" declared Maggie boldly, although she experienced a sensation of fear. "I have nothing to say, and I hope that you will not forget that you are a gentleman. Do not importune me further! Here is Mr. Allinson!"

John Allinson had re-appeared at that moment; Maggie went towards him and Dorrington drew his breath hard. It might end in a quarrel between the two men and——

The demon of jealousy and revenge was warping Harcourt Dorrington's nature, and the probable result of such a quarrel filled him for the time with exultation. Would Maggie tell her lover what had passed?

"I think we might go along this cutting, dear," said Allinson as Maggie approached him. "It runs close to the river at one point, and there is a part of it which is well worth examination from a scientific point of view. At one time there was gold about here I should say."

"If you think so, we will go," responded Maggie with feigned interest. "Let me keep close to you, that you may explain."

Dorrington breathed more freely. After all, it was well not to quarrel down there. They walked along the cutting sometimes stooping to avoid

"Who forces you to marry him?" Harcourt Dorrington asked, holding his lantern aloft.

Digitized by Google

knocking their heads, and at others stepping over heaps of fallen earth. Dorrington, tripping against a mound which he had been too deep in meditation to observe, fell against the wall; he did not hurt himself, but he noticed that there was a good deal of moisture on the surface.

"Is this safe, Allinson?" he asked almost mechanically. "Looks to me as if the river was doing its work here."

"Stay here, while I go forward!" said Allinson quickly. "I mustn't take you into danger, Maggie."

Before Maggie could object, he was hastening onward. He had proceeded only a few yards when there was a strange sound—a sound which they could compare to nothing else — and the earth tumbled about them.

"The river has broken a part of the wall," cried Dorrington, dismayed for the time by the disaster. "Heavens! The water will pour in and drown us!"

Maggie's face blanched, but she made no cry. It was an awful moment, as they felt the damp earth tumbling near and against them, felt the water as it oozed in and wondered how soon it would be before they were buried by a great fall of soil from above. Maggie's thoughts flew to Allinson; had he been overwhelmed?

They waited for the death that seemed to be threatening them, and the suspense of those terrible seconds was almost intolerable.

Then they found that the falling and crumbling had stopped, although the water was still flowing in and steadily rising.

"We are entombed," declared Dorrington. In the face of danger, and after the first shock, he was calm and collected. "The soil has fallen and has blocked the cutting on each side of us. It is lucky, so far, that it has not crushed us."

"Can we get out? I wonder if Mr. Allinson has——?" Maggie could not trust herself to say more.

"He may be entombed as we are. I do not think he has been overwhelmed by the falling earth," replied Dorrington, speaking quite candidly. "I think that the weak spot was here, and in going forward he got beyond it. He is more likely to get out than we are."

"You think, then, that we shall die here?" Maggie asked the question steadily, crushing down all the agony which the vision of such a death caused her.

Dorrington examined the prison in which they had been entombed; he looked above, at the sides, and lastly at the water that was slowly rising—it was over their ankles—and replied:

Suddenly Allinson's head appeared through a hole in the roof.

"I fear so. We are caught in a trap!"

He looked again, and saw a block of earth on which she could stand, thus keeping out of the water for a time.

"Let me lift you to this block of earth, Maggie. It will keep you dry for a while; it is two feet high. That's it!"

He had lifted her tenderly to the new position. Holding up his lantern so that he could see her face, he gazed at her with eyes that were filled with intense longing.

"I called you 'Maggie.' You are mine!" he cried. "We shall die here together. Why should you not belong to me? Tell me that you love me?"

He seized her hand with his right hand, while he held the lantern with the left. He drew nearer to her; his breath came hot and fast as he raised himself and tried to make her bend, that he might kiss her.

"You are mine! Kiss me!" he cried hoarsely. "We die together; the past is nothing. Let us live for each other during the last few minutes!"

Maggie tried to release herself, affrighted at his vehemence. He was mad—mad with the longing to possess her.

"Mr. Dorrington, I love one man, and I love him with all my soul! I may never see him again, but I shall love him till I die!"

The words were uttered with simple dignity, and they extracted a cry of mingled rage and anguish from Dorrington.

"You must love me! You shall!" he cried fiercely. "I will ask you again in a few minutes; when we are nearer death, you will come to me."

The water was rising somewhat more rapidly. He clambered up the sloping side of the cutting and secured a rough seat. The water rose to the height of the mound on which Maggie stood, and rose over her feet. She glanced about in vain for a way of escape, but she could see none. The cutting had altered in shape; one of the walls was sloping, and seemed more lofty than before. That was due to the sliding of the earth, no doubt, but it offered no escape. The services of a party of men with spades and pickaxes would be required, and it was unlikely that rescue would come before the water rose.

"Will you give yourself up to me?" asked Dorrington again.

The water was up to her waist. He was hanging on to a precarious position, but he was scraping away the soil in order to make a seat for both.

"Never!" she said decisively.

"Are you there, Maggie?" said a voice faintly.

It was that of Allinson, and Maggie uttered a cry of joy.

Digitized by Google

Where was he? She soon discovered that he was making his way through to them, scraping, tearing away the earth near the roof; it was loose just there, and the head and breast of Allinson soon showed through.

"Thank Heaven! You are both safe!" he gasped. "You must try to climb to this hole and crawl through; we can all get out through a small opening which the subsidence has produced. It is awfully risky, but we can try it."

Dorrington was between the girl and her lover; he looked from one to the other.

"Allinson," he said solemnly, "you have stolen my love from me. I will give her up to no man! She must choose between being my bride or the bride of death! Let her choose. If she and you agree that she shall marry me, she goes from here and lives. If she and you refuse, she and I remain here till death overtakes us. It is useless for you to attempt to reach her," he added, as Allinson made a movement with that object. "I can prevent that easily."

Allinson recognised the truth of this assertion and groaned. Maggie shot an appealing glance at John Allinson, but it was lost in the gloom; then she remembered that she would only be torturing him by any appeal for help and she refrained.

"Maggie," said Harcourt Dorrington passionately, "you know that I love you as madly as any man can love. I cannot live without you! I would sooner have you die with me than see you the wife of another man. You must choose between life with me and death with me; which shall it be?"

There was an awe-inspiring pause, followed by one word, spoken deliberately.

"Death!"

Dorrington was near enough to see the marble pallor and rigidity of the girl's face. There was a determination about it which struck him like a sudden chill. He turned to Allinson.

"Do you wish her to die? Then tell her to live!"

There was a great inward struggle in the next half minute, but Allinson did not have the opportunity of telling the result of that struggle. Maggie spoke.

"If I cannot live with my betrothed husband by my side, I will die. It is useless to speak, John!"

Yet it was so hard to die! Dorrington, had he not been so tormented by his own emotions, might have observed a relaxation of those set features; but he noticed nothing. He spoke pleasingly, to shake her determination.

"Maggie, would it be so hard to live with me by your side? I would watch over you, cherish you, try to realise your every wish. I would be your slave; my whole life would be devoted to making you happy. Think, try to imagine how I would strive for your happiness! Is it so very hard to love one who loves you so much?"

Maggie was touched by this appeal, although it could not alter her decision. Allinson, a prey to the greatest mental anguish, waited for her reply.

"It cannot be as you wish," she said gently. "I have made my choice. I am sorry, so sorry, that your own wishes cannot be realised, but is it fair to punish me for what I cannot help? You cannot help loving me and you consider that you are free to do so. I cannot help loving my betrothed husband better than anyone else, and surely I may claim freedom also? If you really love me as you say," she added, clasping her hands, her voice trembling with the intensity of her feelings, "then you will save me from this cruel death and let me live to be as happy as you desire me to be. I remind you of your latest words. Give me the chance of being happy!"

The water was rising and enveloping her; it reached to her breast. Harcourt Dorrington stared at her, but his thoughts were far away. Her words had awakened something within him. He wished her to be happy, and she could not be happy with him—alas! Yet, why should he deprive her of the joy of living and loving? He passed his hand across his brow, like one awakening from a disagreeable dream.

"Quick!" he cried in an altered tone. "Give me your hand. Try to climb here. Hurrah! Steady! That's it!"

Maggie felt his hands grasping hers, and heard the lantern drop into the water. It was dark, but she understood. Dorrington's hands drew her up the sloping side, slipping and nearly falling, but she gained a kind of ledge. He helped her to move along in a sitting position, and after five minutes' dangerous work she knew that Allinson had grasped her and was aiding her to scramble through the hole to comparative safety.

"Safe, my darling!" whispered Allinson, kissing her rapturously.

"Now, Dorrington, I can help you through!" he cried to the manager.

"I stay here!" replied Dorrington calmly.

"No, no!" cried Allinson and Maggie Rosslyn in a breath. And the girl added: "You must come, to share our happiness, for your own sake and ours!"

Dorrington listened to the appeal, strangely moved. If he died, it would be a sad remembrance for them, and he must not cloud their lives. But could they forgive him? He asked them this question.

"We ask you to come with us and live to be useful to us and to all your fellow men," said Maggie simply, reverently.

He climbed along and through the hole to their side. Silently they made for the opening and widened it with their hands until they could force their way to liberty.

Allinson and Maggie were married two months later, but Dorrington could not wait for that. He went off suddenly about a fortnight previously, and he is now in West Australia.

George Day.

He: "Do you believe in woman taking man's place?" She: "Yes; in a crowded railway carriage."

Effie: "Jack, papa said we must not see each other any more." Jack: "Indeed! Then I will turn the gas out."

George: "Do you embrace Miss Sweetthing when you call on her?" Tom: "Not now. Her father has established a press censorship."

Husband: "For whom are you knitting those socks?" Wife: "For a benevolent society." Husband: "Do you know, you might send them my address. Perhaps they would send me a pair."

"Mr. Jones, you said you were connected with the fine arts. Do you mean by that that you are a sculptor?" "No, sir, I don't sculp myself, but I furnish the stone to the man that does."

The dear girl had been baiting him again. "Do you believe in love at first sight?" she asked. "Of course," answered the bachelor. "Do you suppose, if a man had the gift of second sight, he would fall in love?"

Family Friend: "I congratulate you, my dear sir, on the marriage of your daughter. I see you are gradually getting all the girls off your hands." Old Goldbranch: "Off my hands—yes; but the worst of it is I have to keep all their husbands on their feet."

"I presume," said the talkative man to his meek-looking neighbour in the train, "from your manner and conversation, that you have family ties." "Yes," replied the other, "I suppose you might as well call 'em that. I buy 'em for myself, but my wife and the girls wear 'em whenever they feel like it."

Customer: "I thought I told you to paint me sitting on the verandah of my house. You've painted the verandah all right, but there's nobody on it." Artist: "Of course not. The painting represents an afternoon view. The sun would then be on the front of the house, and of course you wouldn't be sitting in the sun. The picture is true to art and to nature. You are supposed to be sitting in the back garden."

Digitized by Google

An Unsuitable Part;

Or, Bringing Him to the Point.

"My dear Daisy," expostulated her married sister, seating herself with considerable emphasis in a chair opposite Daisy, "you must bring him to the point. At present, it seems to me, he is playing with you!"

"Oh, no!" declared Daisy Braidwood energetically—that is, energetically for her, for she was a gentle, unassuming creature by disposition and almost the very opposite of her sister. "I can't think that!"

"It looks very much like it!" asserted the elder daughter of Mr. Braidwood. "He visits here and has created the impression that he has 'intentions,' as our respected aunt Mary would say, and everybody thinks that an engagement is about to be announced every day, and yet——"

"Don't you think you have put in enough 'ands'?" asked Daisy, laughing in order to hide her vexation. "People always know more about your business than you do yourself, so they expect announcements which should not be expected—or which they have no right to think about!"

Mrs. Maud Hallfax shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Either the man wants you or he doesn't!" she said decisively. "And if I were in your place I would soon find out and make him declare himself or go away!"

"By flirting with someone else?" inquired Daisy with pretended innocence, having a lively recollection of her sister's methods before marriage.

Maud laughed at the arch manner in which Daisy asked the question.

"That character would not suit you, my dear," she cried. "You are too quiet for flirting, and, moreover, that kind of plan is a wee bit threadbare. No, I can suggest a better idea and I advise you to adopt it, unless you wish me to set John to work by telling your backward swain, confidentially, something or other that will quicken his wooing!"

"If you do that!" began Daisy, springing up with fear. "I should die of shame!"

Maud laughed heartily as she crossed to the couch and took a seat beside her sister. She unfolded her idea in a low tone; it did not commend itself at first to Daisy, who shrank from doing anything that might by any manner of means be regarded as "forward."

"There's nothing in it, and many people would say it was no plan at all; but that's just why I propose it. It is so easy. A real plot wouldn't suit you and it isn't required, unless I misjudge the man. He is in love with you, and you have to make him say so."

When Maud was gone, Daisy retired to her own room to reflect.

"I love him, love him dearly!" she murmured. She felt the colour mounting to her cheeks and she involuntarily cast a glance at the mirror, where she saw a vision of loveliness which ought to have extracted a declaration of love from most men who appreciate the type of beauty which consists of a comely figure below the medium height—"plump" it would be colloquially termed, with a face that attracted you in spite of yourself, dark hair and equally dark eyes, with swiftly changing expression, and a healthy glow on the cheeks.

"Does he love me?" Daisy asked herself next, and the face became more thoughtful. "I really do not know; sometimes I think he does, whilst at others I fancy that he only finds in me an agreeable person with whom to chat. Perhaps Maud is right when she says that he is one of those rather absent-minded men who, although deeply in love, think that the object of their affections understands the fact as a matter of course, and that it is not necessary to show it in any special way. They forget that women like attention, that they like to receive demonstrations of affections, and if they are told about it they say: "Dear me! Of course, I love you! Didn't you know that?" That is how Maud puts it, but Maud is so terribly matter-of-fact and worldly! I would never be surprised to hear that *she* did the wooing!"

Another thoughtful glance in the mirror.

"It is a very simple thing to do, yet I do not care to do it! But I cannot let it go on vaguely, and if I don't take some action, Maud will carry out her threat of forcing her dear hubby to speak to Laurence, and I should never have the courage to face him after that! I'll do it!"

So the next time Mr. Laurence Alleyne called he detected a difference in the reception accorded to him by Miss Daisy Braidwood; she was not quite so diffident, she met his somewhat cool and "take-it-for-granted" attentions boldly and as if she attached no importance to them. He did not stay long on that occasion, and the slight uneasiness which had taken possession of him soon disappeared. Two evenings later he was to be at Mr. Braidwood's princely residence once more, to be a member of a small party.

He was again struck by the manner of Daisy Braidwood.

"What's the matter with the girl?" he mused, casting furtive glances at her, unconscious of the fact that Daisy was watching him. "She seems altered."

Laurence seized the first opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* with Daisy; she helped him to gain the opportunity and then the campaign began.

"Do you know, Mr. Alleyne," she began in the most business-like style, "I have wanted to talk with you on a subject which rather fascinates me, and to learn your views. You are a man of learning, you have studied a great deal, as you must do for your profession. What do you think of Platonic friendship?"

She looked at him coolly, with the air of a woman whom no masculine blandishments can touch, although inwardly she was quaking and telling herself that he would consider her very forward. Laurence started and gazed at her in perplexity.

"You mean friendship between man and woman without love, just as man becomes a firm friend to another man, and woman towards woman," he replied slowly. "I have never speculated on that subject, Miss Braidwood, so I am at a loss how to reply."

His tone betrayed anxiety, but Daisy was too occupied with her task to observe it. It was not so simple as she had anticipated, to talk to the man you love about Platonic friendships for the sole purpose of inducing him to declare himself.

"I half wish I hadn't begun!" she thought. Aloud she said: "I know that some great thinkers believe it to be an impossibility, but I see no reason for regarding it as impossible. Now, take two people, young people—er—like you and—and, well, me."

Daisy stopped; her throat was dry and she was getting into difficulties at the very start. She recognised that her break-off had rather spoilt the look of the thing, so she bravely continued the argument, although she felt the colour rising.

"Now, we two, we like each other's society and enjoy a chat together, and we have certain favourite subjects. We can talk and discuss, without—can't we?"

"Y-e-s, I suppose we can," assented Laurence dubiously. "Really, Miss Braidwood, I haven't studied the subject at all, so I expect I cut a sorry figure in this argument and I fear that you will think me very dense!"

"Oh, dear!" thought Daisy in despair. "I don't think it will work. He doesn't take the discussion in the way I want him to do, and in the end he will go away and think me just horrid; and if he really loves me, he won't say so!"

"I am waiting to hear more about it, Miss Braidwood."

"Oh, yes!" gasped Daisy, recalled from her not too pleasant reflections by this remark. "Let me see, I was saying—yes! We could talk and laugh and—generally be excellent friends and be helpful to one another, and all that, without falling in love, without expecting that we should ever be nearer relations. Take yourself, for instance." Daisy had to pause here and make a great effort. "You have already shown that friendship is possible without love, for you have never attempted to show affection. I don't suppose I have made myself very clear, Mr. Alleyne, because I am not a debater, but that's what I mean."

Daisy was very hot when she had finished this rather incoherent speech; she looked hot, too, although she pretended to be very cool, and she looked very pretty in her confusion. Alleyne gazed at her, his fingers twitching nervously; then he grew calm and spoke steadily.

"Oh, it is quite clear! It is possible for you to be the best of friends to me without being so foolish as to fall in love with me. Most people would say that we were on a very awkward subject, and one that might well lead to the destruction of the theory of Platonic friendship by our doing the very thing which, as you say, we are not likely to do. But you are too level-headed to do anything so absurd!"

If Daisy had been more composed, she would have understood that he was non-committal and had, in fact, said nothing, but she was too much worri d.

"It's a failure!" she murmured. "I wish I hadn't tried it. It must be that he doesn't love me. Well, it is better that I should know it!"

The thought that Laurence Alleyne did not love her, that her affection had gone out to him unbidden, filled her with dismay. A lump came into her throat, her heart beat painfully fast, she felt faint and, notwithstanding all her efforts, her eyes became moist with tears. She arose and turned towards an open window.

"I must go into the garden to get a little air," she said in a low voice. "It is too warm here!"

She passed hurriedly through the window, leaving him in the room, and sped towards a secluded spot in order to relieve her feelings with a good cry. She was cross with Maud, with herself, with Laurence; she sat down on a seat in the darkness and buried her face in her pocket handkerchief.

A hand touched her shoulder, causing her to start up with a cry of surprise and dismay.

"Does the idea of Platonic friendship make you cry, Daisy?" asked a voice which she recognised as Laurence's. "Does the idea of pleasant companionship, without love, seem less attractive now? Let me tell you my opinion, dearest, before you reply; I have formed it since the beginning of the argument. *I* think it is impossible in one instance, at least! Now tell me what you think, truly!"

He gently pushed aside the handkerchief, took her in his arms and pressed her close to his heart, the better to hear her reply. That answer evidently satisfied him that she was not wholly pledged to the theory of Platonic friendship, for he kissed her again and again, and she made no objection.

"I thought you were in earnest at first, and it gave me a shock!" admitted Laurence. "I saw how easily a man may lose a woman, and deservedly lose her, by becoming so wrapped up in his studies or business as to forget that attention and acts indicative of his love for her are so much waste of time. It is neglect, nothing else, and a man has no right to neglect his loved one. He thrusts his love too far down, and not until the object of his love is lost to him, does he realise what he has done. I am luckier than some men, for I discovered my error before it was too late, thanks to your views on——"

"Please don't!" she exclaimed, ashamed. "I wonder how I could have been led away by Maud to such an extent. I feel so horribly mean!"

"I guessed, before you were half-way through, that your sister had been egging you on. It was not your disposition to act in that manner, and Mrs. Halifax is more—up-to-date! Still, I am thankful to her for causing the little comedy to be played. Supposing that I had not lost you altogether by my neglect, I might have brought much unhappiness upon you and myself after marriage by that neglect. *Now* it will be different, thanks to——"

She looked at him reproachfully; he could see the expression on her face in the light that streamed through the window which they were now approaching.

"Thanks to Maud!" he said with a laugh, as he led her from the stream of light and kissed her passionately. "We will show our gratitude to her by giving her a volume of essays on the subject, written by someone who knows nothing about it."

Ada Exford.

The Most Successful Novel of Modern Times.

EVERYBODY SHOULD READ

DAVID HARUM

DAVID HARUM

By Edward Noyes Westcott.

The Sales of this book in the expensive edition have exceeded the phenomenal number of

700,000.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN says:

"I have read 'David Harum' with great appreciation."

NOW READY. CHEAP EDITION.

Price 6d. Post Free 8d.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To the Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "David Harum," for which I inclose Eightpence.

Name .....

Address .....

Digitized by Google

Why They Were There.

"WHAT a lot of those dear, charming hospital nurses one sees about just now." "Yes, football season's on again."

Before or After Taking?

HE: "Here is a picture of my wife." She: "Before or after taking?" He: "What do you mean? Before or after taking what?" She: "You."

He Earned the Right.

HE: "Tell me, confidentially, how much did that bonnet cost you?" She: "George, there is but one way in which you can obtain the right to inspect my millinery bills." He popped.

By Moonlight.

SHE (waxing sentimental): "What a beautiful thing is the soul, Algernon." He (unromantic): "By Jove, yes; and if we're having soles for supper let us hurry in to them, for it's chilly out here in the blessed moonlight."

Broken off the Habit.

MISS LAFIN: "What has become of our friend, Mr. Clay?" Mr. Rand: "He has taken employment in a powder mill for six months." Miss Lafin: "How strange!" Mr. Rand: "Not at all. He wished to break himself of smoking."

Always Kissing.

SHE (sentimentally): "In the spring all nature smiles, the birds woo, lovers kiss; but ah! now comes winter." He: "I know more things that kiss all the year round, and never change." She: "Impossible! What?" He (calmly): "Billiard balls."

Wanted a Different Light.

MISS COYGIRL: "Jack Softleigh told me last night that I ought to accept him because he was willing to prove his love for me." Her Friend: "What did you say?" Miss Coygirl: "I said I couldn't see it in that light." Her Friend: "Then what did he say?" Miss Coygirl: "Nothing. He just turned the light out."

The Worm Didn't Murmur.

TENDER-HEARTED DAMSEL: "I think fishing is cruel. The idea of putting a worm to the torture of having a hook run through him is awful to me." Witherby: "It doesn't hurt the worm." Tender-hearted damsel: "How do you know?" Witherby: "How? Why I've put worms on hooks dozens of times and never heard a murmur from them."

Easy to Order More.

"I'M almost afraid, Miss Squeers," said the impecunious young man who had taken her to an after-theatre supper for which he had been hoarding money for months, "I'm almost afraid to ask you to eat such a meal as this just before going to bed." "Oh, never mind," replied Miss Squeers, smiling pleasantly. "If it doesn't answer we can easily order some more, you know."

The Rejected's Revenge.

MISS ELDERLY: "I am sorry to say no. I should think you could read my refusal in my face." The Rejected: "I am not very expert at reading between the lines."

The Flask Would Do.

SHORT-SIGHTED SHE: "There, we've trudged up here on purpose to admire the beauties of Nature. I've forgotten to bring a glass with me." Unpoetical He: "Never mind, we can drink out of the flask."

Getting Her Promise.

"YOU say she refused you a number of times?" "Yes." "Well, how did you finally get her consent?" "I have kept a diary for a number of years, and I promised to let her read it after we were married."

A Yacht Would Have Been Different.

HE: "Won't you be my wife? I have paddled my own canoe for years, and feel sure that I can support you." She: "Canoe! Nonsense! If you had said you had sailed your own yacht for years I might have considered your proposal."

A Last Wish.

HE (trembling): "I have one last wi—wish to ask you be—before we part in an—anger for ever." She (sobbing): "Wha—what is it, Geo—George?" He: "Wi—will you—meet me next Th—Thursday as u—usual?" She: "I wi—will, George!"

One Walk they Wouldn't Take.

MARIE: "Women are fast leaving their own walks of life, aren't they?" Billson: "Yes; but there is one walk which they will always leave to man." Marie: "What's that?" Billson: "Up and down the bedroom half the night with a restless baby."

Too Soon to Begin.

"MR. STAYLATE," she murmured, "do you remember when, in 1902, we sat up to see the new year in?" "Yes," he replied rapturously. "Well—don't you—don't you——" "Don't I what?" "Don't you think we are beginning rather early this year?"

She'd Had Experience.

"I KNOW what I'll do," said the girl whose bashful lover would not propose. "I'll go out as a trained nurse." "But that is a profession. You know nothing about it," he rejoined. "Haven't I had six months' experience sitting up at nights with you?"

Appealed to a Higher Court.

"WASN'T that young Mr. Tiff who left the house as I came in?" asked the judge of his eldest daughter. "Yes, papa." "Did I not issue an injunction against his coming here any more?" "Yes, papa; but he appealed to a higher court, and mamma said 'yes.'"

Attractive Anyhow.

"YOU say," murmured Genevieve sweetly, "that you were led to love me when you first saw me in rational dress." "Yes," said Algernon, as he pressed her to his bosom. "I knew that if you didn't look very much of a fright in knickerbockers you must be very beautiful!"

Oscillating or Osculating.

"MABEL," said the girl's mother, "that young man writes very nice letters. But I wish that his chirography were a little less obscure." "Why, mamma?" "I can't quite make out whether he says he looks forward to the time when he will be oscillating in a hammock or osculating in a hammock.'"

Coat Had to Last.

"MY darling," she murmured, "you know that I love you. Is this not enough for the present? Be assured that I will fix a day for our wedding as soon as it is possible." "That's right, Miranda," doggedly replied the young man, "but I hope you will remember that I've got to be married in this black coat, and it won't last for ever."

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

The Under-Secretary's Instructions.

"A SUDDEN frenzy seized me at those words, and I endeavoured to smash the heads of my two gaolers together by throwing them off their balance outwards, and then rapidly contracting my arms. Thereupon I made another discovery. A cord lying loosely round my neck was suddenly tightened, and I was thrown back choking upon the bed as a fourth man, of whose presence I was unconscious, was stationed behind me and held the noose in his hand.

"It was some time before I recovered my breath or my speech.

"At last I was allowed to rise again, and Dubois said with a quiet smile which was intensely irritating:

"'By this time, Mr. Talbot, you should have realised that you have not fallen into the hands of children. We do not wish to do you a mischief. Indeed, it would not suit our purpose. It is far from our desire to quarrel with the British Government or to take the life of one of its rising young diplomatists. This dispute in which you are unfortunately involved is between a certain section of the Sultan's subjects and that potentate himself. But really you must recognise the absolute helplessness of your position. You have just received a stern reminder. Let it be the last, for if you give us any more trouble we may end a difficult situation by effectively cutting your throat. Such an operation would be distasteful to us and most distressing for you. So please do not compel us to perform it.'

"I glared at him viciously. Speak I could not, but he paid no further attention to me, and his make-up was now pronounced to be perfect by his critical companion.

"'You make a very handsome Englishman, *mon vieux*,' she cried, coquettishly setting her head on one side and glancing first at him and then at me."

"The cat," cried Edith. "She evidently thought you good-looking, Jack."

Talbot blushed and laughed at the involuntary slip.

"I am not responsible for her opinions," he said. "I am simply telling you what happened.

"Dubois left the room," he continued, "and returned in a few moments, dressed in an English tweed suit, with a large ulster and a deer-stalker cap. Upon my honour he was so like me that, notwithstanding my rage, I was compelled to smile at him. He caught my transient mood for an instant.

"'Ah,' he cried in French, 'that is better. The surgical operation is beginning to take effect. You see the joke?'

"'It is a somewhat bitter species of humour,' I replied. 'Perhaps in the future it may have a sequel.'

"'Life is made up of sequels,' was the airy answer. 'Events generally turn out to be so completely opposite to that which I anticipated that I no longer give them a thought. I live only for the present, and at this moment I am victorious But now, Mr. Talbot, I purpose taking a little trip to the Continent on your account. I hope, therefore, for your sake, that the Channel will be smooth.'

"With a mock bow of much politeness he took his leave, carrying with him the overcoat containing the case of diamonds. I have never seen him since. Last night in the Foreign Office I met Captain Gaultier, who told me of the incident on the steamer. I readily forgave him for the mistake he had made with reference to my appearance, but it was too bad that he should imagine I would bolt to Paris with a lady of theatrical appearance in broad daylight."

"Yes," cried Fairholme, "if it had been the night steamer——"

"Bobby!" exclaimed Edith.

"Oh, I meant, of course," stammered Fairholme, "that by night Gaultier might have been more easily mistaken."

"Well, and what happened at the Foreign Office?"

Brett's question recalled the younger people to the gravity of the conclave.

"First of all," said Talbot, "Fairholme drove me straight home, where it was necessary to give some slight preliminary explanation before I made a too sudden appearance, so I remained in the cab outside whilst Fairholme went in and found Edith."

"Ah!" said Brett, still surveying the ceiling; but there was so much meaning in his voice that this time it was the turn of the young couple to blush.

"We did not take long to explain matters," continued Talbot. "I sent off messengers post-haste to the Under-Secretary and others suggesting that if possible we should meet at the Foreign Office. Within an hour my chiefs were good enough to fall in with my views, and therefore I had an opportunity to tell them my story exactly as I have repeated it to you. The result is that I carry with me a letter from the Under-Secretary in which he explains his views. I am already acquainted with his reasons, but I have no doubt that he puts them before you quite clearly."

He handed a letter to Brett. Its contents were laconic, but unmistakable:

"The inquiry upon which you are engaged," it read, "must be conducted with the utmost secrecy and discretion. The gravest political importance is attached to its outcome. No trouble or expense should be allowed to interfere with the restoration of the diamonds to their rightful owner. The British Government will regard this as a most valuable service to the State, and Mr. Talbot is commissioned to place at your disposal the full resources of the Foreign Office. You will also find that his Majesty's Ministers throughout Europe have been advised to give you every assistance, whilst there is little reason to doubt that the various European

Digitized by Google

Governments will be ready to offer you all possible support. The first consideration is the restoration of the gems intact to the Sultan; the second, absolute secrecy as to the whole of the circumstances."

"Whew!" whistled Brett. "Read between the lines this communication shows the serious nature of our quest. If those diamonds are not recovered, a revolution in Turkey is the almost certain outcome, and Heaven alone knows what that means to the European Powers most concerned."

"If you succeed," said Sir Hubert Fitzjames, "the Government will make you a baronet."

"If you succeed," growled Talbot, "I will get even with that Frenchman."

"And when you succeed," said Fairholme, in a matter-of-fact tone, that indicated the wild improbability of any other outcome, "Edith and I will get married!"

"All Goes Well."

Brett now deemed it advisable to take the commissary of police fully into his confidence. When that worthy personage had recovered from the surprise evoked by the barrister's communication, he promptly suggested that every personage in Paris connected even remotely with the mystery—Grosjean, the Turks, the waiter at the Café Noir, and even the little thief "Le Ver"—should be arrested and subjected to a cross-examination.

But Brett would not hear of this proceeding.

He quite firmly reminded the commissary that the wishes of the British Government must be respected in this matter, and the proposed wholesale arrests of persons, some of whom were in no way cognisant of the crime, would assuredly lead to publicity and the appearance of sensational statements in the Press.

"But, monsieur," cried the excitable Frenchman, "something must be done. Even you, I presume, intend to lay hands upon the principal men. While they are wandering about the country, each hour makes it easier for them to secrete the diamonds so effectually that no matter what may be the result the Sultan will never recover his property."

"Calm yourself," I beg, said the barrister, with difficulty compelling himself to reason with this excitable policeman. "You speak as though we had in our hands every jot of evidence to secure the conviction of Dubois and his associates before a judge."

"But is it not so?" screamed the other.

"No; it is very far from being so. Let us look at the facts. In the first place the Turks will not speak. They are political fanatics. The moment a policeman lays hands upon them they become dumb. Torture would bring nothing from them but lies. Then we have the two people who acted as Mr. Talbot's gaolers. What charge can we prefer against them? Merely one of illegal detention, whilst they would probably defend themselves by saying that Talbot was represented to them as a lunatic whose restraint was necessary for family reasons. Then we come to Dubois himself and the fair Mlle. Beaucaire. In the first place, you may be certain that they have provided a strong alibi to prove that they were in Paris on the days when we were certain they were in London. Who can identify them?

The lady we must rule out of court at once. The only persons who saw her were Mr. Talbot, and Captain Gaultier, the latter of whom has already placed on record the statement that he would not recognise her again. Talbot's evidence is stronger, but I would not like to hear him subjected to the merciless cross-examination of an able counsel. As for Dubois, there are two inspectors of police and a dozen intelligent Metropolitan constables who would be forced to swear that he was not the man who entered Albert Gate on the night of the murder in company with the other Turks. I tell you candidly, monsieur, that in my opinion the case would not only break down very badly, but Mr. Talbot would leave the court under grave suspicion, whilst I would be regarded by the public as a meddlesome idiot."

"Then what are we to do?" said the commissary, piteously throwing out his hands and shrugging his shoulders with the eloquent French gesture that betokens utter bewilderment.

"Difficult though it may be, we must first accomplish the main part of our work. In other words, we must secure the diamonds before we collar the murderers."

The Frenchman was silent for a moment. At last he said submissively:

"In what way can I help?"

"By procuring for me from the chief of your department an authorisation to call in the aid of the police when and where I may desire their assistance. This, of course, will render necessary on his part some inquiry before I am intrusted with such an important document. The British Embassy in Paris and your own Foreign Office will quickly supply you with the reasons why this power should be given to me."

"But what of the house in the Rue Bonbonnerie?"

"You anticipated my next request. Whilst you are looking to that letter you must place at my disposal two of your most trusty agents. In their company Lord Fairholme and I purpose visiting the house to-night."

They were conversing in the commissary's office at a late hour after Brett had quitted his friends in the Grand Hotel.

Within a few minutes the two Englishmen and their French companions were standing outside No. 41, Rue Bonbonnerie, and they found that Monsieur de Lisle kept a small shop, whose only significant feature was a placard announcing that letters might be addressed there.

"Oh," said Brett, when he noticed this legend, "this is simple. We need not waste much time here."

The four men walked inside, crowding the narrow space before a diminutive counter. The proprietor was supping in style, as they could perceive through the glass top of the door which communicated with the sitting-room at the back. His feast consisted of a tankard of thin wine, half a loaf of black bread, and two herrings.

The man seemed vastly surprised at the sudden incursion of customers. He came out looking puzzled and alarmed.

"Have you any letters here for Monsieur Jean Beaujolais?" said Brett.

"No, monsieur."

"Have you received any letters for a person of that name?"

"No, monsieur."

"I suppose you never heard the name of Jean Beaujolais before in your life?"

"I think not, monsieur."

"Then," exclaimed Brett, turning quietly away, "I fear you must be arrested. These two gentlemen"—and he nodded towards the detectives—"will take you to the prefecture, where perhaps your memory may improve."

The man blanched visibly. His teeth chattered, and his hands shook as if with an ague, whilst he nervously arranged some small objects on the counter.

"I cry your pardon, monsieur," he stammered, "but you will understand that I receive letters at my shop for a small fee, and I cannot remember the names of all my customers. I will search with pleasure among those now in my possession to see if there are any for M. Beaujolais."

"You are simply incriminating yourself," said Brett sternly. "If your excuse were a genuine one you would first have looked among your letters before answering so glibly that the name of Beaujolais was unfamiliar."

"I beg of you to listen," cried the dismayed shopkeeper. "I had no idea you were from the prefecture, otherwise I would have answered you in the first instance. There have been letters here for Monsieur Beaujolais. They came from

"One of the finest stories ever written," is the verdict of those who have read advance proofs of our new serial by R. Norman Silver.

Digitized by Google

London. He called for them three or perhaps four times. The last letter arrived yesterday morning. It is here now. I have not seen Monsieur Beaujolais since the previous evening."

He took from a drawer a packet of letters tied together with string, and the handwriting betrayed the contents of most of them. They evidently dealt with that species of the tender passion which find its outlet in the agony column or in fictitious addresses.

One of the detectives did not trust to Monsieur de Lisle's examination, but seized the bundle and went through its contents carefully, but this time Monsieur de Lisle was speaking the truth.

There was but one letter addressed to Beaujolais, and this was the only one which bore a foreign postmark. Brett tore it open. It contained a single sheet of note-paper, without a date or address, or any words save these, scrawled across the centre—

"*Tout va bien.*" (All goes well.)

He placed the document and its envelope in his pocket-book, and then fixed his keen eyes upon the shopkeeper's pallid face.

"What sort of person is Monsieur Beaujolais?"

The man was still so nervous that he could hardly speak.

"I am not good at descriptions," he began.

So Brett helped.

"Was he a Frenchman, about my height, elegant in appearance, well built, with long, thin hands, and straight, tapering fingers, with very fair skin and high colour, dark hair and large eyes set deeply beneath well-marked eyebrows?"

"That is he to the life," cried the shopkeeper. "Monsieur must know him well. I recall him now exactly, but I could not for a hundred francs have described him so accurately."

"How long have you known him?" broke in Brett.

"Let me think," mused the man, who had now somewhat recovered from his alarm. "He came here one day last week—I think it was Thursday, because that day my daughter Marie—no matter what Marie did, I remember the date quite well now. He came in and asked me if I did not receive letters for a fee. I said 'Yes,' and told him that I charged ten centimes per letter. He gave me his name, and thereafter called regularly to obtain the inclosure from London. He always handed me half a franc and would never take any change."

"Was he alone?"

"Invariably, monsieur."

"Thank you. You will not be arrested to-night. I think you have told the truth."

On the Cannebière.

The shopkeeper's protestations that he had given every assistance in his power followed them into the street.

Brett dismissed the two detectives and returned to the hotel, where he and Fairholme found Edith and her brother sitting up for them. When Talbot heard the contents of the letter he remarked: "I suppose that 'All goes well,' means that I am still a prisoner?"

"Undoubtedly," said the barrister. "The letter was posted in the Haymarket. It came from your French host. I wonder what he will write now? By the way, where is he? Did you lose sight of the couple after your escape?"

"I did," laughed Talbot. "But Inspector Winter did not. By some mysterious means he learnt all about Fairholme's action in smashing in the door, whilst I was at the Foreign Office that night, and he promptly arrested both the man and the woman."

"Winter is a perfect terror," said Brett. "He dreams of handcuffs and penal servitude. I hope this couple will not be brought to trial though, or at any rate, that your name will not be mixed up in it."

"Oh, no. As soon as I heard the Under-Secretary's wishes, I promptly communicated with Scotland Yard. The Frenchman and his wife will be remanded on a mysterious charge of felony, and held in durance vile until their testimony is wanted, should we ever capture Dubois."

At Brett's request, detectives were hunting through Paris all that night and next day for a sign of Hussein ul Mulk and

BOVRIL

REPELS

INFLUENZA

Another
Bovril War Picture.

Owing to the great success of their celebrated war picture, "The Relief of Ladysmith," BOVRIL LIMITED have arranged to present another splendid gravure—measuring 28 in. by 18½ in., and printed on fine plate paper 40 in. by 30 in. It is entitled, "Lord Kitchener's Home-Coming," and is from a painting by William Hatherell, R.I.

A coupon, and a leaflet giving full particulars, will be found wrapped with each bottle (1 oz. to 16 oz.) of BOVRIL.

Digitized by Google

his Turkish friends. But these gentlemen had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up.

This was a strange thing. Although Paris is a cosmopolitan city, a party of Turks, only one of whom could speak French, should be discovered with tolerable rapidity in view of the fact that the French police maintain such a watch upon the inhabitants.

It was not until Brett and his four companions quitted the train at Marseilles late at night and the barrister received a telegram from the commissary announcing that the search made by the police had yielded no results, that he suddenly recalled the existence of a doorless and windowless room in the Café Noir.

Curiously enough he had omitted to make any mention of this strange apartment in his recital to the official. He would not trust to the discretion of the Telegraph Department, so on reaching the Hotel du Louvre et de la Paix he succeeded with some difficulty in ringing up the commissary on the long-distance telephone.

Having acquainted the police officer with the exact position of the hidden apartment, he ended by saying :

"Continue inquiries throughout Paris during the whole of to-morrow. Do not visit the Cabaret Noir for the purpose of police inspection until a late hour—long after midnight—when the café is empty and the boulevard comparatively deserted. It is only a mere guess on my part. The Turks may not be there. If they are, they should be set at liberty and not questioned. Tell them they owe their escape to me. If you do not find them you may make other discoveries of general interest to the police. But, above all things, I do not wish you to interfere with Grosjean or his house until the next twenty-fours hours have elapsed."

The commissary assured him that his desires would be respected, and soon afterwards Brett went upstairs with the full determination to secure a long and uninterrupted night's sleep, of which he stood much in need.

He had reached the sitting room reserved for the use of the party when Talbot and Lord Fairholme burst in upon him excitedly.

"We have seen her!" gasped the earl.

"Seen whom?" demanded the barrister.

"Mademoiselle Beaucaire," cried Talbot; "the woman who accompanied Dubois in his flight from London. I recognised her instantly. I could pick her out among a million as the same person who so coolly made up Dubois to represent me, whilst I was lying tied on the bed in that flat."

In their eagerness the two men had forgotten to close the door. Brett ran to it, and looked out into the passage to learn if their words had perchance been overheard. No one was in sight. He closed the door behind him when he re-entered the room, and said quietly :

"How did you happen to meet her?"

"Whilst you were wrestling with the telephone," said Fairholme, "Edith and Jack and I went to the door of the hotel to have a look at the people passing in the Cannebière. None of us have ever been in Marseilles before, you know. We were gazing at the crowd, when suddenly Jack gripped my arm and said : 'There she is! Look at the woman, quick!' He pointed to a tall, well-dressed female, wrapped up in a fur cloak, and wearing a large feather hat. Luckily her veil was up, and the electric light fell fair upon her as she passed. She was undoubtedly La Belle Chasseuse, and I bet you anything you like she had just come away from the music-hall where she is performing."

"Did she see you?" demanded Brett excitedly.

"Not a bit; she was too busy gazing at the tram-cars that were passing. She was evidently on the look-out for some particular line."

"What happened next?" demanded the barrister. "Where is Miss Talbot?"

"Edith has gone after her," said Fairholme.

"What!" cried Brett, more startled than he cared to own.

"Yes," broke in Talbot eagerly. "She heard my words and instantly decided to follow her. She said that the woman knew both of us, and might easily detect us, but she, Edith, was unknown to her, and would never be suspected. She simply forced us to come and tell you, and then darted off like a greyhound before we could stop her."

Brett forced himself to say calmly—

"I always knew that Miss Talbot had brains, but still I wish she had not taken this risk. Nevertheless, your chance discovery and her prompt action may be invaluable to us."

"But what must we do?" exclaimed the impetuous Fairholme. "We cannot allow Edith to go wandering off around Marseilles by herself at this hour of the night. I have always heard that this town is a perfectly awful place. What a fool I was not to follow her at once."

"Miss Talbot has acted quite rightly," said Brett decisively. "We must simply remain here until she returns. There is not the slightest ground for alarm. A woman who could act with such ready judgment is well able to take care of herself. Unless I am much mistaken, we shall see her within the hour."

It was well for the peace of mind of the younger men that Sir Hubert Fitzjames had gone to his room soon after the party reached the hotel. Had the irascible baronet known of his niece's mission, no power on earth could have restrained him from setting every policeman in Marseilles on her track forthwith.

And so they kept their vigil, striving to talk unconcernedly, but watching the clock with feverish impatience until Edith should appear.

"Marie."

Marseilles is one of the most picturesque cities in the world. Its streets cluster round an ancient harbour, famous before history was writ, or climb the sides of the steep hills that surround a land-locked bay.

In the suburbs Marseilles is modern enough, but the chief thoroughfare, known to all who read, the famous and ever busy Cannebière, plunges rapidly downhill until it empties itself on the crowded quays that surround the old port.

With the newer Marseilles of the Joliette—well found in wharfs and warehouses, steam cranes and railway lines—the town beloved of the Phœnicians has no concern. There is a touch of modern ugliness in the tiny maritime refuge which is barely half the size of the Serpentine. Lofty, old-fashioned, half-ruined houses throng close to its rugged quays.

At night this quarter of the turbulent city wears an air of intense mystery. The side streets are narrow and tortuous. Dark courts and alleys twist in every conceivable direction, whilst the brightness of the many wine shops that face each other across the tideless harbour only serves to enhance the squalid gloom that forms the most marked characteristic of the buildings clustered behind them.

Edith Talbot, intent upon the pursuit of a woman so dramatically bound up with the mystery affecting her brother, paid heed to no consideration save the paramount one, that the hurrying figure in front must be kept in sight.

Contrary to the opinions expressed by the two men, Mlle. Beaucaire did not board a passing tramcar. To Edith's eyes she seemed to be eagerly watching for some person who might pass in one of the small open carriages which in Marseilles take the place of the London hansom. Even as she rapidly walked down the crowded street mademoiselle closely scrutinised each vehicle that overtook her, and once, at a busy crossing, she deliberately stopped so as to render the task easier. Edith, of course, slackened her pace, and it was not until that moment that she became aware how incongruous was her appearance at such an hour in such a thoroughfare.

Much taller than the average Frenchwoman, neatly dressed in an English tailor-made costume, with her smart straw hat and well-gloved hands, Miss Talbot naturally attracted the curious gaze of the passers by.

Instantly it occurred to her that some disguise was absolutely necessary if she would not court attention which might be fatal to her enterprise. It chanced that where she stood for a moment a fruit-seller occupied a tiny shop, squeezed tightly between a church and a restaurant. The interior

Digitized by Google

was dark enough, for a couple of flaring naphtha lamps were so disposed as to cast their flickering brilliancy over the baskets of fruit and vegetables, displayed in the window or crowded together on the pavement.

The woman inside had a kindly and contented face, cherry ripe in cheek and lips, and from a pair of deep-set dark eyes she looked out quizzically upon the hurrying crowd.

Assuring herself with one fleeting glance that La Belle Chasseuse still remained motionless and intent at the crossing, Edith darted inside the shop. She produced a sovereign.

"I have not much French money," she said hurriedly, "but this is worth twenty-five francs. Can you let me have a large dark shawl? I do not care whether or not it is old or worn. It is necessary that I should remain out for some few minutes longer, and I do not wish to court observation."

Even as she spoke she removed her straw hat and eagerly tore off her gloves. The Frenchwoman saw that one of her own sex, English, and consequently mad, desired to screen her appearance from too inquisitive eyes.

It was sufficient for her that there should be a spice of romance in the request. With one hand she closed upon the sovereign; with the other she dived into a recess beneath the counter and produced the very article Edith wanted.

"But certainly, mademoiselle," she cried. "See. It will cover you to the waist."

Edith advanced another pace into the darkest corner of the shop, quickly arranged the shawl over her head and shoulders and then, hastily murmuring her thanks, rushed forth into the street again, leaving her hat and gloves behind her in her haste.

The fruit-seller was far too wise a woman to call after the other and apprise her of her loss.

"It must be serious, this adventure," she mused. "And yet the novelists say that the English are so cold! For me, now, I think that women are very much alike all over the world."

And with this bit of Provençal philosophy she picked up the discarded articles and discovered, to her joy, that they must be worth at least ten francs.

"Thirty-five francs for an old shawl is a good night's work," she murmured. "Who could dream of such fortune at this hour? To-morrow I will buy a candle and place it in front of the statue of Notre Dame de le Garde."

Meanwhile Edith was just in time to see Mlle. Beaucaire either abandon her search or alter her method in some way, for the lady in question once more resumed her progress towards the old harbour, in whose placid bosom could now be seen the reflections of numberless lights from the small promontory beyond, crowned with the Fort St. Nicholas and the Château du Pharo.

Looking neither right nor left, but hastening onwards with rapid strides, mademoiselle crossed the rough pavement of the Quai de la Fraternité, bearing away diagonally towards the left.

But if the Frenchwoman was a good walker, Edith Talbot was a better one, and now that she no longer feared notice—for she draped the large shawl as elegantly about her shoulders as any woman in Marseilles—she decided to adopt a little strategy. Instead of keeping directly behind mademoiselle she broke into a run under the shadow of the houses. By thus making up ground she approached the narrow street towards which the Frenchwoman was heading almost simultaneously with her quarry, but apparently from an opposite direction. The aspect of the thoroughfare through which the two women now sped was forbidding in the extreme. The houses were many storeys in height, of disreputable appearance and so close together on both sides that were other conditions equal an active man might easily spring from one room into another across the street.

The walls appeared to be honeycombed with doors and windows, while an indescribable number of shutters, balconies, projecting poles and clothes-lines created such a medley in the darkness, which was only made visible by a solitary bracket lamp, that Edith felt some anxiety as to whether or not she would be able to recognise the house into which

Grew Old in a Trance.

In America, quite recently, a girl, aged nineteen, fell into a trance, which lasted twenty days. During that time her hair turned grey, wrinkles formed about her features, and she gradually assumed the appearance of an old woman. On coming out of her stupor she only lived for a few days. Another singular case of a woman growing prematurely old, but which, fortunately, ended in a happier way, was that of Miss May Musson, of Breach Road, Marlpool, her peculiar condition having been brought about by indigestion and anæmia, of which, luckily, Chas. Forde's bile beans completely cured her. "I went to look more like an old woman at the end of my days than a woman of twenty-two years," she said, "for indigestion and anæmia completely changed my appearance. I became so ill that I could not eat a morsel of food, and ofttimes I was so weak that I could not walk even a short distance without feeling exhausted. No matter what king of food I took I could never enjoy it, because pain invariably attacked me after eating. I had a severe pain in my left side, which hurt me whenever I moved, and I was told that I had an enlarged liver. Whatever it was which occasioned the pain I suffered, it seemed as if nothing I took would do me any good. Anæmia set in, and I was almost in despair when I saw Chas. Forde's bile beans advertised in the newspapers, and made up my mind to give them a trial. When I had finished the first box I felt better and got more. Each box of beans made me better and better, until the neighbours began to notice how vastly I was improving. First one and then another would say, 'You do look different.' Whatever I look, I know I feel different. Never in all my life have I felt so well as I do at the present moment. I am sure I owe my life to Chas. Forde's bile beans. I shall do all I can to let others know of them, and I have already recommended them to several friends." It is by effecting such cures as the above that Chas. Forde's bile beans for biliousness have made their world-wide reputation. They are without doubt superior to all other known medicines for indigestion, anæmia, dizziness, pains in the side, chest and back, palpitation, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, headache, debility, nervousness, and female ailments. All chemists stock them, or you may obtain post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., by sending prices—one and three halfpence or two and nine.

GIVEN AWAY
WITH THIS WEEK'S
HOME NOTES
(No 474),
A PAPER PATTERN
of this
CHEMISE
Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Digitized by Google

mademoiselle disappeared, should her destination be close at hand.

There were, of course, many other people in the street besides themselves, else Edith's self-imposed piece of espionage would have been rendered difficult, if not impossible.

Men, women, and children lounged about the doorways and kept up a constant cackle of conversation in a mysterious patois which Miss Talbot, though an excellent French scholar, could make nothing of. The presence of these people naturally shielded her from the direct observation of La Belle Chasseuse, but, nevertheless, threatened a slight danger should it be necessary for her to loiter on the way, for she well understood that in such a locality each person was known to the other, and the advent of a stranger could not fail to arouse curiosity.

Soon after passing beneath the lamp mademoiselle vanished into a doorway.

Edith perceived to her joy that at this point there was no group of loungers. Indeed, for a few yards the street was empty.

Keeping her eyes sedulously fixed upon the exact spot where the Frenchwoman disappeared, she reached the door, and, after a moment's hesitation, stepped lightly into the interior darkness.

The narrow entrance was at once lessened to half its width by a staircase. She listened intently, and could hear the other woman ascending the second flight of stairs.

At the next landing mademoiselle paused and knocked three times.

Presumably in reply to a question within, she murmured something which Edith could not catch and was at once admitted. The shooting of a rusty bolt supplied further evidence that the door was locked behind her.

M.R. 107.

Edith's next task was to identify the house. She stepped out into the street again and crossed to the opposite pavement. She looked up to the second storey, but, owing to the short distance—barely fourteen feet—that separated her from the house, she could discern nothing, save that the windows on that floor were closely shuttered.

She rapidly noted that the door was the third removed from the lamp. Whilst wondering what to do next, a couple of girls approached her. They were young and of course inquisitive. Without any dissimulation, they stood right in front of her and scrutinised her face, wondering, no doubt, who this tall and graceful new-comer could be.

"What is your name?" said one. "Where do you live? Have you just come here? Are you staying with old Mother Peter?"

With difficulty Edith caught the drift of their questions. But she answered smilingly:

"No, I do not live here, and I do not know Mother Peter. But I want you to tell me who lives in the house opposite?"

Her Parisian French greatly surprised the two girls, who giggled at each other, and one of them cried:

"Oh, here's a lark."

But they scented an intrigue, and were quite ready to give all the information in their power.

"A lot of people live there," said the elder one, trying with the ready tact of her nation to accommodate her words to the understanding of the stranger. "It all depends whom you want to know about. On the ground floor is Josef the barber, and his wife, with three little ones. It cannot be them, I am sure, and it cannot be Monsieur Ducrot, who is their lodger, for he is seventy years old and a sacristan in the Church of the Sacred Heart. Then, on the first floor there are three men, not a woman amongst them. One is a bill-sticker, another a fisherman, and the third a waiter in the Café du Midi. I do not know their proper names. We call the bill-sticker 'Paste pot,' and the fisherman 'Crab,' The waiter is called 'Thomas' in the café, but when a letter comes for him it is in another name. Then, on the second floor—by the way, Marie, who is it that lives on the second floor?"

Edith with difficulty restrained her excitement. She felt that if only these youngsters rattled on a little longer she might gain some valuable information.

Marie, thus appealed to, was evidently of a more cautious temperament than her companion.

"If the young lady will tell us why she wants to know, we may be able to help her?" she stipulated.

"Certainly," cried Edith, instantly resolving to pursue the tactics of the penny novelette. "I have been deserted. My lover has been taken away from me by another woman—at least, that is what I am informed. I do not wish to make any trouble about it. There are plenty as good men as he left in the world; but, on the other hand, I must not act unjustly. I have been told that he lives in this house—that he is living with her here at this moment, in fact. If I can make sure of it, I will go away and never set eyes upon him again unless by chance, and then you may be sure I will take no notice of him. I am not one of those silly girls who break their hearts over a faithless sweetheart."

Marie was reassured.

"I should think not," she said, with a sympathetic and defiant sniff. "I had the very same experience last Sunday, when Phillippe—the grocer's boy at the corner, you know—walked along the Corniche Road with a chit of a girl out of a shop. She thinks herself better than we are because she stands behind a counter, and I am sure she made eyes at Phillippe one day when his master sent him there on an errand."

"Phillippe must have bad taste," broke in Edith. "But I am sorry I must hasten away. If you girls will tell me quickly all the other people that live in that house I will give you two francs each. That is all the money I have got."

She produced the coins, which she easily distinguished from the gold in her pocket by their size, and she knew that to appear too well supplied with money in that neighbourhood was to court danger, if not disaster, to her undertaking.

Both girls eagerly seized the 40-sous pieces.

"Oh, on the second floor," said Marie, "I am afraid you will find your young man. They are a funny couple that live there. They only came here on Monday. When did your young man leave you?"

"I saw him on Saturday."

"Where?"

This was a poser, but Miss Talbot answered desperately:

"At Lyon."

"What is he like?"

Another haphazard shot.

"He is tall and dark, and, oh, so good-looking, with a beautifully white skin and a pink complexion."

"That is he!" cried both girls together.

"The scoundrel! But tell me," went on Edith, whose excitement was readily construed as the pangs of jealousy, "who is the creature that lives with him?"

"We think she is a music-hall artiste," replied Marie. "At least, that is what the people say. I have not heard yet what hall she appears in. They say she is very pretty. Are you going to throw vitriol over her?"

"Not I," said Edith. "Do they live there alone?"

"Yes, quite alone. They rent the place from Père Didon. He owns most of the houses in this street, you know, and is a regular skin-flint. He won't let anyone get behind with their rent for an hour. He is old, so old, that you would not think that he could live another week, yet he is that keen after his francs you would imagine he was a young man anxious to get money for a gay life. You ought to

(Continued on page 223.)

Look out for R. NORMAN SILVER'S new serial, which is coming along on March 7th.

Digitized by Google

Cure of Deafness in Advanced Age.

The Editor of the "Journal for the Deaf" points out the great mistake made by deaf people, past the prime of life, in thinking that, because of advancing years, they must not expect a restoration of hearing. Against this common opinion he puts numerous cases of persons (with names and addresses), 60, 70, and even 80 years old, cured by the Drouet Method of external application. In one case, a man 64 years old, the deafness was of the worst chronic form—so bad, indeed, a watch could not be heard ticking even when pressed close to the ear on either side. The restoration of hearing is described by the patient, Mr. H. Holt, 17 Fenton Road, Blackpool, as follows:—"I may say I am completely cured and shall be pleased to give my testimony to anyone, as I think the Drouet Treatment cannot be too widely known." Anyone interested in the treatment of any form of Deafness or Ear, Nose, or Throat ailment can obtain a free copy of the "Journal for the Deaf," by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The "Journal" also contains a Special Report Form by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to treatment. The Editor, however, advises patients whenever possible, to attend the Institute for personal examination.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. 2½%

The Birkbeck Almanack, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

HYPNOTISM

Develops Personal Magnetism, will-power, nerve force, vital energy. It gives you a magic influence over others. It enables you to banish all diseases and bad habits without drugs or medicines. You need it in your life just as much as you need food and drink. If you wish to rise higher in your accepted business or calling; if you would make more money; win fame or renown; master the wonderful science of Hypnotism and gratify your highest ambitions. In hundreds of instance it has proved the turning point in lives which seemed doomed to poverty and despair.

LEARN AT HOME.

You can learn the inner secrets of personal magnetism and hypnotism at your own home. The New York Institute of Science has recently issued an elegantly illustrated **free book** which tells all about this mysterious and marvelous power. It tells how to learn to hypnotize people instantly by a mere wave of the hand or a glance of the eye. It opens up the pathway to health, happiness and wealth; it is full of startling disclosures, and practical hypnotic possibilities never dreamed of by the ordinary person. Any one can learn. We guarantee you success or forfeit One Thousand Dollars in gold. Write for a copy of this wonderful book to-day. Remember it is **absolutely free.** Address penny postcard:—

New York Institute of Science,

Dept. VA33, Rochester, N.Y. U.S.A.

SPECIAL BARGAINS.

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE £ d $

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH,** extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished, elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6**; approval before payment.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval before payment.

REAL DIAMOND and EMERALD doublet **HALF-HOOP RING;** large, lustrous stones, massive solid gold setting (hall-marked); weight 2½ dwts.; sacrifice, **21/-**; approval willingly.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER,** jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument. 12-fold bellows (meta bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

DARK RUSSIAN FUR MUFF & NECKLET to match, with large, bushy tails; never worn; sacrifice, **12/6** together: also another set of extra fine quality very handsome muff and necklet, accept **16/6**, worth 3 guineas; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING,** 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6.**

BROOCH; very handsome, 18-carat rolled gold; 3 swallows in flight; set lovely turquoise and pearls, in velvet case; accept **6/9**; approval before payment.

NECKLET WITH HEART PENDANT, very pretty Princess of Wales rope pattern, heart set with pearls and turquoise; accept **9/6**; approval.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH,** jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-.**

A full list of **Special Bargains,** New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, PAWNBROKER & JEWELLER,
284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance,

SHILLING BOTTLES.

TEST BOXES FREE TO ALL.

Any sufferer sending name and address to JOHN A. SMITH, 1007 Montague House, Stonecutter St., London, E.C., will be sent a Test Box of his marvellous Cure, Gloria Tonic, for all Uric Acid Ailments, including Gout, Sciatica, and **RHEUMATISM.** *300 Recent Cures.*

RUN NO RISK

KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE

THE WORST COUGH

To CURE Drunkards

Mrs. Geo. Fuller, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

Digitized by Google

have heard the row there was here last Saturday when he turned the people out from these rooms where your lover now lives with his mistress. It was terrible. There was a poor woman with two sick children."

How much further the revelations as to Père Didon's iniquity might have gone, Miss Talbot could not say, but at that moment there came an interruption.

From the opposite doorway appeared the figure of Mlle. Beaucaire, carrying a small bag.

She was followed by a man, tall, slight, and closely muffled up, who shouldered a larger portmanteau.

Edith grabbed both the girls, and pulled them close to her against the closed door behind them.

"It is he!" she whispered tragically. "Silence! Let us watch them!"

The man darted a suspicious glance up and down the street. There was no one whom even the clever Henri Dubois could construe as an enemy—no one save some chattering Marseillais loitering around their doorsteps, and three girls huddled together in close conclave directly opposite.

Thus reassured, he strode after La Belle Chasseuse, who cried out impatiently:

"Come quick, Henri; what are you waiting for?"

"Is his name Henri?" whispered the awe-stricken Marie.

"Yes. Isn't he a villain? I wonder where they are going now!"

"Let us follow them and see," suggested Marie.

"Yes, let us follow them and see," chimed in the other one, who delighted in this nocturnal romance. It was a veritable page out of one of Paul de Kock's novels.

The programme suited Miss Talbot exceedingly well.

They strolled off down the street, nestling together, Edith in the centre, and keeping the shrouded couple in front well in sight.

This time, when Mademoiselle Beaucaire and her companion reached the point where the street emerged on to the harbour, they did not cross over towards the broad and brilliantly-lighted Cannebière, but hurried on through the darkness in the direction of a cluster of fishing smacks that lay alongside the Quai de Rive Neuva.

"My faith, Eugenie!" cried Marie, "they must be going on board one of the vessels."

"What a lark!" was the answer. "I suppose they fear you," she added, turning her sharp eyes on Edith. "What is your name?"

"Lucille," came the answer on the spur of the moment.

"Lucille what?"

"Lucille Beauharnais."

"My gracious!" cried Eugenie, "what a swell name!"

"Oh, let us hurry," interrupted Miss Talbot desperately. "You girls know everybody. You must know all the vessels. If they are going on a boat and you find out the name and number for me I will give each of you a whole louis. I will give them to you now—I mean, that is, if you will walk with me afterwards to my lodgings."

For even amidst the exciting circumstances that surrounded her, Edith recognised the absolute necessity there was to maintain the credibility of her previous narrative.

Unquestionably Dubois and the lady intended to embark on one of the fishing boats.

They hastened to the further end of the harbour, through whose tiny entrance Edith could now see the dark waters of the bay beyond, for the night was beautifully clear and fine, and the bright stars of the south lent some radiance to the scene, when the girls quitted the deep shadow of the houses.

A solitary boat, a decked fishing-smack of some forty tons, was lying by the side of the quay, apart from the others. Edith, who knew something about yachting, recognised that her gearing was not fastened in the trim manner suggestive of a craft laid by for the night.

At the same instant, too, she caught sight of a third form—that of a man who had been seated on a fixed capstan, and who now strode forward to peer at the new comers.

Some few words passed between the three, but it was impossible for the girls to hear a syllable.

Instantly the sailor assisted Dubois and Mademoiselle Beaucaire to step down from the quay on board the smack. He followed them, and three other men who appeared out of the chaos of sails and ropes, commenced to labour with a large pole in order to shove the sturdy vessel out into the harbour.

"Quick!" murmured Edith, in an agony lest the opportunity should slip. "Tell me what vessel it is."

"I think," said Marie, "it is the *Belles Sœurs*. Anyhow, we can easily make certain. All we have to do is to go back around the top of the harbour, walk down the Quai de Port, and watch her as she passes under the lighthouse of the Fort St. Jean. They will hoist her sail then and we will see her number."

"Oh, come," cried Edith, "let us run!"

"We can run if you like," replied Marie coolly, "but there is no need. They have to get out by using the sweeps, and we will be underneath the lighthouse at least a minute or two before they pass, even if we walk slowly."

Whilst they were talking the three girls put their words into practice, and Edith found herself battling with a logical dilemma.

Dubois was evidently escaping from France—making out from Marseilles at this late hour on a small vessel which was nevertheless, as she well knew, capable of sailing to almost any point of the Mediterranean.

What could she do? Was it possible to invoke the aid of a policeman and get some authority to hail the craft and order her to return, or was there time to take a cab in the Cannebière and drive furiously to the hotel, where Brett, Fairholme, and her brother must be anxiously awaiting her return?

Rapidly as these alternatives suggested themselves, she dismissed them. It was best to fall in with Marie's suggestion and ascertain beyond doubt the identity of the fishing smack. Then at any rate Brett would have a tangible and definite clue.

So she hastened with her companions along the three sides of the now almost deserted quay, and, in accordance with the prediction of her youthful guides, she reached the promenade beyond the small lighthouse of the inner port before the vessel had quitted the harbour, for to move a forty-ton boat with oars is a slow matter at the best.

As the craft came creeping steadily through the narrow channel Edith saw, to her great relief, that two of the men drew in their sweeps, and commenced to haul upon ropes whilst the clanking and groaning of pulleys heralded the slow rising of the mainsail.

She thought the sail would never climb up in time, but as it began to yield to the steady pull of the men it mounted more and more radidly, and at last, feeling the influence of a gentle breeze blowing off the land, it shook out its cumbrous folds and the number stood clearly revealed in huge white letters on the dark brown canvas.

At first, in her eagerness, she could hardly discern it, save a big "M" and an "R."

"There!" cried Eugenie, bubbling over with excitement. "There it is! 'M.R. 107, Marseilles. No. 107, you know. Why, isn't that Jacques Le Bon's boat?" she demanded of her companion.

"Yes, it is," said Marie; "and there is Jacques himself standing by the tiller."

Edith's eyes were now becoming accustomed to the light.

"Where are the others?" she said. "I cannot see them. There is no one standing on the deck but the sailors."

"Oh, they have gone below, I expect," said the practical Marie. "They will be in the way of the sails, you know. There is not much room for people that don't work on the deck of a small ship like that. Besides, they don't want to be seen. If a Customs officer or a harbour official were to notice the boat now he would think that Le Bon was going out fishing for the night, but he would be sure to wonder what was happening if he caught sight of a woman on board. Funny, isn't it," she rattled on, "that Jacques should be called 'Le Bon,' for he is the worst man in Marseilles? They say that his ugly grin when he draws a knife would frighten anybody!"

(Another instalment next week.)

Digitized by Google

ASTHMA

WHY ?? is it generally thought that there is no cure for

ASTHMA,

CHRONIC BRONCHITIS, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, EMPHYSEMA, BLOOD-SPITTING, HAY FEVER, and other Lung Complaints.

BECAUSE !! the usual treatments only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE

ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE.

Sufferers will receive, post free **Free of Charge**, particulars of the famous WEIDHAAS HOME TREATMENT when applying to **THE PAUL WEIDHAAS HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, 16 T.A. BUCKINGHAM ROAD, BRIGHTON.**

Mr. Weidhaas has tried the Treatment on himself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured himself, and had then practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of special cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by this Treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been **GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.** No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from **COLD FEET.** Read the following Testimonials, two out of thousands received:

SEVERE BRONCHIAL ASTHMA CURED, AND BLOOD SPITTING.

MR. S. J. HAILES.
(From a photo.)

(When Mr. S. J. Hailes applied for the Treatment, he said the doctor described his complaint as Asthma, and he could do him no more good, and he would always be subject to the spasms. During the complaint the patient had lost strength and about 28lb. in weight. He suffered generally with cold hands. He could not sleep well. He could not go upstairs to bed, and had to be propped up downstairs at night before a large fire. He suffered from wheezing and a cough. He perspired freely when the attacks came on. The shortness of breath came on in paroxysms in the mornings.)

After a course of the treatment he writes: "Dear Sir,—It is with feelings of deepest gratitude that I testify to the marvellous effect your cure has had on me. I could very seldom lie down; if I did, only to wake up nearly suffocated and gasping for breath, the attacks lasting three or four hours, until I was completely worn out, not able to walk or do anything, with much spitting of blood. My friends all gave me up, and I thought myself it was all over. Seeing your advertisement, I resolved to give the Treatment a trial, and, thanks to the Cure, I am now able to eat, sleep, walk, or do anything as well as ever. Trusting many who are suffering from such dreadful complaints will give you a trial as it is in reach of everybody, I shall be pleased to answer any inquiries as regards my cure. Again thanking you for your kind attention and interest you have taken in my case, I remain, very gratefully yours, S. J. HAILES." Nuneaton.

(Full address on application.)

CONSUMPTION AND HÆMORRHAGE OF THE LUNGS CURED.

"I suffered for several years with Consumption, and the doctors gave me up, and told me the only cure would be to go abroad. I lost a half-pint of blood a day. I could only walk across the room with difficulty. Also, I suffered with a dry cough and night sweats, and whenever I attempted to do anything I had a fearful pain in my left side. In September, 1897, I was given up. I didn't know what it was to enjoy a good meal. My food did not seem to do me any good. I made up my mind to try your cure, just at the time I was at my worst. After trying your treatment I began to improve; my cough ceased, and I did not suffer from the night sweats, and have not had a return of the bleeding of the lungs for over 12 months. Now I can walk a considerable distance without feeling the least fatigue. I don't think I can thank you enough for your marvellous treatment, to which I owe my entire cure.

MRS. ARNOLD, Polegate."

(Full address on application.)

MRS. ARNOLD.
(From a photo.)

The DIRECTOR is prepared to pay

£1,000

to any Charitable Institution if the above are not genuine extracts from the patient's own letters. The originals may be seen at the Paul Weidhaas Hygienic Institute by any bona-fide inquirers.

CURABLE

BORAX
Starch Glaze.

While the iron's hot.

is the time to get the Borax Starch Glaze finish. There's a "just right" about the heat that means quickness in the work.

The women who talk of the bother of ironing are they who try to get good results with starch alone. The starch isn't made that will give a satisfactory finish by itself, be the ironer ever so clever. It's the pinch of Borax Starch Glaze in it that makes any woman a proficient laundress.

A penny packet sufficient for several ironings can be obtained from Grocers and Stores everywhere.

Facsimile Packet.

FREE SAMPLE PACKET AND SOME NOVELTIES
if you name this paper and your grocer.

For the finest results it should be used with Borax "Beauty" Starch.

BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT MAKERS TO THE KING.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham.

Distinction in Dress
AT LITTLE COST

Is the enjoyment of all who shop by post during

NOBLE'S MONEY-SAVING SALE

Write to-day for Noble's

SALE CATALOGUE

of Bargains, sent post free.

MODEL 1586.

This very Neat Design consists of plain Tailor-cut Skirt, and smart Blouse Bodice, tastefully trimmed corded satinette strappings, yoke and sleeves lined. In the **J.N. Cheviot Serge** or **Costume Coating, 10/6.** Carriage, 6d. Sizes larger than 38 ins. bust measure cost 2/6 extra. Skirt alone, **5/6.** Carriage, 5d. This Costume is also made to measure in the New Black and White Flake Tweed at **21/-**

John Noble Ld. 148 BROOK ST. MILLS, MANCHESTER

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Neglected Girl.

"TWENTY-FOUR" is much concerned about her age. She has reached that number of summers, but as yet has never received attentions from the opposite sex, except the barest formalities. Do I think her case exceptional, and likely to mean that she will be an old maid? "TWENTY-FOUR" tells me she is quite attractive in appearance.

* * * * *

"TWENTY-FOUR" had better not worry herself. Women do not marry so young nowadays as they used to. Many women of thirty are regarded as just at the most attractive age. It is often, too, that certain women do not attract as girls, while as mature women they possess unusual attractiveness for men. Perhaps "TWENTY-FOUR" is one of these. Let me add that there is one very sure way of becoming an old maid, and that is to worry over possibilities. More women grow *possée* out of their own foolish despairings than from the hand of Time.

Calling.

"R. B." asks: "On paying an afternoon call, should one, when leaving, say 'Good-bye' or 'Good afternoon?' Also, should one take one's umbrella into the room or leave it in the hall?"

* * * * *

Never say "Good afternoon" to a friend on whom you are calling. It is formal, and not at all polite. Always say "Good-bye," and on meeting "How do you do?" As to your umbrella, certainly leave it in the hall, but, of course, take you hat with you if it is only a short social call.

Boy and Girl Love.

I AM glad you have summoned up courage to write to me, "APOLLO." You are sixteen, and in love with a girl of your own age, whom, you say, you met last year, and think rather likes you. You have corresponded regularly, but not as yet exchanged any word of love. Of course, you cannot offer marriage, but at the same time would wish to convey to her your feelings.

* * * * *

Well, I see no reason why you should not hint to her when next you write that you are affectionately disposed towards her. At your age neither of you could sensibly become engaged, or even think of marriage; but there is no reason why you should not have an understanding that if your relations continue the same when a few years are past, you will enter into a serious bond.

* * * * *

Of course, though I don't doubt your sincerity or hers in the matter, many things happen between sixteen and twenty-one, and it would be wrong to set too much store now by your feelings. Still, there is no reason why you should not let the girl know how you are disposed towards her.

A Very Faint Heart.

"N. E. R." wishes to make the acquaintance of a girl in his town. He knows a lady friend of hers through whom he could get an introduction, but has not the courage to ask her for it. Can I advise him as to the best method of procedure?"

* * * * *

If "N. E. R." has not the courage to ask for such an ordinary privilege as an introduction, I fear he has that "faint heart" spoken of by the proverb. He has an excellent opportunity to know the girl in the shape of a lady friend. If he is afraid to take this chance, I don't think he would have much success with any other courses I might recommend him.

A Speculative Lover.

"JOHANNESBURG" unfolds to me a story in which love is very closely mixed up with finance. The gentleman who has proposed to her, and been accepted, goes in for speculation on the Stock Exchange. Recently he has lost £2,000 through the sharpness of a broker. He hopes to get this back when affairs in South Africa change for the better. Until this happens, he is reluctant to buy my correspondent her engagement ring. Do I think this is right, seeing that many girls have their rings before the lover can even support himself.

* * * * *

I do not think you need quarrel with your lover because he does not buy you a ring at once. Surely you can wait until he can afford to do so. True love does not need the fetter of an engagement ring to make it binding. If your engagement has been made public, and you do not care about being teased by your friends for not having a ring, get your lover to buy you just a plain gold chain ring. These rings look very neat and nice, are not expensive, and would answer the purpose admirably until your lover is able to get you what he would, had he the money now. A word of warning, however, "JOHANNESBURG," you may take in good part. Men who depend for their living on speculations, and who are apparently so careless in disposing of thousands as your lover, do not make promising husbands, even if successful.

* * * * *

A man who juggles with £2,000 will do the same later on with £20,000 or £200,000 (if he gets them), and amongst speculators the gulf between a millionaire and a pauper is not a very wide one. So it is for you also to consider whether an engagement between you is desirable so long as your lover can only depend on speculations for his future career.

A Curious Question.

"GEORGE," who, I suppose, is a young lady from the question asked, has met a "fellow" to whom she has taken a great liking. He is about her own age, and she wants him for a friend. Should she ask him to become so, or how should she act?

If you are to be friends, it will be a mutual understanding between you, which should not require any formality. Friends attract each other instinctively, and there is no proposal or acceptance. If he likes you, he will cultivate your society, and you should cultivate his. There is no harm, however, in telling a person that you like him. Reserve in those matters often leads to misunderstanding.

Kissing In Public.

"WHEN my young man and myself are parting at a railway station," writes "VIOLET," "ought we to kiss each other in view of other people?" Certainly, if you do not do it too ostentatiously. It would be foolish to make a huge display of your relationships with each other. A parting kiss, under such circumstances, should be snatched. It is sweeter, too, that way.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Breom's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

PHONOGRAPHS FREE

A Practical Up-to-date Sound Reproducing Instrument, which will take any Standard Record and bring forth the Words, Music or other Sounds in a Perfect Manner.

AN ABSOLUTELY FREE GIFT

This is a Genuine Offer. It comes to you from the well-known establishment of Symonds' London Stores. We are the largest Phonograph suppliers directly to the public of any firm in the United Kingdom. When we make a promise we keep it. We now tell you that we mean to give away a limited number of the celebrated Symonds' Premier Phonographs. **You can verify our assertion by answering this advertisement.** But do not wait and be too late.

THE REASON FOR OUR FREE OFFER

We have set aside a quantity of our Symonds' Premier Phonographs to be distributed for advertising purposes. We offer to give you one of these Phonographs provided that whenever friends ask where you obtained it you will mention that it came from Symonds' London Stores, and also provided that you keep at least half-a-dozen of our Records according to the Award which we will send you (playing selections of band music, songs, &c.), so that your friends may know their quality. You will not be required to pay a penny for the complete Phonograph. We will send the Phonograph, carefully packed, and by the directions you can learn to operate it quickly and easily. We can supply comic songs, sentimental songs, religious selections, or band music. What kind do you prefer? Our catalogue will help your choice.

Bear in mind you are not to send us any money for the Phonograph, but merely write a letter, mentioning having seen this offer in this paper. Give us your full address, being particular to also mention the nearest railway station. Enclose stamp.

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

(The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 55 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

VARICOSE VEINS,

BAD LEGS, ETC., ARE COMPLETELY CURED WITH INEXPENSIVE HOME TREATMENT.

Mr. E. Gooch, Maldon, Essex, writes:

Sept. 4th, 1902.

"Dear Sir,—My wife had two boxes of your remedy for Varicose Veins two years ago, and they entirely cured her. They acted like magic, for before using them she could not walk about without support."

Full address, with particulars of remedy, on receipt of two stamps.

S. S. ROBERTS,
15 Playfair Road, Southsea.

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.,** you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you **should have no hesitancy in writing.** You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.,** Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

The Most Nutritious.

EPPS'S

Grateful—Comforting.

COCOA

Breakfast—Supper.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-: Countries, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

SONGS COPIED.

Legible as print, **5d.** page; transposed correctly, **6d.** page. MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon. Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Mrs. Conyers,
MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive **Free** on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU—
NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at **2d.** each, making **4/-** altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Timekeeper or other Presents of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of **£2 10s. per week.** Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE
Delamere Crescent, London, W.

REMOVE THAT BILIOUS FEELING.

You know how it interferes with your daily work, your pleasures, and recreations—it is a sure indication that your system is not working right, and that you need a little assistance—take

BEECHAM'S PILLS

and you will be well, look well, and feel well. You will eat well, sleep well, and you will work well. You not only need the laxative, but the tonic effects of Beecham's Pills to put your entire system in good working order. Beecham's Pills come as a boon and a blessing, for they correct the evils of an over-worked digestive system, and lay a solid foundation of health and strength.

TRIED AND TRUSTED FRIENDS **BEECHAM'S PILLS will prove every point claimed.**

SOLD EVERYWHERE IN BOXES.

Price 1s. 1½d. (56 Pills), & 2s. 9d. (168 Pills).

Short Stories.

No. 738.] Week ending February 21, 1903. [Price One Penny.

She paused with the glass in one hand and the phial in the other, for suddenly upon the opposite wall she saw the shadow of a man!

(A Dramatic Incident from our Story, "The Wickedness of a Woman." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia.

Cures In TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

"Health," the well-known Medical Journal. Edited by Dr. Andrew Wilson, F.R.S.E., says of Kaputine:

"There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ this remedy, and popular experience of its use fully warrants the recommendations with which it is offered."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,

of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from

KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield,

for 12 stamps.

'Let's Talk of Graves' Drapery

.. THE .. 'ECONOMIC' BALE

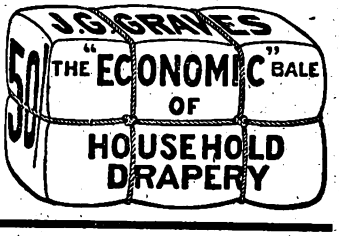
OF HOUSEHOLD DRAPERY,

£2 10s.

CONTAINS: Pair very Best Quality Twilled Sheets, Pair Heavy Blankets with white whipped edges (full size), Superior Quality Red and White or Blue and White Alhambra Quilt (large size), Pair Fine Quality Pillow Slips, 1 Bolster Case, Set of 5 Handsomely Embroidered Toilet Mats, 2 Turkish Towels, Best Quality Glass Cloth, Scouring Cloth, 6 Netted Dusters, Pair Special Design Lace Curtains, 1 Woven Turkey Table Cloth, 1 Embroidered Table Cover 80 in. square, and 1 Full Size White Table Cloth of Fine Quality.

TERMS.

Send only 5/-, the Bale will then be sent to your address (carriage paid), and, if you are satisfied, complete the purchase in six more monthly payments of 7s. each. If not satisfied, return the parcel, and your deposit will be refunded in full.



Send for No. 5 Catalogue of Drapery, Costumes, etc., etc., Post Free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. No Risk. Good Commission.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

Order E. & T. PINK'S JAM

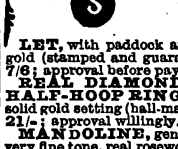
Undoubtedly the Best.

PURE.

No Artificial Colouring or Chemical Preservative.

SPECIAL BARGAINS.

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.



LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH**, extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished, elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6**; approval before payment.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval before payment.

REAL DIAMOND and EMERALD doublet **HALF-HOOP RING**; large, lustrous stones, massive solid gold setting (hall-marked); weight 2½ dwts.; sacrifice, **21/-**; approval willingly.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER**, jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument. 13-fold bellows (meta bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

DARK RUSSIAN FUR MUFF & NECKLET to match, with large, bushy tails; never worn; sacrifice, **12/6** together; also another set of extra fine quality very handsome muff and necklet, accept **16/6**, worth 3 guineas; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING**, 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6**.

BROOCH; very handsome, 18-carat rolled gold; 3 swallows in flight; set lovely turquoise and pearls, in velvet case; accept **6/9**; approval before payment.

NECKLET WITH HEART PENDANT, very pretty Princess of Wales rope pattern; heart set with pearls and turquoise; accept **9/6**; approval.

LADY'S 4-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH**, jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-**.

A full list of **Special Bargains**, New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, PAWNBROKER & JEWELLER,

284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W.

SPLENDID NEW SERIAL STARTS THE WEEK AFTER NEXT

Short Stories

No. 738.] [ONE PENNY.

Week Ending February 21st, 1903.

The Wickedness of a Woman.

THE STORY OF AN ADVENTURESS.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

"THE señora has decided to go?"

"Yes; I have decided to go."

"The señora is wise—with the wisdom of the serpent. The señora will be a great lady in the land to which she goes."

"It will not be my fault if I am not," and a short laugh, half amused, half scornful, wholly musical, accompanied the words.

The two speakers stood in the tiny living-room of a wretched hovel whose windows looked upon a miserable back street in Valparaiso. No greater contrast could have been conceived than was presented by the women who faced one another in that miserable den. One of them—evidently the mistress of the dwelling—was dressed in the meanest rags, and her dark, evil face bore the stamp of poverty and wickedness.

Her companion obviously belonged to a far higher rank of society, and her face possessed that extraordinary and surpassing beauty, given now and again, though rarely indeed, to one of the daughters of men.

No living being could have looked unmoved upon that exquisite face, with its warm southern colouring, its deep, dark eyes, its lips that could only be compared to pomegranate flowers; its dusky, glorious hair!

Her mien and bearing were those of a queen; her very presence in the den in which she stood seemed incongruous, unnatural. That she should even have a passing acquaintance with the repulsive old hag by her side gave one a sense of repugnance.

The old woman leered up into the beautiful face with her bleared red eyes, and said softly and fawningly:

"The señora must conquer the world. So fair a face should win even a kingdom."

"It will win me all I need," was the short response. "I shall leave this vile land to-morrow."

"To revile the land that gave you birth is——"

"Oh! no moralising please, Marietta," the younger woman broke in impatiently. "I shall revile whom I please, and what I please. This land has been an evil place to me; to-morrow I shake off its dust from my feet for ever!"

"And Gonsalez?" The old woman spoke the words softly but very significantly, and the other started as though a snake had stung her.

"Gonsalez?" she said haughtily, but in spite of herself her voice shook. "I shall never see Gonsalez again. He knows neither where I am going, nor the name under which I go."

Marietta's eyes narrowed into little evil sparks of light, a curious intent look stole over her face.

"The señora goes then under another name? Yet Gonsalez is her——"

"Gonsalez is nothing to me—nothing, nothing!" the other woman cried passionately. "Do not ever remind me that I was a fool to—— But it is all over," she ended, with an abrupt change of tone. "From the moment the ship in which I sail leaves the harbour my past is wiped out; I shall no longer be Elena Huerta, but——"

"But?" the old woman questioned softly, her head eagerly craned forward to catch the reply. But instead of a reply, a low, triumphant laugh came from the younger woman's lovely lips.

"No, no, Marietta!" she cried; "the past you know, the future I shall keep hidden from you. In silence is wisdom, and I can be silent as well as wise."

Disappointed malice looked out of the old woman's eyes, but she said smoothly:

"The señora is right—wisdom and silence go hand in hand. And what can poor old Marietta do for the señora to-day?"

"To-day I am rich; to-morrow I may be poor," the other answered vaguely. "I must have always by me that which can cut the knot of life quickly. You can sell me——"

She hesitated, Marietta's eyes gleamed. She moved across the room to a tumble-down cupboard, from which she drew two tiny bottles. A grim smile overspread her face as she hobbled back to her visitor's side.

"Either of these will suit the purpose of the señora," she said. "With one comes a painless end; with the other——" she shrugged her shoulders with deadly significance. "With both nothing is traceable afterwards!"

"Give me—the painless one," the woman calling herself Elena answered coldly. "I will pay you well."

Ten minutes later there emerged from the low doorway of Marietta's dwelling a tall woman, whose lace mantilla, closely drawn over her face, entirely hindered all recognition of her features. She walked swiftly down the street and entered a carriage that awaited her at a distant corner.

But Marietta, standing alone in her little room, shook her

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

fist at the retreating figure, and muttered under her breath:

"Be not so sure that vengeance will not come, my fine señora; a past may be buried, but sometimes it will rise from the dead, as you may find, oh, lady with the soul of a fiend and the face of an angel."

* * *

"My dear fellow, you are not going to marry her!"

"I *am* going to marry her."

"But, Graham, dear old chap, I—well, of course it's no business of mine; I ought not to interfere, but—are you wise to do this without knowing more about—about——"

"Look here, Desmond, I don't want to quarrel with you, but this discussion must end if we are still to be friends. I cannot allow my betrothed to be discussed by anyone, not even by you. Isabella is to me the embodiment of all that is pure and good, as well as beautiful. She——"

"My dear fellow, don't be vexed, but think of the name you will put into her keeping if you marry her; the honoured name that has meant so much to Britain for centuries."

The man called Graham laughed lightly.

"I would trust my honour and my name to her if I were a king!" he answered. "No one could look into her face for a moment, and think evil of her! You are prejudiced against all foreigners, Desmond, that is the plain and simple truth. Don't let us argue the matter any more; you and I are too old friends to quarrel over my marriage," and Lord Graham thrust his arm through Desmond's, and drew him to a table on which rested a large photograph in a silver frame.

"Look at her face and be ashamed of your doubts," he said, half in jest, and half in earnest, and for a moment both men gazed silently at the exquisite features of the portrait. Then Desmond said slowly:

"I grant her loveliness, old man, I never saw a more beautiful woman, but——"

"No more 'buts,'" Graham said lightly; "the wedding is fixed for June 12th." And at that Desmond was silent.

Society is apt, in these days, to fall at the feet of every new divinity that rises above the horizon, but seldom has such a furore been created as was brought about by the introduction to the London world of the famous Spanish beauty, Isabella Guarnera. She took the world by storm. Her marvellous beauty, her grace, her charm, won homage for her wherever she went, and she had not been in London three months before offers of marriage more than she could count, were showered upon her.

But gracious and charming as she was to all who approached her, no one man could flatter himself that he was singled out for her special favour. No one man, that is to say, until Douglas, Earl Graham, that most fastidious of beings, succumbed to her fascinations, and then Isabella melted as no one in her new surroundings had ever seen her melt before.

It was soon perfectly plain that he was singled out for the beautiful woman's favour, and that his persistent wooing was likely to meet with its reward. Perhaps no one was exactly surprised at his infatuation, though plenty of people—his own relations, and his old friend, Hugh Desmond, amongst them—implored him to stop and consider before taking so irrevocable a step as marrying a woman of whom so little was known.

The above conversation was but a sample of many like it. Douglas Graham—hitherto impervious to every woman's charm—Douglas, the most particular, the most refined, as well as one of the noblest of men, was as wildly in love as any schoolboy with the beautiful Spaniard of whose antecedents he knew absolutely nothing but what she herself chose to tell him.

And, needless to say, he placed implicit belief in every word that fell from her lovely lips.

"Tell me, my darling," he said to her one evening, about a week before June 12th, the day fixed for their wedding; "tell me truly—have you never before loved anyone? Am I truly and really the first?"

"Truly and really," she answered, in her deep, musical tones, looking full into his eyes with her own dark ones; "you are the first man I have ever loved—as you will be the last—and only one." And she laid a soft, caressing hand on his.

"But many men must have loved you," he said wistfully.

"If they did," she looked at him with her innocent, angelic smile; "I knew little of it. I gave them no encouragement. I have never cared for men, or for men's society—until now."

And lifting her lovely eyes to his again—the subtle flattery in their depths almost intoxicated him when he saw it, she laid her head upon his breast. The act seemed to him one of beautiful, childlike surrender; his love became something akin to reverent worship, and he said low and humbly:

"God made me worthy of you, my sweet."

* * * * *

Lady Graham—"the beautiful Lady Graham" as she was soon called, was undoubtedly a success. Everyone said so, and of course everyone must be right. Douglas' family forgot their original objection to the marriage, and welcomed her with open arms. Douglas' household adored her; his friends could not speak loudly enough of her many merits.

With one exception. Hugh Desmond, Lord Graham's greatest and oldest friend, never cordially approved of the match or liked his friend's lovely wife.

"That woman is a cat," he said confidentially to his favourite sister when they were discussing the marriage, "don't ask me why I say so, or why I think so, but I know it. She is a cat—a beautiful one, I grant it, but there are claws under that velvet paw—I would swear to that!"

Certainly no claws were visible, and Isabella Graham went on her triumphant way, beloved and admired on all sides.

She made an ideal mistress of her husband's great country house—Dangerfield Hall. She was a Lady Bountiful to the whole village, and the villagers were loud in her praises, and in the admiration of her angelic face.

"Ah! his lordship is a lucky man to 'a' found such a wife as that," they would say. "She be more like to an angel than a woman—so she be!"

Lord and Lady Graham had been married nearly three months, when one fine October afternoon they were returning from paying a visit to a neighbouring Squire. They had dismissed their carriage, and agreed to walk across the Park by Douglas' suggestion.

Isabella never failed to fall in with every suggestion of her husband; it would almost seem as though she could never do enough to please him, and from this fact the generality of people deduced her overwhelming love for Douglas.

Hugh Desmond thought differently. To that safe confidante of his—his sister, he said: "Lady Graham is playing a deep game. She means to yield to Douglas in everything, and play the part of a model wife. That woman is a cat."

* * * * *

No one could have looked less cat-like than did Isabella, as she and her husband strolled across the Park. Her lovely face was alight with animation; she acquiesced with enthusiasm in Douglas' schemes for new cottages, for improved conditions of his tenants, for various philanthropic efforts, and showed such interest in his plans and wishes, that, as they emerged upon the drive, he exclaimed fervently: "No man ever had such a wife as I!"

Digitized by Google

She smiled her adorable smile, and they passed on in silence, until, just as they reached their own front door, Douglas exclaimed :

"Good Heavens, there is a man lying on the step ! What on earth is he doing there ?"

Husband and wife hurried forward to find, as Douglas had stated, that a man was lying huddled upon the steps, his ghastly face and closed eyes speaking of serious illness. He was quite unconscious ; only when Lord Graham stooped and touched him gently, he moaned, and cried out wildly in Spanish :

"Elena—I have come—Elena !"

"Poor fellow," Douglas said kindly, "he seems to be a fellow countryman of yours, sweetheart."

He was still bending over the fallen man, otherwise he could not have failed to notice the awful pallor that had overspread his wife's face, the light of deadly hatred that shone out of her flashing eyes, the changed expression of her features, that turned them from those of an angel to those of a demon.

Not the fraction of a second had passed, however, before the expression vanished, and she was her usual sweet self again, saying softly :

"Oh ! poor, poor man, let us have him taken in, Douglas, and do what we can for him."

Graham turned to his wife, passionate adoration written all over his speaking countenance.

"It is like your goodness to have suggested such a thing," he said, "Perhaps the poor fellow had heard of you and of your helpfulness to all who suffer, and came here to ask for succour. Perhaps he has even seen you in your own land ?"

"Perhaps," she said, very gently, "but I do not know his face at all." And she looked down calmly at the unconscious man, who suddenly lifted his arms in a wild gesture, and cried again :

"Elena—Elena, I have come !"

It was a matter of a few moments only before the stranger was carried into the house and put to bed in one of the bedrooms, and whilst Lord Graham dispatched messengers to summon a doctor and a nurse, his wife watched beside the sick man.

He lay very still, and evidently quite unaware of all his surroundings, least of all of the woman who sat watching him, with lips close set in hard, determined lines, and eyes in which that look of hatred burnt afresh.

Her first action, when left alone with him, was to search every pocket of the clothes which had been taken from him but the search was apparently a futile one, for she went to her place by the bedside with a look of relief in her face, and the whisper dropped from her lips :

"Old scores can be settled now !"

* * * * *

Midnight boomed slowly out from the clock over the stables of Dangerfield Hall.

The house was wrapped in profound stillness, and in total darkness, save in the room where the sick stranger lay.

There a shaded lamp cast strange shadows on walls and ceiling, yet giving sufficient illumination to allow the nurse to see the face of the patient.

Consciousness had not returned to him. Beyond the perpetual cry of : "Elena, Elena," he had spoken no word, but lay wrapped in a deadly lethargy, from which he was only roused for his food and medicine.

The doctor had declared that the man was merely suffering from hunger and exhaustion, and that in a few days he would be quite well, and able to give an account of himself, and to this report Lady Graham had listened with a face of grave pleasure, and a few words of suitable satisfaction.

And now, just as midnight boomed from the stable clock, her form might have been seen stealing softly, softly along the corridor between her room and that of the patient. She was fully dressed, for her husband was dining out, and she had said she would sit up for him, although he declared he could not possibly be home till nearly two in the morning.

"I shall like to go now and then to our patient's room, Douglas," she said, "just to assure myself that all is well."

Yet surely it was strange that she should move along the passage with such stealthy feet, and without a light ! Strange that she should start at every sound, and pause with quickly beating heart when the wood of the furniture creaked loudly.

She reached the sick room at last, and opened the door with the extremity of caution and quietness. All within was very silent.

Lady Graham smiled—an evil smile—as her glance fell on the form of the nurse, sleeping soundly in an arm-chair.

"Coffee is a good narcotic sometimes," she murmured, then she crossed the room with swift, yet noiseless tread, and stood looking down at the sick man.

His face was upturned towards her, in the dim light it looked very pathetic and helpless ; the lines of want and suffering were carved deeply upon it.

"Elena," he moaned, stirring restlessly. "I—loved—you !"

No pity, no soft emotion, stirred the face of the woman above him ; she did not even wince, but turned towards the table on which stood a bottle of medicine and a glass.

Then with a sudden quick motion she drew from her bosom a small blue phial, and held it up to the light.

A smile of unspeakable wickedness flashed over the angelic beauty of her face as she murmured :

"Painless and untraceable ! You thought you could baffle me—Elena Huerta ! Poor fool, poor fool, but you were always that, Gonsalez."

As she said the words she turned a little more to the light, and lifting the glass from the table, poured into it the sick man's medicine, then with the utmost deliberation she was preparing to empty into this the contents of the blue phial, when, with a gesture of horror and profound terror, she let the latter slip from her hands.

For her startled glance had seen upon the opposite wall the plain and distinct shadow of a man—a man who must have entered the room unheard, unperceived, and who——

A cry broke from her lips, she stooped, and with hurried, trembling hands, searched the floor for the blue phial, when a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and her husband's voice, stern and changed beyond all recognition, said slowly :

"What is in that phial ? And who is Gonsalez ?"

Was it the sound of the voices ? Was it the natural ending of his strange lethargy ? Who can say ? But at that moment the sick man opened his eyes, and, looking full at Lady Graham whispered passionately :

"Elena ! My wife !"

* * * * *

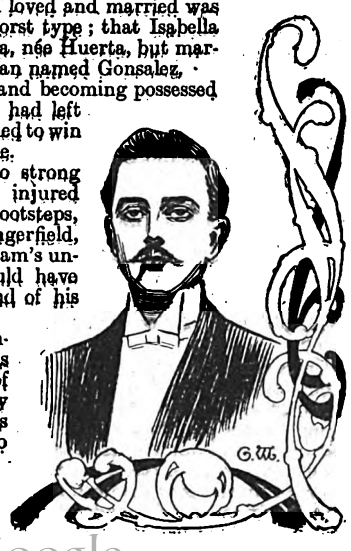
Douglas Graham has never got over the awful discovery that the woman he had loved and married was an adventuress of the worst type ; that Isabella Guarnera was truly Elena, nee Huerta, but married years before to a man named Gonsalez.

Having tired of him, and becoming possessed of a small fortune, Elena had left her native land, determined to win for herself rank and fame.

But Fate had been too strong for her. Gonsalez, her injured husband, had dogged her footsteps, tracing her at last to Dangerfield, where, but for Lord Graham's unexpected return, he would have met his death by the hand of his faithless and evil wife.

Douglas was broken-hearted, but his friends aver that he is well quit of a woman who so terribly fulfilled the wise man's saying : "There is no wickedness like the wickedness of a woman."

L. G. Moberly.



Digitized by Google

The Romance of an Unpaid Bill.

BEING THE HISTORY OF A QUARREL.

THE barometer stood at "Cloudy" in the pretty little breakfast room at Laburnum Villa, somewhere in Kensington. Furthermore the barometer would have worked round to "Stormy" had it been in any way influenced by the faces of the occupants of the room who were seated at the breakfast table; to wit Gerald Sinclair and Ethel, his wife.

Mrs. Sinclair was a pretty girl of medium height, with violet eyes, a pretty little nose, slightly inclined to Heaven perhaps, a pair of full red lips which seemed made for the express purpose of kissing, a low forehead surmounted by masses of dark brown hair which fell down behind a couple of little coral ears. With all these advantages, still the barometer stood at "cloudy."

Gerald glared at Ethel; Ethel glared back; Gerald glared at the centre of the table, which proceeding was immediately imitated by Ethel.

The object of their resentment lay in the centre of the table, blissfully unconscious of the state of affairs; it was one of those small pieces of paper which tradespeople are in the habit of sending out when money is due to them.

Messrs. Branford and Flower, Ltd., fashionable West End milliners and dressmakers, were responsible for this bill, which amounted to £84 10s., including the remark that a cheque would oblige.

At length Gerald broke the silence.

"We've been married now nearly six months and during that time how you have managed to run up a bill for £84 is beyond my comprehension. You must have been wilfully and needlessly extravagant." This last sentence seemed to please Mr. Sinclair for he repeated "Yes, needlessly extravagant."

"Oh, Gerald," Mrs. Sinclair cried, "I am sure I never had all those things."

"That's just like women; no head for business whatever; do you think a firm like Branford and Flower would make a mistake in an account of that size; as I said before, you have been very extravagant, and the sooner you alter the better."

By this time Gerald was wishing he had not allowed his momentary anger to run away with him and was racking his brains for some means of conciliating Ethel without appearing to be himself in the wrong.

"Needlessly extravagant," he once more repeated. "But—"

"Gerald, how dare you. You—you—unkind"—and here Ethel broke into a flood of tears. "I wish I'd never married you."

Then Gerald got up, threw the morning paper across the room, knocked over a cup of coffee in his haste, and in a cool dignified voice said: "Kindly address all letters to me at the Grand Hotel; I shall not come home until you are in a better frame of mind." Ethel made no answer, simply turned a sullen tear-stained face away from him.

Presently the door slammed and Ethel rising, timidly pulled the curtain on one side and watched her husband stalk down the road looking neither to the right nor left. Womanlike, as soon as it was too late, she endeavoured to recall him by shrieking "Gerald" to the window pane.

Unfortunately for Ethel, window panes are not made of a substance which will transmit sounds, consequently, the only person who heard her cry out, was the advance guard of a German band, who was just coming up the path, doubtless with the idea of obtaining money.

Whether the word "Gerald" resembles any bad language in German, I cannot say, but the representative of the Fatherland hurriedly retreated.

Ethel's repentance was decidedly short-lived, perhaps it was the sight of the German which again upset her, for she seized a cushion, banged the nearest chair in a most brutal manner, looked at Gerald's photograph and said "Beast." Tried to kick the cat out of the way, and failing, once more seized the cushion, aimed it at the cat, and consequently knocked a cup off the table which was situated in an entirely different direction. The cat resented this sudden frontal attack, and by an admirably executed flank movement, gained the open door, and departed.

Her sudden passion having been satisfied by these proceedings, Ethel sat down and thought out a plan of campaign which was briefly this—she would never, never, recall Gerald, she would go to the theatre each night, and thoroughly enjoy herself, in fact, the longer Gerald stayed away, the better she would like it.

As for Mr. Sinclair he reached the office with a murderous glint in his eyes, and one of the juniors remarked to another as Gerald stalked through their public office, "Guess we'd better look out for squalls. Reckon Mrs. S. made him go through the mill this morning."

* * * * *

Now Mr. Gerald Sinclair left the office about four o'clock in a decidedly happier frame of mind. He visited the florist's and bought a huge bouquet, then he invested in two dress circle tickets for the Lyceum; for he had decided to go home to Ethel, go home and tell her how sorry he was for the words he had used.

So it was with a light heart and a latch-key that he opened the door of Laburnum Villa, but the house seemed strangely silent. There was no smiling Ethel to kiss him as he came in.

Going into the dining-room, he threw the flowers and tickets on the table and rang for a maid. "Tell your mistress I am home," he said.

"Please sir Mrs. Sinclair went out about three o'clock and said she was going to the theatre and didn't know what time she would be home."

"All right, Mary, that will do."

The servant withdrew and Gerald was left alone with the flowers, the tickets, and his thoughts, which were not so pleasant as they had sometimes been.

Digitized by Google

He got up and paced the room, then he used a truly English word, jammed his hat on and rushed out of the house, fully determined to stay at the Grand Hotel till Ethel sent for him.

When Mrs. Sinclair came down next morning, she observed the flowers and the tickets which Gerald had left behind, then she questioned the servant who informed her that "master came home about five o'clock and when he found you were not at home, he seemed very much put out." This information seemed to please Ethel for she smiled and murmured "Serve him right."

Now Mrs. Sinclair showed a very undecided manner in carrying out her plan of campaign which was, as the reader will doubtless remember, to go to the theatre every night, yet now it was only the second night and she had decided not to go.

About half-past four, tea was tastefully laid for two in the drawing-room. There were those special crumpets Gerald was so fond of, hot and crisp before the fire, and Ethel looking bewitching in her prettiest dress, sat waiting for her lord and master; but five o'clock struck and no Gerald came, the crumpets were getting heavy and the tea cold; six o'clock came, but still no Gerald; evidently he intended carrying out his threat of not coming home, and once more Ethel sought relief by indulging in a good cry. Then once more she visited Gerald's photo and yet again murmured "Beast." What was he doing now she wondered, probably at some music hall with some of those club friends of his, without one thought for his poor little wife, and again she sought relief by going to a theatre.

But all this time what of Gerald? There were no music halls for Gerald that night. He sat and thought before the fire in his private room at the Grand and smoked innumerable pipes.

* * * * *

At the respected firm of Branford and Flower, Ltd., the counting-house clerks were sleeping peacefully when the ting-a-ling of the governor's bell made them all sit up and endeavour to convince each other that they were getting through an enormous amount of work, whilst the small fat office boy fell off his stool in his frantic haste, and tore madly into the governor's room.

Presently he returned with some letters in his hand with instructions to stamp and post them. Complacently he arranged himself on his stool once more and proceeded with his task, but he was sleepy and sleepiness made him perform his work in a half-hearted manner, so that when he stuck a stamp on a letter addressed to Mrs. Gerald Sinclair, Laburnum Villa, Kensington, W., in such a manner that the stamp was obviously out of the perpendicular, he did not trouble to unstick and replace it properly, but simply gazed at it in a sleepy, dejected manner which ought to have had the effect of shifting the stamp, but it didn't, which for reasons that will be seen later, was decidedly for the best.

Now in due course, the letter arrived at Laburnum Villa, Ethel pounced on it, and as is the custom with the female sex, instead of opening it, she fully explored the outside, then turned her attention to the writing and immediately a little scream emitted from her mouth.

"Gerald's writing, what does he mean by it, if he wants to have anything more to do with me let him come here and not write and—Good gracious! the beast has actually dared to stick the stamp on to mean a kiss, how dare he?" And for a third time she addressed Gerald's photograph with the word "Beast." But the photo received this third insult with grave equanimity.

Having thus relieved her feelings, Ethel once more turned her attention to the unfortunate letter which had been the unwilling cause of this outburst.

"I'll not answer it, I'll not take the slightest notice of it, the brute." Whether "the brute" meant the letter or Mr. Sinclair will remain one of those unsolved problems which fade into oblivion.

"I'd rather die than answer it, if he wants to see me, he'd better come and er—er—see me." which latter remark certainly displayed Mrs. Sinclair's profound knowledge of logic; suddenly a happy inspiration struck her as she gazed at the still unopened letter. "I'll send it back without opening it, that will show him I am not the sort of wife to allow herself to be insulted with impunity."

Mrs. Sinclair seemed rather muddled, and whether the insult referred to was receiving the letter, or the quarrel of the previous day, will remain another of those unsolved problems.

Without giving any further thought to her plan of action, she acted immediately and placed the letter in a larger envelope, stuck the stamp on most rigorously perpendicularly, and addressed it to Gerald Sinclair, Esq., Grand Hotel, Nelson Sq., W. Not satisfied with this, she put on her hat and posted the letter herself in the nearest pillar box.

Directly she saw it slide in and heard the rattle as the envelope struck the tin, Ethel wished she could get it back, and even had serious thoughts of waiting and trying to bribe the postman to return it to her, but as her knowledge of the British law consisted of a hazy, dim notion that letters once posted cannot be recovered, she decided not to wait.

Mrs. Sinclair's knowledge of law, in common with most ladies, was extremely large, as she was also aware that dogs mustn't wear muzzles unless they have a collar or must not wear collars in the dog days, something to do with dogs anyway. At any rate, she returned home with a decided wish to cry and once more went and looked at Gerald's photograph, but this time she did not call it "Beast" but kissed it.

Thus we will leave Ethel after her third repentance and follow the letter to Gerald at the Grand Hotel.

* * * * *

Gerald had not felt like work on that day and as junior partners are not always necessary everyday at business places, he had decided not to go to the office.

After a stroll round St. James' Park, he had stood on the suspension bridge and wondered whether Ethel would care if he jumped in and drowned himself. Truly a morbid state of mind, but where is the young man in love who does not have these morbid fits. At any rate Gerald deemed discretion the better part of valour, and so editors were robbed of another horrible tragedy with which to decorate the headlines of their newspapers, which was no doubt very inconsiderate of Gerald.

At any rate, when the porter handed Gerald a letter, on his return to the hotel, in Ethel's handwriting, his low spirits vanished like "Brother Boer," and he could hardly wait till he reached his room to open the letter; when he did so, he was greatly surprised to find, as the reader already knows, another letter inclosed; he took out the second letter and imitated Mrs. Sinclair's actions by looking it over and over. At length he opened it and his wonder was considerably increased by finding a letter addressed to his wife which ran as follows:

London, W.
—, 1900.

Mrs. Gerald Sinclair,
Laburnum Villa,
Kensington, W.

Dear Madam,—*With reference to your account for which we sent bill on Tuesday, we wish to point out that an error has been*

Digitized by Google

made, and instead of £84 10s., you should only be charged £34 10s. We very much regret this unfortunate mistake, and trusting to receive the favour of your future orders, we are, madam, yours respectfully,

Branford & Flower, Ltd.

Bill inclosed.

Gerald read this letter through and read it again, but was more puzzled than ever at the second reading. Why ever should Ethel send him a letter that was addressed to herself and evidently without opening or reading it herself. The more he thought, the less he could make of it.

"Whatever did she mean, surely she did not, but why not? Eureka, I've got it," he cried. Then with the true detective instinct, he commenced to get the facts of the case together.

Firstly, he had quarrelled with Ethel because she had been so extravagant.

Secondly, she had stated she had not had all the goods for which she had been charged.

Thirdly, they had parted in anger.

The deductions from these facts were:

Firstly, that Ethel must have repented (she had, several times).

Secondly, that Ethel, recognising the writing of Branford & Flower's letter, had sent it to him as an overture to repentance (she thought she had recognised the writing certainly).

Thirdly, that by so doing, she wished him to come back to her.

Truly Gerald would not have made a Sherlock Holmes, but then how was he to know that Ethel had mistaken Branford & Flower's writing for his. There was certainly a slight similarity which had caused Ethel to immediately jump to the conclusion that it was Gerald's writing, but the similarity was very slight, and therefore such an idea did not enter Gerald's head. His solution was one which 999 out of 1,000 husbands would arrive at, especially if the 999 were husbands of six months' experience only.

Then Gerald arose, put on his hat and coat, paid his bill, and tore out into the street, hailed a cab, which, however, failed to start. Standing up he looked at the cabby's face over the top of the cab, which face wore a look of blank astonishment mingled with unrestrained amusement. "'Scuse me, sir, would you mind telling me where Ethel lives?"

"Go to blazes!" ejaculated Gerald.

"Very well, sir," answered the cabman, "but not in this cab."

"Drive me to Laburnum Villa, Drayton Road, Kensington."

"Right, sir," and once more ensconcing himself in the cab Gerald had the satisfaction of feeling the vehicle move only to be pulled up in a minute by a huge policeman who was directing the traffic. Gerald sat and thought of fearful calamities which he hoped would overtake that policeman, but presently, to his relief, the stream of traffic was allowed to proceed.

He then suddenly thought it would be better if he drove to Branford and Flower's and paid the bill before he saw Ethel, accordingly he did so, and with the receipt safely in his pocket he soon reached the familiar Laburnum Villa.

Throwing the man half a sovereign, Gerald rushed up to the door, fumbled for his latch key, but ere he could get at the key, the door opened, a pair of arms incircled him and gravely threatened the immaculate stiffness of his collar. Not only were there a pair of arms round him, but a pair of lips were kissing him whilst a girlish form clung closely to him. And there they stayed, secure from prying eyes, behaving in a manner peculiar to young people very much in love. Later on when they occupied one chair in front of the fire, the following conversation took place:

"What made you come back—Gerald, darling?"

"Why, sweetheart, because you sent me the bill to pay."

"What bill?" said Ethel.

Then Gerald explained, and Ethel explained, then there was a moment's silence broken by Ethel saying:

"Gerald, women haven't any head for business, Branford & Flower's couldn't make a mistake, could they?"

E. Newton Bungey.

MR. HARKINS' CIGARS.

How a Lover's Advent was Discovered.

The old gentleman looked rather solemn when his beautiful daughter entered the reception-room in response to his summons.

"Rosalind," he said, with the air of a man who has made a disagreeable discovery, "you and young Mr. Harkins were in this room last evening, I believe?"

"Yes, papa," she answered with downcast eyes, "George—that is Mr. Harkins—called last evening, and I received him here."

"He calls about three times a week, according to my count," said the old gentleman, "and I suppose you put in the time discussing literature and art, and all that sort of thing."

"We are both very fond of good literature," ventured the beautiful daughter.

"Of course you are," replied the old gentleman sarcastically. "It takes three sittings a week for you to keep up with the times. Oh, I know all about that, and I am willing to make certain concessions in view of your literary tendencies, but I don't exactly understand this."

The old gentleman pointed to four cigars that were lying on the mantelpiece. The blood instantly mounted to the face of the beautiful daughter, but she did not lose her presence of mind.

"Oh, dear, how stupid of me!" she cried. "George—that is, Mr. Harkins—left those for you last night, and I forgot to give them to you."

"Left them for me?"

"Yes. You see, they're a new brand that he thinks particularly good, and he wants you to try them and see what you think of them. He has great confidence in your judgment, and he——"

She stopped, for the old gentleman had critically examined one of the cigars, and then smelt it, and he was now looking at her over the top of his glasses in a very disconcerting way.

"That's the same cigar he has smoked for six months, to my certain knowledge," he said.

"Oh, then he must have made a mistake——"

"Rosalind," interrupted the old gentleman, "why will you insist upon forgetting that your mother and I went all through this, and know all about it? Mr. Harkins is in the habit of carrying his cigars in his upper left hand vest pocket."

"Ye-es."

"And being a wise young man of considerable forethought, he removed the cigars from what he considered a dangerous locality last evening, and he was so elated when he left that he forgot them. Am I correct?"

"Ye-es, papa."

"And when may I expect him to call upon me?"

"He said he was going to see you this afternoon."

"Very good. He's a careful and painstaking young man, and I am ready to accept him as a son-in-law, but I don't want any daughter of mine to think she can pull the wool over the eyes of an old man who has been through it all."

O. P. W.

Mrs. Woodbury: "And yet you once called me the salt of the earth." Mr. Woodbury: "Nor am I the only man who has found he had the pepper when he thought he had the salt."

Digitized by Google

A Ring, a Girl, and a Man.

The Story of a Reunion.

Outside the wind blew shrilly, sending flakes of yesterday's snow with biting fierceness into the faces of pedestrians. Inside, the cold winter air was not felt by the tired girls behind the counters of one of the large shops. Rather did the crowd of changing, thronging shoppers cause a heated atmosphere that gave a throbbing headache to more than one of the tired shop girls.

At last came the lull of early afternoon. The girls, in scattered groups, were making the best of an opportunity for a chat when the street door was flung open to admit a gentleman, who at once attracted their attention.

He was a man of middle age, in full health and vigour; tall, well-formed, with a slight sprinkling of white in his brown hair and moustache; clear-cut features and kindly dark-blue eyes. He bore the marks of a man of wealth and refinement.

He halted at the glove counter, unfastened his great coat, took his hat in hand, and then glanced up pleasantly into the face of the assistant—a young, slender girl, with a tired look in her eyes and a feverish flush on her cheek.

He had opened his lips to speak, but suddenly he checked himself and his dark eyes dilated. Then, recovering his self-possession, he asked for ladies' gloves for evening wear.

"I do not know the number, but—but I judge about the size you wear. If you will be so good as to show me them, perhaps I can judge," he said, gazing first at the pretty, flushed face and then at the slim, white hand, unadorned save for one strange little ring.

That face—that hand—that ring! Was he dreaming, and would it vanish presently, as something of the same vision had so often done during these long years since one so very like this girl had stood beside him in the happy days of youth?

The gloves were brought, a spotless pair of white; but, instead of taking them up, the man continued to gaze into the face of the girl, who flushed deeply. He was about to speak, when another young girl came up and addressed the first.

The gloves fell. Margaret! It was the same sweet name! He felt that he could not leave without some further information as to this girl's identity. This girl must be the child of that other Margaret. But would her child be here? Were they so reduced?

Would that proud, stately woman of his youth have voluntarily returned to her native town, and allow her child to be thus employed? Perhaps she was a widow, poor and struggling, while he—the fires of the old love were kindling anew, and, half dreaming and with an excited flush on his face, he retained his seat.

"Will you take the gloves, sir?" a gentle voice asked. And again he started, with sudden shame at his odd manner.

"Yes, yes!" he answered quickly, "and a pair of the same number for street wear, please. Any colour the ladies like best. They are for a little niece who caught me dozing and consequently I must pay the penalty," he added smiling. The girl gave a responsive smile, wondering who the lucky girl was.

The gloves were wrapped up and handed to him. He could decently remain no longer.

What could he do? When calmly entering the shop a short time ago, he little thought to find himself in such a state of unrest.

"Thank you," he murmured absently, and buttoning up the great coat and replacing his hat he reluctantly left.

At the door a daring thought struck him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said to the shopwalker. "I should like to know the young lady at the glove counter where I just made a purchase."

"I presume you have good reason for your inquiry?" was the reply. "Such questions are rather unusual. Her name is Margaret Russell—her address I cannot give you."

The listener's face became pallid. He took a card from his pocket and handed it to the man.

"This, sir, is my name," he said. "I think the young lady's mother was a dear friend of mine. There is a striking resemblance. Will you kindly hand her the card and tell her that if (his voice trembled slightly)—if her mother is living, I should like to meet her again? Ask her to take the card home and explain the incident. I shall come in to-morrow," and with a bow he departed.

Mr. Jones, the shopwalker, gazed upon the piece of cardboard and read engraved thereon, "Mr. Philip J. Hunter." The address guaranteed wealth, and the name was one of which he had frequently heard in connection with philanthropic deeds and much that was good, so, to the vast amusement and universal interest of all the girls near by, he fulfilled the odd request.

* * * * *

It was a pleasant little dining-room, bright and cosy, with a small table laid with a pretty white cloth, and places for two.

By a little side table, on which was a small lamp, sat a woman, no longer young, but still pleasing to look upon, save that the cheeks were a trifle hollow and the face pale. She was busily at work upon some fine embroidery. Other finished pieces lying about spoke of the work she did to assist the income brought in by her child.

A step sounded outside the door, and a moment later the young girl of the glove counter episode entered. The woman looked up with a sweet smile, and rose, laying aside the work and greeting the girl with a caress.

When her hat and coat had been removed, Margaret, with a mischievous look on her face, drew the card from her purse, and, stopping her mother as she placed the teapot upon

Digitized by Google

the table, held it before her eyes. "Did you know this person, mamma? Have you ever seen that name before?" she asked her, half playfully, half seriously.

"Philip!" the mother exclaimed, with a catch in the breath almost painful. "Why—why, Margaret, child, where did you get that card?" and, nervously putting out her hand for it, the mother suddenly sat down.

Then, in a few words, the girl told all she knew of the incident, and described in glowing terms the handsome gentleman's appearance.

"And so, dear mamma, you do know him. Please tell me something about him—and if to-morrow when he comes I may permit him to call to see you, as he wishes?"

"Yes! No! I hardly know what to say, darling. I do not know if it were better or not that we meet again. It is a very commonplace story, dear, but I will tell you.

"We were once devoted to one another. Both were jealous and very proud. He said some unkind words which I resented and refused to forgive. Later I left for the North. There I met your father, whom I respected very much, and who soon persuaded me to marry him. Then, of course, I dared not think of my earlier love, and soon rumours reached me of his marriage.

"After carrying out your father's dying request and burying him in his native city, I could not spare the little means I had to go back to the North. In Margaret Russell only a few dear friends recognised and sought the Margaret Young of earlier days.

"I knew Philip had grown to wealth and position in his own town, but did not expect to meet him in our humble sphere. I know, too, that he never married. What do you say, darling, should we be ashamed of our humble home, a simple flat, with a room which serves as dining-room, sitting-room, and drawing-room?" she concluded, glancing about her and contentedly smiling.

Margaret was silent. She had been so much to her mother and she to her, and if he came—only too well Margaret foresaw the inevitable.

She recalled the emotion of the man, and now saw a new light in her mother's soft brown eyes.

Could she be so unselfish as to say one word to prevent the meeting? And if—well—her dear mother would be relieved of all further cares and trials and be restored to her former position. It was characteristic of her sweet, unselfish little heart that she saw no future benefit just then for herself.

"Let him come, mamma, dearest. I am sure it will be best," she said, striving to keep down a sigh that would come. Little supper was eaten that night, and the talk was all of Mr. Hunter.

So, when the tall, handsome man sought the glove counter on the morrow, Margaret gracefully offered him her hand and told him how well her mother remembered her old friend, and that she would be pleased to see him again at their home.

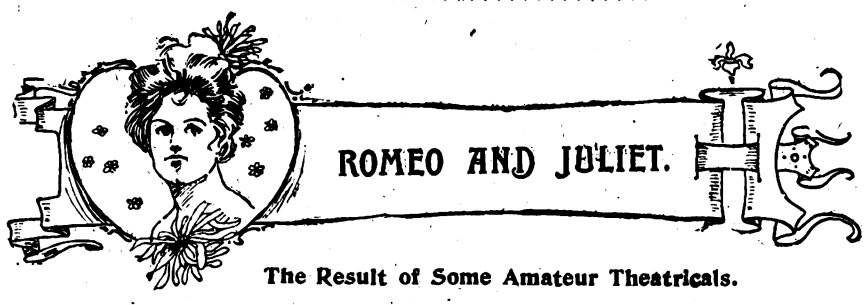
He responded with a look of intense satisfaction and a warm clasp, saying simply, "I will be there to-night."

Margaret was dreadfully upset all day, and undecided as to her part in this pretty romance. Should she go home from the shop, or go to a friend's first to leave them uninterrupted?

After much pondering and some little heartache and stealthy tears, too, she decided to let her mother think it was she entering, when it would actually be her old friend and lover! It would, perhaps, make it easier for both, and later Margaret's friend could see her home, when matters had been adjusted.

As she planned, so indeed, it was, and upon entering the cosy room, now bearing no resemblance to a dining-room, she found two happy faces, looking years younger and handsomer in the blessings of being reunited.

Agatha Alston.



The Result of Some Amateur Theatricals.

Juliet sat on a clothes'-horse, shivering in her burial robes under a muff and tippet.

To-night's rehearsal had been the worst of all. Nobody seemed to take any interest or to enter into the spirit of it; the thing had dragged so long the enthusiasm was all dissipated, the players went through their parts like marionettes, and the twenty-fourth was only three days off. It looked as though the whole affair would be a failure.

It was out of the question to give it up now, however, for the members of the club had pledged themselves for fifty pounds towards the fund, so there was nothing to do but see the miserable thing through to the bitter end and then give up the East-End Amateur Dramatic Club forever. Yes, indeed, forever and ever!

When nobody else felt any responsibility or tried to take himself seriously, why should she? This decision cost her more than anyone guessed, for it meant the death blow to the hope she had secretly cherished of treading the professional boards.

As the president of the club, she had selected the play, unselfishly reserving for herself the star *rôle*, given the use of her music room for the rehearsals, and worked very hard to keep the other members satisfied with their *rôles*; and now, three days before the performance, the company was no nearer perfection than it was a month ago. It did seem hard after all she had done.

The nurse, who was just beginning to get a little meaning in her lines, catches the influenza, the stupid carpenter sends up a balcony so high that Juliet must needs stoop to keep her head from being lost in the clouds, and Jack, the perfidious, has had the impudence to tell her that her Juliet would be a good Galatea.

Although she did not know it, this was the sole reason for her dejection. The balcony and the influenza were not irremedial, but her quarrel with Jack, in the light of her overwrought nerves, certainly was. If he had been decently civil and apologised afterwards, she would not have cared, but he had laughed—laughed outright in her face—and before the whole company, as if he had thought it a good joke.

And she had been saying such nice things about his Romeo. She had even confided to Tybalt that Jack's Romeo was at times really inspiring, but, of course, that was all a mistake, for Jack's acting could never have been anything but abominable.

The energy with which she came to this decision brought the clothes'-horse and the hysterical leading lady to the floor with a crash. Friar Laurence and Lady Capulet, who had been dancing in the hall, came running in to see what was the matter, and the sneezing nurse, still full of her *rôle*, ran to Juliet with something that sounded like:

"What ho, Lady-bird! Dow what's the batter with you?" While the perfidious Romeo sauntered in and coolly picked Juliet up, and deposited her on top of an improvised tomb.

Digitized by Google

"Will you please just l—leave me al—lone, Mr. Davis!" sobbed the offended Juliet to her astonished rescuer.

"Why, what have I done?" exclaimed Romeo. "You didn't think I meant what I said about Galatea, did you? Well, any way, I take it all back. You'd be a better Niobe now."

And Jack, lost to every spark of decency, seemed to think he was witty, and he laughed again.

When at last the troupe had dispersed, and the heartless Jack had called back from the door as if nothing had happened, "Good night, little Niobe; hope you'll feel better to-morrow," she dragged her bruised knees, that still bore the impress of the clothes'-horse, upstairs, and crept into her little bed where, alone in the dark, the tragedy, the tomb, and the family losses of the real Juliet seemed as nothing compared with the sorrows she, Amy Harper, had to bear.

The following day Miss Amy was kept a prisoner in her room and threatened with a rest cure when her "absurd theatricals" were over if she did not take things more calmly; and the violets Jack sent up as a peace offering were promptly bestowed on the housemaid, who was down with the measles.

That night a very red-eyed, reproachful Juliet listened to Romeo's intreaty to "Speak again, bright angel!" But the bright angel's voice was shaken with anger when, after having electrified her audience of chairs with the lines that led up to—"I'll frown and be perverse and say——" the incorrigible Jack had muttered so loud everyone in the wings could hear, "Lord, no! Don't be any more perverse than you naturally are."

The night of the twenty-fourth the company assembled or the first time promptly at the appointed hour. The stage carpenter, costumier, property man and dresser, were all fuming and squabbling over belated details, but the players themselves were preternaturally calm, nerved by a grim determination to do or die, owing, perhaps, to a dose of bromide Mrs. Harper had administered to the actors as they entered the door.

Amy's fears that something might go wrong, that someone might forget his lines or be seized with stage-fright, were somewhat allayed when she saw how the crucial test affected her.

She was perfectly composed, knew every line forwards and backwards, and felt serenely confident she was going to acquit herself as the president of the East-End Amateur Dramatic Club should.

She had, in fact, so far recovered from the despair of a few minutes before that she had asked an out-of-town manager to be present with a view to trying her fortune on the stage.

The nervousness and anxiety of the past few weeks had told somewhat on her looks, but when she saw the reflection of Juliet in her ball gown she began to feel there was after all, some sweetness and satisfaction to be had out of life, although she was not on speaking terms with Jack.

The nurse was sufficiently recovered to go through with her part, and she certainly did do it creditably, and, as for Romeo, a week ago she would have said he was superb.

The house filled early, for the association had conscientiously sold twice as many tickets as there were chairs. As the play progressed, and the house grew more enthusiastic, the players responded to the encouragement of a sympathetic audience and did better than they had ever done at the rehearsal.

To be sure, Mercutio's sword, made of Chinese coins, fell to pieces with the challenge, "Come, sir, your passado!" but he had slipped it into his pocket so deftly that the mishap had not been generally noticed; and the moon, which was a lantern supported on the step-ladder by Tom Harper, wobbled whenever Tom started giggling, but these were mere trifles.

On the whole the play was going well and the players were outdoing themselves. So far there had not been a hitch either with the scenery or the actors, every line was spoken so glibly that the prompter's voice was completely drowned.

Amy was breathing long, deep breaths of relief, for she had maintained that if everything did not go off smoothly she should die of mortification, and when at last Mercutio was safely laid she felt safe, for she had been more anxious about him than in regard to any of them.

Under the stress of excitement Amy lost herself when she was on the stage, in the passion of Juliet. Her eyes shone verily like "two of the fairest stars," and when, in her earnestness, she leant near and looked into Romeo's eyes with a radiance that glowed even through the grease paint, assuring him, "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep," he swore to himself that Amy was adorable.

Every time the curtain rang down the house resounded with applause, and the actors consequently felt pleased with themselves and all the world.

Romeo and Paris did their duel scene valiantly, and after Romeo, having quaffed his poison, lay dying comfortably—and he managed to fall on a cushion—Juliet glided across the stage with her, "I will kiss thy lips. Haply some poison yet doth hang on them——"

As she bent low over the prostrate Romeo to suit the action to the words, the page, young Tom Harper, and Friar Laurence saw the dead man make a sudden movement, and Juliet found herself held in a very substantial grasp.

She had not counted on the revivifying effect her kiss might have on the stark Montague, and she reached for his dagger to utter the lines she had been eager to reach throughout the evening.

The house had rung for weeks past with her last agonies of grief, she had become so imbued with her *rôle* that her lightest tones and most commonplace remarks were thrilled with a tragic tremor; she had worn herself almost ill practising for the death-scene, and she felt, with a pardonable pride, that this was her crowning piece of work.

And now Romeo, incorrigible beyond all belief, who had done his own death scene splendidly and won his applause, detained her. The watch within began to get uneasy, the prompter's voice rang out in impatient tones, and there was a slight stir in the audience; finally the watch, out of all patience, commanded:

"Lead boy—which way?"

But young Tom stood still, shaking with laughter and pointing to Romeo. The situation was becoming strained, but the dead Montague insisted:

"Promise me, now."

Tears of anger and mortification welled up in Juliet's eyes, her hand was held in a vice, she could not reach the dagger, there was an unrestrained rustle of apprehension in the audience and a murmured:

"She has forgotten her lines, what a pity!" reached her ears. The prompter's voice shrilled across the stage, "Then I'll be bri—e—f," and Romeo closed his eyes on her agony, prepared to hold on all night if need be. It was no longer the dead Romeo but John Davis, cool and determined as she had never seen him, who tightened his grasp and urged, "Say 'yes,' and I'll let you go!"

Juliet deliberated as long as she dared, then at the last moment, when the strain could be endured no longer, and the audience was beginning to wonder where the "hitch" might be, she flashed out in a happy voice with not a trace of the tragic thrill she had so prided herself upon:

"Yes, Jack! Then I'll be brief—Oh, happy dagger! This is thy sheath; there rust and let me die."

And forgetting to stab herself she fell into his arms.

Vernon Owen.

Only Two More Weeks,

and then Mr. R. Norman Silver's great new serial will start in *Short Stories*. March 7th is the date of the paper, and it will be on sale on March 3rd. Many good serials have been published in *Short Stories*, but this new one will beat them all in power, dramatic situations, love, interest, and other points which go to make up a good story. Don't omit to place your order early; by so doing you will prevent disappointment. Remember that good things always go quickly, and that the date of the issue of *Short Stories* you want particularly is March 7th.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF. A celebrated Russian beauty.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman, and friend of Lady Peggy.

Belinda Plays the Heroine.

I SHALL always remember it in Toffy's favour that she immediately grasped the significance of the discovery; only for a moment did she show doubt as to how the card came into Belinda's possession.

Then, with a quick movement, she crossed to where the girl stood, and lightly drew the card from its hiding-place.

"You're real smart," she said; "and as good as gold. To think you should have dropped on *this*"—she held the card at arm's length—"for the sake of a woman like Celia Dawtrey. I know it was under the handkerchief. Oh!" as Celia rapped out a shrill denial; "I don't mind how much you deny, I know better. You had the card under your handkerchief. You're as much a cheat as any card-sharper or blackleg.

"It's not a bit of use for you people to make a noise and try to stop me," continued Toffy, lapsing into the vernacular of her earlier days. "It's the fashion to cover things up in smart Society, I know, but there are some things that I won't cover up, and cheating at cards"—she called it 'kyards'—"is one. I've seen a man shot at sight for what this woman's done. I tell you she's not fit for decent folk to live with. It's not the first time she's done it, I know."

Heaven alone can tell what awful disclosures the Yankee was about to make! We had all endeavoured to repress her, but in vain. Her high treble had defeated all our efforts; clear above the murmurs of women fearful lest they should be the next victim of Toffy's candour, her shrill pipe had sounded. Rolla himself had vainly tried to stem the torrent. It was Belinda who closed the incident.

"Look," she said sharply; "the poor thing's ill. It's cowardly of you not to leave her alone. You've said enough already. I won't listen to another word. Alphonse"—she turned appealingly to the artist—"take her away." And she pointed to the dejected Celia, who sat huddled in a chair.

The artist rose to the occasion and half led, half carried, the childish figure with the painted face out of the room.

Those that remained looked blankly at each other. Toffy had made it impossible for us to pass over the occurrence. Once a woman is openly accused of a Society crime—cheating at cards—indeed, any sort of sharp practice with one's friends comes under that heading—she is doomed. That women—great ladies some of them—do cheat, we know, that they suffer from kleptomania we know also, as do some of the biggest shop-keepers in London and Paris, but we keep the knowledge to ourselves.

The proprietor of a *magasin* in the Louvre has a book in which there are confessions of theft, signed with some of the greatest names in British and foreign Society. He is a tactful person, and never openly accuses anyone; as madame, the kleptomaniac, turns to leave the shop, however, she is politely asked to step into the managerial sanctum, there she is told that she must sign a confession, and pay so much to a charity or face a public exposure! The former is invariably her choice; the manager is discreet, she goes upon her way, free to pick up unconsidered trifles elsewhere, but never more is she permitted to enter his shop.

I knew for a fact that Celia's name was amongst the list, but I never mentioned it. I assumed ignorance of that and other things like the rest of the world. Toffy had made that ignorance impossible. She had spoken out.

Celia knew the fate in store for her as well as anyone. She left La Caprice the next morning. Gradually, and by slow degrees, she dropped out of our set. When last I heard of her she was living in a third-rate Continental gaming resort—where her pretty painted face still brings her admiration. Mr. Dawtrey makes her an allowance but declines to live with her. He has no use for a wife "out of Society."

Things were somewhat strained in the *château* after that evening. People looked even more askance at Belinda for championing Celia than at Toffy for unmasking her. Rolla renewed his matrimonial overtures to my charge, but was quietly and firmly rejected.

I had had a letter from Vera while at La Caprice. She spoke of leaving Petersburg as soon as possible, and journeying through Italy.

"I shall be at Florence in September," she wrote, "when I shall expect *ma chère* Belinda!"

At Florence, as she had foretold, they met; but the fashion of their meeting was far otherwise than she expected. There in the City of Flowers was to be played the last scene in a stormy life, the final chapter of the beautiful Russian's love-story would be told.

Meanwhile Belinda and I said farewell to Trouville, and Alphonse—fully restored to health—returned to Paris. He was still a staunch friend to Belinda, but—I noted it with much annoyance—his passion for her was over.

If he should journey to Florence and meet Vera—I saw my castle topple to the ground!

Farringdon, good-humoured as ever, was accompanying us. Belinda had had charming letters from his mother and sisters

Digitized by Google

and seemed much pleased with them. They were quiet, old-fashioned sort of people, who disliked "bridge" and discounted anything within a mile of being "smart." That, I suppose, was the reason of their regard for Belinda!

Among the crowd of pleasure-seekers at Trouville, I had met a certain Archduke of my acquaintance. He was a fascinating man and in his time had been a handsome one. He was old now, but he still retained his appreciation of a pretty woman, and, struck by Belinda's face and figure, he begged that we would stay at his *châlet*, a delightful little place, tucked away among the Austrian mountains.

The Archduke was of the old school. That is to say, he was polished in manner and in speech, and had a horror of women like Toffy and Celia Dawtrey. We met some old acquaintances at the *châlet*, amongst them Lady Saxby and Paul de Sonnaz.

It caused our host intense amusement to see Belinda and her ladyship together, the one tall and straight, with calm, untroubled eyes, devoid of any fripperies of dress or conversation. The other all gesture and grimace, in a wonderful toilette of red and black, scarlet shoes with silver heels, and a tall ebony cane.

"What a beautiful creature she is," said the old diplomatist as Belinda passed him.

"Beautiful as a statue," I answered; "but oh, how dull."

He laughed and shook his head.

"She is not of our world," he said; "so much the worse for us," and he sauntered down the path that led to the waterside, where waited a very pretty awning-shaded, flower-decked barge, with breakfast spread under the soft grey sky above the green water.

Life at the *châlet* was an idyll to those given over to open-air delights; there were the mountains, wild, beautiful, where eagles made their nests, and where the chamois flashed from peak to peak; great tracks of woodland where the trees are giants, moss-grown with age, set in a wilderness of ferns and flowers, and the distant hills gleam half light, half gloom among the branches. The place is full of birds and all wild woodland creatures. Where any wood has been cleared there are tracks of lilac, heather and of broom. A wonderful place, more exquisite than I can tell you.

Perhaps the scene might not appeal to some of you. I don't want to be offensive, but really you women of the middle class have not much sense of the beautiful. I saw a British matron over at Venice; she stood in the very shadow of St. Mark's—one of the wonders of the world—and in the face of that exquisite jewel of architecture she munched a ham sandwich, and bitterly lamented that it lacked the proper quantity of mustard!

Now a Society woman may do much that she ought not to do, but she certainly wouldn't munch ham in front of St. Mark's.

Those of us who were sated with the beautiful Austrian scenery drove into the quaint old town near the *châlet*, and lolled away a morning in a swinging chair in the river balconies smoking Turkish cigarettes and drinking hock.

To spend August in the uplands of Austria is to taste the best of the summer. There no tourist comes; the Society butterfly sips enjoyment in undisturbed serenity.

Year after year some of the best born, and the most beautiful women in Europe are to be found here. Life goes softly, smoothly, like a laugh on a summer' day.

It was while we were staying at the *châlet* that Belinda did me an injury. Up to that time I had not regarded the girl with any marked dislike. I had been vexed with her, angry and annoyed at her obstinacy, vexed at her opposition to my will. But inasmuch as she had never directly injured me I was tolerant, and for the most part amiably disposed towards her. That which now occurred brought about a radical alteration to my feelings.

I have mentioned somewhere in this series that the foolish but kind-hearted Crawley had suggested I should find a husband for myself rather than Belinda. It was to this end he arrived one day at the Archduke's in company with a certain little Jew, of pronounced features, large income, and little or no manners.

The Archduke knew Crawley well, and allowed him considerable latitude, otherwise Klinski, as the little financier was called, would not have been welcome.

"He's not much to look at, I know, Peggy," said Crawley deprecatingly, "and his manners are worse than none; but he's simply rolling in money. He could pave Rotten Row with nuggets and never turn a hair."

"As a husband, he's impossible, Crawley."

"He need not be seen. You could keep him well out of the way."

I shook my head. "Impossible! He's not the sort of man to give anything for nothing. He'll pay for all he has, and pay well, but he'll get his money's worth. Come, Crawley, how much did he advance you on the chance of the Archduke's invitation?"

Crawley blushed and blinked in a shame-faced sort of way.

"I'm rather short myself just now," I went on. "If——"

"I can let you have a couple of hundred if that's any good, Peggy," he said hastily.

I accepted the offer, and decided that my friend had made every penny of £2,000 out of the Jew.

I daresay you wonder how I managed for money all this time. My answer is the same as my exchequer was—Hardy North. He was ready to pour out cheques on the least necessity. His joy at the news that Belinda was the guest of an Archduke was childlike; he sent me a present of a turquoise necklace and a diamond brooch as well.

All the same, I had no money to spare; there are so many and such heavy expenses in Society. You must not wear the same dress more than three times at the most, and you change your jewellery with your gown.

The little Jew financier should, I decided, help me to form a nest egg, which with Belinda's £20,000, would keep me from poverty, if not in luxury. Klinski had all the quickness of his race, and soon learnt to conceal his objectionable self-confidence. He readily understood that if a man cannot distinguish, he must extinguish himself in Society.

It was not necessary for me to reject his matrimonial proposals, he had sufficient good sense not to make them.

I approved the man's insight, and rewarded him by a little friendly counsel. He responded gratefully to my teaching, and one evening after a long and somewhat tedious dinner, I drew him into conversation in a room opening on to the terrace,

To make a long story short, I told him that Belinda was a profitable speculation in which he might, if he paid high enough for the privilege, take shares.

"She is engaged to Lord Farringdon," I said nonchalantly. "On her marriage her father will make over some £300,000 to the bridegroom. Meantime Lord Farringdon has, like most other young men, expensive tastes, all of which his income will not supply. A matter of £10,000 would, I think, be very useful to him just now. You understand," I stared straight in Klinski's eyes, "that I should not mention this to you if I were not sure of your discretion. A word of what I have mentioned and——"

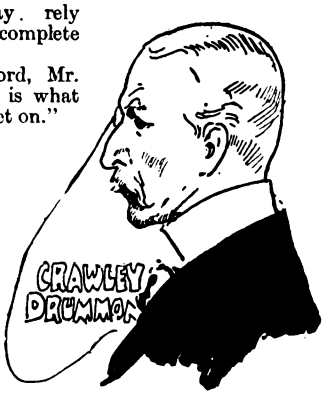
"Your Ladyship may rely upon my utter and complete secrecy."

"That is hardly the word, Mr. Klinski. A tactful silence is what you want—if you wish to get on."

He bit his lip and bowed profoundly.

"His Lordship would like perhaps——"

"His Lordship does not wish to appear upon the scene," I said sharply. "You are a man of the world, Mr. Klinski, and will understand how matters lie when I tell you that there is a certain person who considers she



Digitized by Google

has claims on Lord Farringdon. Miss North must not hear of her existence; but to remain unknown the person requires £10,000. I, as Miss North's guardian, and the dear and intimate friend of old Lady Farringdon, am willing, I may say desirous, of settling the matter. I shall pay the money on Farringdon's behalf, and will give you my own note of hand for the amount."

"Which Lord Farringdon will redeem on his wedding day?" said the odious little wretch.

"So long as it *is* redeemed, I don't suppose you will mind who pays the money," I said coldly.

Once let me get Belinda married and I felt sure I could squeeze an extra ten thousand out of North. If not, if all my schemes went wrong, well, Klinski could only enforce his bond on Farringdon's marriage with the girl. Anyway, I stood to win.

For a moment the Jew studied me with his small, keen eyes. Then, bending forwards, he said softly,

"I may rely on your social patronage—if this is arranged—Miladi?"

I nodded lightly, and gave him a few words of encouragement.

"Then," he said with an expansive smile, "I agree. I advance you £10,000 on behalf of his Lordship—which will be repaid with interest on the day that he marries Miss North.

Before I could reply, before indeed I could take breath, an indignant young voice cried outside the open window from the terrace:

"I shall never marry Lord Farringdon—*never* after what I have heard," and with flaming cheeks Belinda entered and confronted us. "Besides," she flung up her head, "there is not even a definite engagement between us. I agreed to consider his proposal for three months. That time has not yet elapsed. To think," she turned on Klinski with a fine scorn, "to think that I should have to make these explanations, to render an account of my proceedings to *you*," and she flashed a look of such contempt and scorn that the Jew flinched.

Then turning to me she cried:

"How could you, Lady Peggy, how could you try to persuade me to marry such a mean, base man as, you say, Lord Farringdon is?"

For a moment I hesitated what to answer. Then a quick feeling of resentment stirred within me.

"It is not Farringdon who is mean," I cried. "It is you, who condescends to such an underhand proceeding as to listen outside doors and windows, to overhear other people's conversation. You shall come with me at once and repeat what you have just said to Farringdon himself. You have cruelly misjudged him."

I took her by the arm and led her from the room. Needless to say she did not confront his Lordship—at her earnest appeal I waived that part of the proceeding, and succeeded to a certain degree in softening her opinion of his character.

But as I have said before, the events of that evening brought about a revolution in my attitude to the girl. But for her Klinski would have advanced me £10,000, but for her——My indignation rose to a white heat against her. I set my teeth, and decided that henceforth I would fight her with any weapons. I would compel her by force or strategy to marry.

We passed from Austria to the Palace of a great Russian lady, very old, and fabulously wealthy. On the borders of the Baltic, the Ortoff Palace is one of the most magnificent of the many stately mansions in Russia. It is a very grand place, with acres of palm houses and glasshouses; vast stables full of thoroughbred horses of the famous Ortoff breed

It has a theatre with a stage as large as any public place of entertainment, where divas of European repute think it an honour to perform. It is as wonderful a place as Versailles, with hundreds of halls and chambers and a staircase up which thirty men might have walked abreast. It boasts many and rare works of art, precious marbles, great pictures, statues in bronze, in silver, and in the costly malachite.

Within a stone's throw of the house are vast forests, in which the bear, the boar, and the wolf are hunted with a splendour, and, I am bound to say, a barbarity inconceivable in Britain.

We arrived at the Palace late in the afternoon, just as the sun was tipping the snow tops of the distant hills with red, casting a deeper shadow upon the waters of the Baltic.

All through the journey Belinda had spoken but little, and I, filled with rage and bitterness at my failure with Klinski and with Farringdon, sat silently beside her. His Lordship did not accompany us to Russia, he was to meet us at Florence in September, where, as you will remember, Vera also was to be.

All through the dinner and the evening concert that followed, I sat, my brain on fire seeking to find a way to subdue Belinda's will.

Farringdon, I realised, was no longer a factor in the game. David or no David, I felt she would not tolerate his Lordship. It would be necessary that I should have an ally in my plan, a man without principle or money. Such a one I had ready to my hand—Eastacres, with his cold smile and steely eyes.

But, and this was the puzzle, how could I influence or rather break Belinda's will? I could not send her for a time to Siberia, neither could I have her beaten as the Russian husbands—moujik and Prince alike—beat their wives.

As I pondered there flashed into my mind a means, a dangerous means by which I might attain my end. During the next few days certain events took place which rendered my plan more easy of fulfilment.

I have already alluded to the great bear hunts that took place in the forests that fringed the grounds of the Ortoff Palace. Whole days were given up to the delights of the chase; the beasts were not infrequently driven through the forest right into the huge court of the Palace, there to receive the *coup-de-grace* in full sight of the Palace windows. The savage that lies under the soft manners, the exquisite courtesy of the Russ, is uppermost at those times.

The scene is of the fiercest description—a wild *melée* of men and beasts. The hunters' knives glisten in the moonlight, the dying beasts, with the cruel steel in their necks, turn their blood-shot eyes up to the windows of the great house where the women are eagerly watching. Some of us were not content to watch; Lady Saxby, with pistols in her belt, and her blue tunic girt round with a silver belt, went out to see the bear's death struggle at close quarters, or to help give the last stroke to a wolf.

Belinda had a horror of these scenes, and turned sick and faint at the sounds from the court-yard. Why this should be, I was rather puzzled to know, the girl was by no means a coward, it seemed strange to display such emotion at the slaughter of wild beasts.

She was especially indignant at the women joining in the fray, and had a bitter quarrel with Lady Saxby on that account. On one occasion she was not content with mere verbal expostulation, but rushed from the Palace into the court, a tall figure in long white gown with flashing eyes and pale, proud face.

"It's inhuman!" she cried. "Wicked!" She dashed towards the corner of the court where Lady Saxby was waiting for Paul de Sonnaz to give the death thrust to a huge bear.

Suddenly the wounded beast rose to his hind legs and with an awful snarl aimed a huge blow with his paw, that stretched de Sonnaz on the ground.

With an awful shriek Lady Saxby faced round, her courage gone, ready to leave Paul to his fate, if only she could escape.

Stooping to pick de Sonnaz's rifle from the ground, Belinda aimed at the bear. The great beast swayed, struck a blow

Digitized by Google

with his formidable paw, that grazed the girl's shoulder, and then fell a lifeless heap of brown fur upon the ground.

Belinda was of course the heroine of the occasion; she was picked up and carried unconscious to her room, and medical aid was summoned.

The wound was not dangerous, but she had sustained a severe shock, and it became necessary to put her under the influence of narcotics. She responded easily to the action of the drug, and, as is often the case with certain temperaments, showed a docility of disposition utterly foreign to her disposition when under its influence.

By the doctor's orders I did not decrease the dose even when she was well enough to leave her room.

The last evening of our stay at the Ortoff Palace, was a memorable one; we were in the most magnificent of the many reception rooms, a place of marble, inlaid with malachite, and hung with gorgeous tapestries from the east; tall palms waved their high heads towards the vaulted roof, and the air was heavy with the scent of orange blossoms.

The entertainment that evening was a popular one at that time; a clever palmist had come all the way from Paris to read our hands. These persons are, for the most part, the agents for private detectives and money-lenders on a large scale, to whose interest it is to know as much as possible of the private life of their clients.

Belinda, like most young girls, was deeply interested to know all that could be told her of the future. Suddenly, just as the palmist was foretelling her happy marriage and various other impossible things, Belinda started to her feet, and with a low cry rushed to where Paul de Sonnaz was sitting.

"Look," she cried, "look!" And, seizing his arm, she pointed to the window.

"That face," she cried, "that awful face!" Shuddering she pointed once again into the night. And as I followed her gaze, something of the terror, the horror that she felt, laid hold of me.

(*The explanation of the appearance of this face will be told next Tuesday.*)

"Robert, dear, how do you suppose those dozens and dozens of empty bottles ever got into the cellar?" "Why, I don't know, my dear; I never bought an empty bottle in my life."

Young Man: "Is there any er—tunnel on your railway?" Railway Official: "Yes, thirty of them. The line is a favourite one with newly-married couples. Book you a couple of tickets?"

Young Wife: "But, Charles, before we were married you said that my slightest wish should be gratified." Young Husband: "Yes, Maria; but there's nothing slight about a three-guinea bonnet."

Reggie: "I heard papa say the other day that labour is sweet and noble." Mamma: "So it is, Reggie." Reggie: "Then, mamma, why does papa get a man to cut the grass, while he sits on a chair and only looks on?"

Scene—A Sunday-school. Johnnie: "I say, Miss Jones, I know now why you didn't want me to rob birds' nests last spring." Miss Jones (who has on a new hat): "Why was it, Johnnie?" Johnnie (gazing with admiring eyes at the hat): "'Cause you wanted the birds to grow big enough to wear 'em."

"No," said Ethel, "I'm afraid I shall never see Harold again." "Why? Have you offended him?" "Yes. I was giving him a nice, sisterly talk, and said that I was afraid he was leading an aimless existence." "Did he get angry?" "Yes. You see, he has the reputation of being the worst shot in the Rifle Corps."

Mrs. Purskey: Please, sir, I want one o' them thum—um—things; yer know, sir, as reggylates the 'eat of a room. Chemist: "Thermometer, you mean, ma'am, I suppose?" Mrs. P. (eagerly): "Yes, sir, that's it, sir. And if you'll be so kind, sir, to set it to 'sixty-five,' 'cause that's what the doctor says I'm to keep the room at."

Your Editor Chats.

Among the claims sent in by readers for one of the £10 notes offered by "Dayton," I have received one from Earl Poulett (late Viscount Hinton). His reason for wanting the £10 he gives as follows: "It would assist me in prosecuting my claim to the Poulett peerage, which is expected to be heard in the House of Peers either at the end of February or the beginning of March."

In order to ascertain whether the application was really that of Earl Poulett, I wrote to him at the address given in London, asking him to call and see me. A few days later I received a wire from Canterbury saying he was at St. Margaret's Hall in that city, and would call upon me when he returned to town. When he came subsequently he told me that he was touring the country for the purpose of raising money to prosecute his claim by giving entertainments in various towns.

I think readers will agree with me that Earl Poulett is justified in sharing the £10 note with Mr. R. S. Tunnell, 108 Grantham Road, Clapham, who wishes to take out a patent for an improvement in cycles.

Mr. R. Norman Silver, whose remarkable sensational novel "Held Apart" will shortly commence publication in *Short Stories*, belongs to that group of writers who find the best atmosphere for work in some public place. His favourite resort, when bent on the production of "copy," is a corner in a London restaurant much patronised by foreigners, and, as a matter of course, served by waiters of extremely mixed nationality. He uses a fountain pen, small sheets of paper, and writes an almost microscopic hand. Once, when more than ordinarily absorbed in some exciting situation of his characters, a bland German face approached his table and a guttural bass inquired: "Exguse me, sir, but what for you make so liddle writing?" Mr. Silver confessed himself unable to explain the peculiarity, which, however, enables him to crowd some five hundred words onto a sheet scarcely larger than an ordinary "Court" envelope. With the first instalment of his new serial I shall reproduce a specimen of his writing.

In a fortnight's time you will be able to enter the splendid new competition which starts in *Short Stories*. It is certainly one of the most original competitions ever devised, and I am sure will be a huge success. In view of the tremendous attractions which will be embodied in the issue of *Short Stories* for March 7th, I would ask you to make sure of securing a copy by asking your newsagent well in advance to reserve it for you.

Your Editor.

The £10 offered in the Fourth "Dayton" Competition has been divided between Earl Poulett (formerly Viscount Hinton), 17 Henry Street Buildings, Pentonville, N.W., and Mr. R. S. Tunnell, 108 Grantham Road, Clapham, S.W., each of whom has received £5.

The winner of the £10 offered in the Final "Dayton" Competition is Miss Annie Thorne, 4 Nile Street, Landport, Portsmouth.

Digitized by Google

MRS. COOPER'S NIECE.

The Story of a Romantic Love Affair.

"Philip," said old John Briggs to his son, "you are twenty-eight years old to-day."

"So the family record says, father," responded the elegant young gentleman addressed. "I am disposed to place implicit reliance upon it and on you."

"You have done nothing since you left college but kill time."

"It is only retaliation in advance, sir. Some day or other the old chap with the scalp-lock and scythe will kill me."

"You are too flippant. Since your aunt Priscilla left you a thousand a year you have done nothing but spend the money. Your income ought to be enough for a single man, but you draw on me, too."

"I'll try to draw on you less, sir."

"It is not that, Philip. You are quite welcome to a cheque now and then, for I know that you neither gamble nor gad about town, and I don't mind your horses, your club, your natural history craze, or your luxurious tastes. But still you spend more money and get less for it than most young men of your age—have too much, in fact."

"I don't find it too much, sir. In fact, I was thinking what a graceful thing it would be if you would only double it—a mere trifle to a gentleman of your means. I have to use the most pitiful economy, I assure you."

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, I can tell you how to increase it considerably. You have heard me speak of Edward Spriggs, of Birmingham?"

"Money-lender and skinflint? I have heard of him."

"Nonsense, Philip. He is a quite worthy as well as very wealthy man; and if he prefers to invest ready money by lending it, what of that? I lend my money, or some of it, sometimes."

"But not at cent. per cent."

"No matter. I don't propose that you shall borrow of him. He has an only child, a daughter, who will inherit all his vast property, just as you will mine."

"Does she shave sovereigns, father?"

"Phil, be kind enough not to indulge in chaff. I have seen her and talked with her. She is young, handsome, well educated, and has good taste—a Society gentlewoman with domestic tastes."

"Well, father, you are not so old, and, since you admire her so much, I see no reason why——"

"Stop your nonsense, and listen. Spriggs and I had a talk over it when I was in Birmingham, and we have concluded if you two agree to marry, to settle a hundred thousand pounds on you on your wedding-day. With what you have you'll do well enough for a while."

"But," demurred Philip, "I don't like Spriggs for a father-in-law."

"Stuff! you don't marry Spriggs."

"And the name! Think of it! Spr-r-iggs."

"What of that? With marriage the name is changed. I don't think she'll gain much by it—Spriggs—Briggs! Six of one and a half-dozen of the other."

"I'd like to oblige you, father. I suppose I must marry some day; but it will be someone I love; and then I insist of a woman on good family."

"Someone you love! How the dickens do you know you'll not love her till you see her? Good family! Of course you're entitled to that. The peerage of Britain is full of Viscount Briggses! The Briggses are found in the Almanac von Gotha among the earlier families.

"Your grandfather made sixty thousand pounds property in hides and tallow, and if he had not invested it in property, that multiplied itself more than tenfold before he died, I should have been in the same business to-day, and you in the office or warehouse. Family, indeed! You're a foolish boy, Philip, and your aunt's legacy has ruined you."

"I wish, sir, there were half a dozen more old aunts to continue my ruin in the same way. It is no use getting angry, father. You can't keep it up. I'll take to anything else you say—law, physic, or divinity; sell my horses, drop my club, read by the cubic foot, but to marry—excuse me."

"Look here, Phil," exclaimed the father, who by this time was very annoyed, "you never knew me to break my word. I merely ask you to marry for your own good. I point out a wife in every way suitable to you. Marry to please me, and I will not only start you fairly in life now, but leave you all I have when I am gone. Marry to suit some foolish fancy of your own and I'll—yes, I'll found an asylum for idiots. Now you understand me;" and Briggs marched off, leaving his son to his meditations.

"If I stay here," said Philip to himself, "father and I will quarrel. Better give the dear old gentleman a chance to cool off. I'll ruralise a little."

That afternoon Philip packed a portmanteau, and with a fishing rod and mineral hammer started off to Cornwall, where an old college friend of his had married and settled, one whom he had long promised to visit.

When he arrived there he learnt that Graham and his wife had gone to Ilfracombe for the season, and their servants with them, the house being in charge of a caretaker. Philip heard of good fishing in a stream four miles off, and concluded to try it. He found lodgings at a farmhouse near the place, owned by a man named Abraham Cooper.

His quarters were quite comfortable. The house was an old stone building, and roomy. He was assigned a chamber upstairs, looking out on a trimly-kept garden, in which old-fashioned flowers and herbs were grown side by side, and which sent a pleasant fragrance through the open window.

The room itself was adorned with pictures and nick-nacks showing feminine taste, and the bedstead was furnished with a hair mattress, and not the bag of feathers usually found in such places.

"Decidedly," said Philip to himself, "there is another female on the premises, something younger and possibly fairer than the substantial Dame Cooper, and with some refined taste."

But neither that day nor that week did he see any woman other than Mrs. Cooper or the servant. However, the cooking was good, the country air and his walks round about gave him an appetite, and he was content. He fished the stream closely, or rambled here and there, hammer in hand and bag at his side, or leant over the fences and talked with farmers about "crops" and the weather.

In a week's time the thing grew monotonous. The fish were not always inclined to bite, good specimens in quarries grew scarcer, and his stock of talk on farming was nearly

Digitized by Google

exhausted. He began to think of going to Ilfracombe and hunting up Graham.

As he sat out in the garden one afternoon, debating the matter, a carriage was driven up the lane and stopped at the door. Lightly out stepped a young woman in a neat travelling dress, and the driver followed her with a large trunk, under which he staggered, burly as he was. Mrs. Cooper came from the kitchen, and exclaimed :

"Why, it's Gwenny, I declare !"

"You dear old aunty Ruth !" said the newcomer, hugging and kissing the farmer's wife. "I came to have a good time or a month."

"And so you shall, my dear," was the hearty reply. Philip took an ocular inventory of the looks, dress and manner of the newcomer as he took off his hat.

"A sweet face and graceful figure, and presentable anywhere," was his internal comment. "Here's luck. I shall not visit Ilfracombe yet."

"You have a lodger, aunty," said the girl, when upstairs with Mrs. Cooper.

"Yes, he's a Mr. Bee," said the other. "It don't look as if he had any call to work for his living, judging by his white hands and his luggage, and he's plenty of money."

"Bee ! Then he isn't a busy bee. But he's good-looking ; if he be agreeable, he'll do for a walking stick."

Mrs. Cooper's mistake as to Philip was natural enough. When she had asked his name on his coming he had said, in his airy way, "Philip B., at your service," and she had taken the sound of the initial for his surname.

After she had called him Mr. Bee several times Philip saw the blunder, smiled at it, and, as the naval officers say, "made it so" ; and when Gwenny came to the table she was introduced, "Miss Gwenny, Mr. B." As she was the niece, he concluded her name to be Cooper, but as the farmer addressed her as Miss Gwenny, and the farmer's wife as Gwenny, Philip chose the more respectful form of the two.

As Philip was a gallant young gentleman, and as the young lady was charming in manner, he naturally paid her much attention. When a young man and young woman are thrown together under such circumstances it is not unusual for a flirtation to follow. It is generally a foregone conclusion.

Philip soon learnt that "Gwenny" was the diminutive of Gwenllian, and not of the more stilted Gwendoline, which interested him. Philip's mother had been a Powel, with Welsh blood in her veins, and bore the same name.

This later Gwenllian was a mystery to him. For the niece of a rather coarse farmer—for Cooper, though a worthy man, was the reverse of refined—she displayed unquestionably gentle manners. Then she showed a fair knowledge of any subject touched upon in conversation.

What was she—a teacher ? She had not the look or the way of the schoolmistress. A governess ? Possibly. If so, in a good family. But her belongings were not of the second-hand kind.

Philip had a keen eye for female apparel. Her lace was of the newest ; her dresses were pretty in material and well fitting, though quiet in tone ; and though she displayed little in the way of jewellery, the stone that sparkled on the head of a pin was unmistakably a diamond. She had been well cultured, and every word and action showed a purity that fitted her name.

On the other hand, Philip was as much a mystery to the young girl. He was a gentleman beyond doubt. But what was he doing there, a man of culture, refinement, and aesthetic tastes, in that farmhouse ?

He had said nothing of the Grahams, which would have explained it. With a little affectation of cynicism, which did not ill become him, the man was as clear as water, frank as air. But why did he loiter there with no apparent purpose ?

The girl did not at first deem she was the attraction, but it came to her after five weeks, and she grew shy, and her shyness for the last week of her stay infected Philip, who became shy too, and lost all ease.

At length she announced to Mrs. Cooper that she had return home, and that her father, who was in London visiting a friend there, would come for her on the following day, and his friend with him. Philip heard this with a depression that told him that he had met his fate and that it lay in the power of this girl to make him happy or miserable for life.

All the night that followed Philip lay and tossed restlessly. He could not sleep. He felt that his father would be as good as his word, but he determined that he would win a wife then or never.

Towards morning he rose, dressed, and sat at the window until the sun showed itself. Then he slipped out of the house, and strolled towards a glen a few yards off, intending to remain out until he heard the breakfast bell.

It had been a favourite haunt of the two, and yet for the last few days both had avoided it. He made his way to a mossy rock which formed a sort of rustic seat, and there he saw—Gwenny.

"Miss Gwenllian !" he exclaimed.

She rose with rather an embarrassed air. Then she said calmly :

"I rested badly last night, Mr. Bee, and I came out at daybreak. I have been here ever since. The morning air seems to refresh me."

"I had the same experience," he said. "I have rested badly, or rather, have not rested at all. I——"

She looked up inquiringly, and at something she read in his eyes dropped her own, while a flush overspread her face and neck.

"Gwenny !" he said desperately, and took her hand. The fingers trembled in his, but were not withdrawn. "Gwenny darling," he said, "we are to part to-day. Do you know that I love you dearly ?"

"Do you—Philip ?" she murmured, but she did not look up.

"Gwenny," he said, "I have been sailing under false colours, but innocently enough. I have a way among my gentlemen friends of using my initials, and so I am called among them P. B., or Mr. B. When your aunt asked me my name, I said, "Mr. B.,' and I did not care to undeceive her ; but I desire no concealment from you, unless you do not care for me. Then we will part as we met ; but I shall be a changed man. I shall never be able to forget you."

He waited for a reply. There was a slight tightening of her fingers on his as she half whispered :

"You must know that I care for you, Philip.'

"Now, darling," said the exultant Philip, "you must let me speak to your father to-day."

"I fear you may find him rather obstinate," she said. "He sets an undue store by his daughter."

"I can satisfy him of my position in society and that I am able to maintain you. I have means of my own, and have—well, I may say I had, great expectations ; but my father, who is very wealthy, has taken it into his head to choose a wife for me. I prefer to choose for myself. If you will be content to share what I have, Philip Briggs does not desire anything more."

"Briggs—Philip !" cried Gwenny, releasing herself from his grasp, and looking at him wonderingly. "Is your father's name John ?"

"Yes."

"And he lives in London ?"

"Yes."

Gwenny burst into a peal of silvery laughter.

"Do not feel vexed, Philip," she said at length. "I am only laughing at the similarity of our positions. My father chose a husband for me in the same way, and it was to escape discussion of the matter that I took these few weeks' rustication.

"Mrs. Cooper is my old nurse, and I have called her 'aunty' from the time I could toddle. She was married from our house. Her husband had very little money, and father bought them this farm and stocked it. But, oh, think, Philip dear, how your father and mine will chuckle ! You are Philip Briggs and I—I am Gwenllian Spriggs !"

Thos. D. English.

Digitized by Google

Behind the Tamarisk Hedge.

HOW A QUARREL WAS MADE UP.

Summer.

A FRESH wind blowing from the east tempered the heat of the sun that beat down upon the wide-stretching sands.

It was low tide, and the tiny wavelets rippled at the edge of the brown sand in a faint white line, hardly discernible from where Jack Leslie lay dozing in the sunshine on the fringe of seaweed left by the last high tide.

A fishing boat with wide brown sails was tacking along close inland; children paddled, and dug, and played in little scattered groups dotted here and there, the little ones in the distance looking but tiny coloured specks dwarfed by the wide expanse of sand.

It was an ideal place to laze away long summer days. Not well enough known to be crowded, not near enough to a railway to be spoilt by excursionists. Niggers and a pier were unknown on that beach and the voices of the children at play were the only sounds that mingled with the cry of the sea-birds and the swish of the waves.

Jack Leslie had found a comfortable lodging with a coast-guard widow in the village, and after a swim in the blue waters was dozing away the morning hours on the sands. After the atmosphere of a stuffy city office the fresh salt air and feeling of space made Jack draw deep breaths of fresh air into his lungs, and feel thankful to be alive in such a sunny world.

For the first day at least Leslie felt that he did not want to speak to anyone. He wanted to be alone, free to do as he liked and watch the sea in its varying aspects of morning, afternoon, and evening. He wanted to get to know intimately this part of the shore which was quite new to him.

He could hardly make up his mind to turn his steps away from the sea and go in to his dinner, but that the strong salt air had given him a healthy appetite.

In the evening he strolled along the rough grass that grew to the edge of the low cliff—nowhere higher than a few feet—a little colony of tents were pitched here, and appeared to have a mushroom growth—as well as appearance—by the suddenness with which they appeared and, after a few days, disappeared.

Behind the tents a high tamarisk hedge waved its feathery branches.

It formed a square within the shelter of which two picturesque wooden bungalows lay hidden from the curious glance of chance passers-by.

Jack approached the archway cut in the thickness of the hedge, the rustic gate stood hospitably open, and he looked through, wondering who lived in the little green-and-white bungalow, where the parrot's cage hung and pink flowering tree geraniums making a vivid bit of colouring. Dainty little muslin curtains shaded the windows, and through the open doorway of the little sitting-room Jack caught a glimpse of the cosy interior.

The other bungalow was a complete contrast, evidently occupied by a family simply for their summer holiday; not a permanent "home," as the well-cared-for appearance of the green and white bungalow proclaimed it to be.

No one was about except a fat Basset puppy, who ruffled up an angry back and growled at the intruder standing in the shade of the tamarisk hedge. The growls of the puppy attracted a tiny sailor-clad boy, who trotted out and seized the pup by the collar.

Jack heard a sweet, clear voice from inside calling "Come in Sonnie, it's bed time. Leave the pup alone and come to mother."

The little chap looked regretfully at the puppy and the still, sunny garden outside and trotted back.

Jack did not like to remain longer; so filling a pipe, strolled on again to the next little village—a cluster of farms and an ugly slate-built coastguards' station. Leslie's curiosity was aroused concerning the occupants of the green and white bungalow behind the tamarisk hedge.

He could not resist putting a few questions to his landlady, and learnt from her that Danefield bungalow belonged to a Mrs. Lawrence, and that she lived there all the year round with her little boy, whom Jack had seen that evening.

"I don't rightly know, sir, if she's a widow, leastways we think she is, for although she wears no mourning, and has never said if she is a widow or not, we haven't none of us seen no Mr. Lawrence. Sometimes her sister stays with her, but as a rule she is alone with her old servant and her little Sonnie. It's a lonesome life for one so young and pretty as she is. Did you happen to see her as you passed, sir?"

"No, I didn't see her, but her bungalow looked so pretty and well kept that I felt sure its owner must be nice, and pretty too," added Jack inconsequently.

After his morning dip Jack strolled along the shore, and climbed up where the cliff was lowest opposite the bungalow.

On the step under the shade of the verandah sat a girl combing out her long curly hair still damp and clinging from the sea, on a lower step sat Sonnie, holding the brush and chattering away busily, his little sunburnt face upturned eagerly to the lovely one above him. As Jack's figure blocked out the view of the sea through the gap in the tamarisk hedge, the girl looked up and shook the sunny curls from her face. Seeing a stranger she rose hastily, and calling Sonnie went within.

Jack was forced to move on, reviling the ill-luck that had made the girl look up. If he had been curious about the occupants of the green-and-white bungalow by the sea before, he was doubly so now. Surely that could not be Mrs. Lawrence, that lovely girl with the sunny golden curls; it must be her sister, of whom his landlady had told him.

Later in the day he was buying stamps in the post-office when the fat Basset pup blundered into the shop, tugging little Sonnie after her, whose little strength was hardly enough to hold back the sturdy puppy.

Jack felt rather than saw the girl with the lovely hair enter, for he purposely looked away; he heard her ask for some bacon in a voice that he recognised at once as the one which had called Sonnie to come to "mother" the evening before.

"It must be Mrs. Lawrence," he said to himself, and began to turn over in his mind some plan by which he could obtain

Digitized by Google

an introduction to her, as he knew no one as yet in the village who could introduce him.

But fortune capriciously favoured him sooner than he dared to hope.

The Basset pup, while Sonnie's attention had wandered to the contemplation of a bottle of sweets, had been sniffing at a row of rabbits hanging within reach, and now seized its opportunity and a rabbit and made off out of the shop with its prize.

The sudden tug at the chain upset Sonnie, and Leslie hurried to pick him up. In falling he had struck his head against a chair, and, notwithstanding manful efforts, the tears would come.

Jack lifted him up on to the counter, and hastily pulled out some pennies for sweets. The little chap's face brightened at once; he and his new friend began to seriously discuss the rival merits of butterscotch and chocolate. Mrs. Lawrence thanked Jack for his kindness, and the ice was broken.

The puppy was captured and brought back, and the trio left the shop together, Sonnie's little brown hand slipped confidingly into Jack's, and his little tongue wagged busily.

Quite naturally Jack walked up the village with the little boy and his mother. At the cross road he stopped, hoping that Mrs. Lawrence would ask him to come to the bungalow to tea; but Mrs. Lawrence had relapsed into silence, and was walking along abstractedly, her thoughts evidently far away. She put out her hand when Leslie wished her good-bye.

"Come and sail boats to-morrow with me, Mr. Leslie, do," pleaded Sonnie.

Jack lifted Sonnie on to the counter and he was soon made happy with butterscotch and chocolate.

His mother roused herself, and her deep blue eyes met Jack's for a moment as she said, "Do come and cheer our loneliness if you care to, Mr. Leslie. Sonnie often longs for a playfellow."

So it was as Sonnie's playfellow he was to come, mused Jack, as he went back to his lodgings to write his letters. Well, anyhow he was only too pleased to go just for the hope of seeing those blue eyes again and the sunshine glittering in the curls that clustered in fascinating rings under the sailor hat.

Mrs. Lawrence was lovely, the loveliest woman he had ever seen, Jack thought as he sat with an empty sheet of note paper before him, and gazed out of the window at the shocks of yellow corn standing in the opposite field. The corn reminded him of her hair, the sky of her blue eyes.

With an impatient sigh he took up his pen again, and forced himself to write a dry business letter. Then he wrote a letter to his greatest pal, Lawrie Fielding, and asked him to come down for a few days.

His letters finished, he strolled along the shore, and was rewarded by a glimpse of Mrs. Lawrence with a big holland apron on, watering the geraniums, which added so much to the appearance of her dainty little bungalow.

Sonnie and the Basset pup were racing after each other, the puppy giving tongue lustily, to Sonnie's great delight.

Passing again a little later everything was quiet, and Jack guessed that Sonnie was being put to bed. Leslie lay down on the coarse grass at the edge of the low cliff. Presently Mrs. Lawrence came down and strolled out on to the sands; she caught sight of Jack, and nodded pleasantly. He jumped up and joined her.

She seemed less absent-minded than when she had said good-bye to him that afternoon, and Jack soon found himself chatting away to her as if their acquaintance was of much longer duration than a few hours. "I have written to ask a great friend of mine to come down and stay for a few days, I am so delighted with this dear little place. I am sure that it is just the quiet little nook that Fielding would love too."

Mrs. Lawrence stumbled suddenly. Leslie involuntarily put his hand on her arm, and she recovered herself instantly.

"When is your friend coming?" she asked quietly.

"On Saturday if he can get away," replied Jack, hoping that she would ask them both to the bungalow on Sunday.

Lawrie Fielding arrived, and the first walk that Jack took him was along the cliff past the colony of tents to the little green-and-white bungalow behind the tamarisk hedge. They stopped at the gap, the rustic gates were closed, the parrot's cage was missing from its accustomed place, the blinds were down—without a doubt the bungalow was empty.

Jack Leslie could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes! When he had told Mrs. Lawrence Captain Fielding was coming on Saturday she had said nothing about leaving; surely if she had intended being away she would have said so, recent acquaintance though he was.

Captain Fielding was rather amused, and chaffed Jack about his beautiful widow who had left so suddenly. He had a bitter, sarcastic way of talking about matrimony, and told his friend that evidently the widow did not intend to risk matrimony a second time, and had gone away to escape the fascination of his good-looking friend.

Apparently Leslie took his chaff well; but he secretly worried and fretted over the unexplained absence of the woman with whom he had fallen in love.

He had met her constantly since their first unconventional introduction in the village shop, and each meeting had left him more deeply in love with beautiful Sybil Lawrence.

Digitized by Google

than the last, and now she was gone, suddenly, without a word.

The suddenness of it hurt him. She might have told him. When would she be back? Barely ten days of his holiday remained.

Without Mrs. Lawrence the little seaside village became commonplace.

The little thatched cottages which had seemed so artistic when he arrived, looked more like the cardboard cottages of a stage village now, the shore was lonely, the whole place dull, and had it not been for Lawrie Fielding, Leslie felt he would have moved on to some crowded, fashionable seaside place in which to forget Sybil Lawrence's sweet blue eyes and sunny hair.

But Fielding liked the place, and was quite content to stay with Jack for the remainder of his holiday. All places were more or less alike to him since the sorrow which had spoilt his life two years ago.

Jack Leslie had not known him then and had often wondered what had made him so bitter in speaking of women. He knew that Fielding had been married, and supposed him to be a widower.

One evening as they sat outside in the dusk under the shade of the tamarisk hedge on the cliff, Fielding's usual reserve melted, and he offered for the first time during their friendship to tell Jack the story of the trouble which shadowed his life.

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and began.

"I fell in love with and married the prettiest girl I had ever seen, Jack. She had the sweetest nature and most lovable ways that you can imagine, and we were perfectly happy. We cared, or at least I should say I cared, for nothing in the world but my darling." Captain Fielding's voice was full of regret and bitterness, and he paused. Jack sat silent and waited for him to resume.

"My wife had a great friend, a girl whom she had known all her life. I never really liked her because it seemed to me that she made mischief between Sybil and me, but I was so devoted to my wife that I never could object to anything that seemed to please her and make her happy.

"Then this girl, I won't mention her name, began to drop little hints about a brother officer of mine who was with us a great deal, and whom Sybil had known several years longer than she had known me, in fact it was he who had introduced us to each other.

"The girl was so clever and instilled the poison into my mind so gradually that even now I cannot recall the exact moment when I began to suspect Sybil's most innocent act."

"But," interrupted Jack impetuously, "you surely didn't let that girl influence you against your wife, against the woman who was all the world to you?"

"Ah, I don't wonder at your indignation, old chap, of course I wouldn't without proofs had she been even cleverer than she was, but unfortunately there was plenty of proof in the shape of letters. Oh, Jack, I can hardly bear to remember those awful letters that have ruined my happiness.

"I have never felt the same since I read them. I can see Sybil now, she came into the room just as I finished reading the last; she had Baby Audrey in her arms. The little mite was crying, she was only two, and had fallen and knocked herself. Sybil was loving and kissing her. As she came in I started to my feet and held the letters out. 'God knows I don't want a scandal,' I cried, 'but if ever I see your face again don't hold me responsible for what I do.'

"She stood there, white to the lips with terror, holding her baby in her arms. I had never spoken a sharp word to her before, Jack, in all our married life, I swear. She tried to speak, to explain.

"Then drew herself up proudly and walked out of the room."

"What then?" asked Jack. "You gave her a chance to clear herself?"

"I have never seen her since. I went out of the house in a rage. When I returned she had gone, and she had taken little Audrey with her! On my writing-table on top of the fatal letters lay a tiny note from Sybil. 'You have broken my heart, Jack. Good-bye.' That was all, no attempt to explain, nothing more." He broke off.

"Give me a cigarette, Jack, if you have one. Now you know why I talk a little bitterly sometimes about matrimony."

"Do you know where she is now?" asked his friend, as he gave him his cigarette-case. "Don't think me inquisitive, but I am awfully interested."

"No, I haven't an idea. Sometimes I long to find her, to hold her in my arms again, and forgive and forget. I would have her back gladly, but what is the use? I couldn't make her happy now if I couldn't keep her love then. She could never have loved me, for those letters dated from before we were married until within a few weeks of the day that I read them. The man had been ordered abroad, he had just exchanged, and had left a fortnight before.

"No married woman who loved her husband as I believed, poor, deluded fool, that Sybil loved me could receive such letters. She was a bad lot, Jack, and when you've said that you've said all there is to say. Come, let's go along the sands before we turn in."

Captain Fielding and Mrs. Lawrence were standing very close together.

Digitized by Google

Winter.

A white rime covered the tamarisk, outlining it with brilliant sparkles against the deep blue of the winter sky. The waves were dashing against the shingle and flinging it over the low cliff, strewing the coarse grass with stones from the sea-shore and trails of brown seaweed. It had been a week of storms, but to-day the wind had died down, and only the unrest of the sea told of the storms which had kept the inhabitants of the little village within doors for days, while the wind and hail battered and fought outside and swept in wild gusts across the level sands.

Jack Leslie and his friend, Lawrie Fielding, had just arrived by the morning train. They had wired but a few days before engaging the bungalow close to the little green and white one that belonged to Mrs. Lawrence.

The months which had passed since the summer, had not blotted out the recollection of that first week of Jack's holiday by the sea, which had been spent in growing friendship with beautiful Mrs. Lawrence. Leslie had had a longing ever since to return, and the brief holiday which Christmas brings, he resolved to spend at Saltleigh in the hope of seeing her again.

He had asked Lawrie Fielding to go with him, and having bought some fascinating clockwork toys for Sonnie, they journeyed down.

They could tell at once by the outside of the bungalow that Mrs. Lawrence was at home, for they heard Sonnie's voice, and someone opened the door to let out the Basset hound which Leslie gratefully recognised as the pup which had led to his first introduction to Mrs. Lawrence in the summer.

While Jack was arranging matters with the woman who was to "do" for them, Captain Fielding went off for a stroll to see what Saltleigh looked like in such different weather. Jack had his talk, unpacked and set out his photographs and books to give the little sitting-room a "homey" look and still Captain Fielding did not return.

"I wonder where he can have gone," he said to himself, and having found his pipe and tobacco, opened the door to go and meet him.

The fresh salt wind came in straight off the sea. A few steps out, and Jack stopped suddenly. In the little rustic summer-house in the most sheltered corner of the tamarisk inclosure stood Capt. Fielding holding Mrs. Lawrence in his arms, her pretty golden hair tossed by the breeze lay against his dark coat, and her sweet blue eyes which Jack had thought the loveliest in the world were gazing up into the dark passionate face above her. Leslie could not hear what they were saying, but as he looked the dark head bent towards the fair one, and all the misunderstanding, the trouble, the regret, were forgotten and forgiven in one long kiss.

With a smothered cry Jack went indoors and shut himself into his tiny bedroom. He spent a very bad quarter of an hour in there by himself until the hall door opening announced Capt. Fielding's return. The carefully cooked lunch was growing cold when Jack at last emerged from his room. Fielding's face was transformed, all the bitterness and cynicism were smoothed away, and his old happy expression had returned. It would have been difficult to find a more morose and woebegone object than the erstwhile jaunty Jack Leslie.

"Don't tell me, Lawrie," he said miserably. "I know, I guess, I saw you with her just now in the summer-house. what an ass I have been!"

"Why, my dear old chap, Mrs. Lawrence is charming, and blushed most becomingly when we told her you were down here too."

"Don't make fun of me Lawrie, by Jove," fiercely, "that's more than I can stand. I tell you I saw you just now in the summer-house," with a dignity born of despair.

Suddenly Fielding burst out laughing.

"And so you thought *that* was Mrs. Lawrence whom I was holding, that was her sister, my own dear wife, Sybil Fielding," with a proud, glad ring in his voice. Jack's face changed as if by magic.

"They are twin sisters," Capt. Fielding went on to explain; "both called Sybil, but Sybil Lawrence is a widow with one little boy Sonnie, and my wife was staying here with her when you arrived last summer. You happened to mention my name and she of course told her sister who persuaded her to leave at once in order to avoid me. Mrs. Lawrence went away with her, but I think," slyly, "that it was very reluctantly, Jack."

"I am awfully glad, old chap, that you two are to be happy again. I suppose, after all, it was all a mistake, wasn't it?"

"If I hadn't been such an impetuous, credulous fool, it would all have been cleared up long ago. That girl altered the date of those passionate love letters, they were written by Bingham to Sybil, but two years before we were engaged. What she must have gone through these last two years, poor darling, makes me miserable to think of. Take my advice, Jack, and don't listen to what any one says about *your* wife not even if they can prove it."

After lunch Lawrie Fielding insisted upon Jack going with him to Mrs. Lawrence's bungalow, and Jack feeling unaccountably nervous, went.

They had a merry Christmas Eve, little Audrey and Sonnie playing delightedly with the toys that Jack had brought.

When the evening came to an end Mrs. Fielding fetched a fur cape and strolled off with her husband along the cliff.

It was a starlit night, frosty and calm, the wind had completely died away, and the sea lay in the cold moonlight at rest.

As the others disappeared in the distance Jack turned to Sybil Lawrence and asked her to be his wife, he waited anxiously for her answer:

"Yes, Jack, I will," said Sybil softly. Outside the Christmas bells were ringing, "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

"You have indeed made my Christmas a happy one," whispered Jack, as he took her in his arms. **F. Lindsey.**

Judge: "How old are you, Miss?" Elderly Female: "I am— I am——" Judge: "Better hurry up; every moment makes it worse."

"We won't print any such stuff as that," said the editor loftily, as he handed back the manuscript. "Well, you needn't be so haughty about it," retorted the irregular contributor; "you're not the only one who won't print it."

Verses Will Win Gramophones.

It is quite the exception to find people who don't like music; there are many who are fond of it, but yet either cannot make it themselves or if they can are not able to afford to buy a piano or other musical instrument. To such, a Gramophone would be an inestimable boon. The only thing you have to do to get the sound is to put in the record of the song or piece you want to hear and then set the machine in motion.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by writing on the back of a post-card the best four-lined verse you can descriptive of *Short Stories*. The words "Short Stories" must appear in one of the lines.

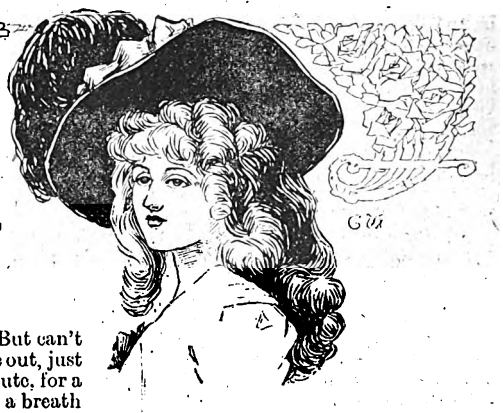
A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers who submit the best verses.

Post-cards only must be used, and should be addressed to the VERSE EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, February 24th.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding

Digitized by Google

Miss Yarwood's Special Providence.



The Love Story of a Struggling Artist.

THERE were odours of turpentine and hot paint upon the air when Nora thrust her curly head into Miss Yarwood's studio.

"Wh-ow!" she cried, "aren't you burnt up? What is it now?"

"It's pin trays—six of them! And I am too warm, but I wanted to dry the colour well; there's so little time."

"I wonder you don't die, Miss Alice! You are cooped up here from daylight until dark, and even after dark, now that so many orders are coming in. How late did you work last night?"

"Twelve," said Miss Yarwood, half apologetically. "But you don't know how thankful I am that I can do those Dresden designs at night! Look here; aren't these dainty? I'm going to fire them to-night"—and Miss Yarwood straightened her stiffened figure and led the way to a tall cabinet filled with odd bits of china, from among which she indicated one particular row of tiny cups and saucers.

"Oh, the dainty darlings!" cried the young girl, with positive rapture. "How you do them I can't even imagine. And will those black dots and scrolls be gold after the firing?"

"Gold as can be!" laughed the other. "They're an order for Kitty Birch; for a wedding present to her dearest friend."

"What will you get for them?" Nora asked suddenly.

Miss Yarwood hesitated a moment, and a little flame of colour shot into the pallor of her cheek as she replied:

"Thirty shillings."

"Apiece!"

"No, no—for all of them."

Nora stared blankly and then fairly shrieked:

"Only thirty shillings for the whole half-dozen? Why, you have worked for days on them, and—what did the plain china cost?"

"Half-a-crown apiece."

"That's fifteen shillings for the set. And how much gold have you used on them?"

"Not more than five shillings' worth, if that much," came the faint response.

"Then you'll get ten shillings for working two days and nights, spoiling your eyes, breaking your devoted back, ruining your health, and—and the firing to do. I forgot to count that and the gas. Miss Alice, my dear, you are an idiot! You make me absolutely furious!" and Nora stalked to the other side of the room and flounced angrily into a seat by the low window.

"Listen, dearie." Miss Alice spoke with a little deprecatory gesture. "It's Kitty's very, very dearest friend, and she did want to give her something charmingly pretty, and yet thirty shillings was all she could afford."

"Then why didn't she use up her own strength and nerves and eyesight instead of yours, in her investment? She can manage to wear beautiful clothes and warm furs and several hats a season, while you are going about in a cloak you've worn for five years—and even your best dress frayed at the edges."

"Now, Nora! I'm sure my cloak is still stylish and pretty, and I bound the frayed edges only last week, so the dress looks as good as new. I'm sure I always look nice."

"Nice!' You look like an angel!"—and impulsive Nora flung both arms about the little spinster and kissed her hot cheek. "But can't you come out, just for a minute, for a walk and a breath of fresh air?"

Miss Yarwood shook her head with a mock-woeful grimace.

"I must get the cream jug ready for the firing, and all the gold's to put on that vase yet. To-morrow's Sunday, dear; we'll have a long walk then, in the afternoon."

Nora sighed and left the room; but Miss Yarwood smiled as her fine brush trailed delicate lines of gold over the pale blossoms on the ivory-tinted cream jug.

"Nora doesn't realise how fortunate I am," she said. "I never had so many orders before."

Meanwhile Nora was freeing her mind to Cæsar, the huge mastiff, who stretched his great legs as he rose from the doormat.

"She's killing herself, Cæsar, for five shillings a day. Come, sir, you need a run. We'll go out and get a bag of cool oranges for that hot little goose. There, now, one, two—run!" It was twilight and the street was still. "Nobody'll know we are school-teachers, Cæsar. This is glorious! Go it, I say—Oh! oh, dear!—gracious!—I beg your pardon. If it isn't Doctor Grimes!"

"Or what is left of him," that gentleman flustered. "Will you tell me, miss, what you mean by tilting headlong in this fashion at respectable old gentlemen?"

"If you please, sir, we were in a bit of a hurry going for oranges for Miss Alice."

"If she needs 'em that badly I think I'll turn back with you to see that you get a good sort. M—h—ah, how is Miss Alice to-day?"

"Cooked, sir."

"What?"

"She's being slowly roasted, I say, in that little studio of hers. I'd like to be her mother, Doctor Grimes, for about a year, till I could teach her some sense!"

"I have found Miss Yarwood a lady of extremely sound sense and good judgment," said Doctor Grimes, with dignity.

"Then you don't know her as well as I do," came the unabashed retort. "You don't know her business methods. She's doing charitable work for people who could buy her—house, lot, and all—and who call themselves her patrons! You don't know, perhaps, that she has her breakfast at six o'clock in the morning that she may lose no minute of precious daylight; that she gives her eyes and her strength and her real artistic talent to the graceless people of Birchwood for the munificent sum of five shillings a day."

"You don't mean it!" gasped the doctor.

"Indeed I do! And I want to fight somebody. She's almost ill, this minute; but she will tell me, smiling sweetly, that she must earn her bread and butter, and that she's so thankful she can!"

Doctor Grimes cleared his throat.

"I haven't been long in Birchwood," he said. "I fancied Miss Yarwood did her china painting mainly for amusement."

"Well, that's about all she gets out of it," said the girl, grimly; "but even amusements may be indulged in to excess. Oranges, yes—a dozen of the best."

Digitized by Google

"And a couple of pounds of those Californian grapes," put in the doctor, pointing with his stick to the saw-dusty box over which luscious white clusters were hanging. "Well, well, well! There ought to be a guardian, I should say. She looks well enough to other people's needs. There was that Osgood family—shiftless things!—I first ran across her there——"

"That's where her muff went, because Mrs. Osgood's hands looked cold—big fat things!—and her own have frozen blue ever since. She never will learn any sense."

"Tut! tut! Miss Nora. No, you needn't say I sent the grapes—I shouldn't dare"—and the big doctor really looked alarmed. "But I hope she'll eat them."

"If she doesn't her lodger will," and Nora laughed mischievously.

She was still smiling, over thoughts all her own, when she looked into the studio again at tea time. Miss Yarwood dropped her brush for a moment, and looked knowingly at the rosy, girlish figure.

"I saw you, Nora, you rogue—both of you. And, my dear, there's the right sort of man; how different from those light creatures Billy Smith and Tom. Not that Billy and Tom aren't nice boys in their way, but the doctor is so fine and big and handsome! And I saw him look after you, Nora dear, as you came in at the gate, almost as if he would have to turn and follow."

"It's likely enough he wanted to," laughed the girl.

Miss Yarwood looked at her half wistfully.

"Don't take it too lightly, Nora, my big, happy girl. Love doesn't come to all lives—not such love as his would be. I tell you, he's a real nobleman, Nora."

"Too fat," commented Nora laconically.

Miss Yarwood looked aghast. Then she said with a little quiet dignity:

"He's a large man, not fat. We'll go to supper, Nora."

* * * * *

They had come back from their walk on Sunday afternoon, and if Miss Yarwood's hands were blue with cold her cheeks were pink enough, and her soft, brown eyes held warm lights in their depths.

"Wasn't it delightful?" she said, with a long-drawn breath as she sank into the chair Nora drew before the blazing coals. "I feel like another person. And how beautiful the fire is! Mary always looks after that. My life ought to be one long song of thanksgiving. A cosy home, my very own, a devoted servant, a friend—and what a friend you have been to me, Nora!"

She paused with a little choke in her voice, and Nora had not the heart to repeat aloud her running commentary:

"'A cosy home,' earned by her own hard struggles; 'a devoted servant,' at exorbitant wages a week; and 'a friend,' Nora, the lodger, who pays ten shillings for a one pound room and her board."

"It has always been like this, Nora, since I can first remember."

Miss Yarwood had thrown off her coat and was looking ruminantly into the coals.

Nora swung a low chair forward, and poked the fire a trifle viciously.

"I am tempted to tell you something I have never told a living soul!" cried Miss Yarwood, with a little start, turning the brown eyes full upon the beloved lodger. Her voice was low, as became the telling of a deep secret, but clear and sweet and alive with feeling. "It is this, Nora: That I believe myself to be, in a special sense, one favoured of Heaven—a charge of Providence. Other people have had terrible trials and troubles——"

"And so have you!" burst forth the girl impetuously.

Miss Yarwood turned meditative eyes upon her.

"Oh, yes, of course there have been clouds and rainy days, but God kept his sun shining steadily for me behind them. Always, I have been specially protected and guarded and shielded from harm. To-night, for very thankfulness, I can't be dumb. Let me tell you, Nora, I had a sweetheart once——"

Nora sat alert.

"I was very young. I hardly knew him, for he was a stranger in our town, but I loved him desperately—I think I really did. We were engaged to be married. My clothes were made—what pleasure I took in them! And the day fixed. But just a week before it, an officer came and—arrested James.

"Nora, that handsome young sweetheart of mine was as cold-blooded a villain as ever lived! He had robbed his own father, gambled away his money—I can't tell you all the story of his sins! What I want you to see is that Providence was watching over me to keep me from becoming the miserable wife of that wicked man.

"Of course it hurt for a long time. But after awhile I was helped past it till all the pain was gone, and in a strange, sweet way, it seemed to me that bitter experience helped me to appreciate the really grand, good man I later learnt to love."

"And he?" Miss Nora leant forward as she asked the question and held her breath.

"He taught me how truly fine and pure a man's life may be, how all-ennobling his love. I honoured him so entirely that when he afterwards found he had been mistaken in his love for me, I could only admire the consideration, the real nobility of character, that prompted him to frankly tell me so."

The girl by the fireside gave a little gulp and looked away; but if the faintest shadow crossed the fair face of the elder woman there lurked no trace of bitterness within it.

"I love children, Nora—you know that. And I used to dream day-dreams of babies lisping about my own knees, babies with Robert's fine, white brow, and Robert's clustering curls. But even this lack in my life is compensated to me. There isn't a child in this whole neighbourhood that doesn't love to come to Auntie Alice's. On all sides, you see, I find love and tenderness. And then this beautiful gift of mine! What if, like many a poor soul, I had to eke out a miserable existence with a poorly paid needle, or doing work too heavy for my strength?"

"Oh, you'd do it, and shout praises over your machine or your wash-tub."

Miss Yarwood laughed a little joyous laugh.

"What a tease you are, Nora. One would almost think you didn't believe in my talent or my—my secret."

"I'll tell you what I believe," said Nora seriously. "I believe you have the sunniest disposition a woman was ever blessed with!"

"Yes, I have that, too!" beamed Miss Yarwood, with the naïvete of a child. "There isn't anything a kindly Providence hasn't given me."

Nora looked at the re-bound best dress, at the thin little figure, the tired but smiling eyes, and forbore to speak.

"I wonder what she'd do with half the blessings most women have?" she thought.

* * * * *

It happened in the most curious way, just three nights later, that big Doctor Grimes, passing Miss Yarwood's cottage, stopped in the shadow of the fir tree to gaze in at the little studio; and at that same instant, Miss Yarwood

Digitized by Google

leaning over her china kiln, more tired than ever, and just a little "shaky" from loss of sleep and appetite, suddenly "gave out" entirely and fell, tea-cups, pin-trays, and all, against the kiln, and on, in a heap of tinkling porcelain, to the floor.

Curiously, too, Doctor Grimes forgot all about his ridiculous shyness of the little woman, vaulted her fence (fir tree, too, he afterwards thought, so great had been his haste) and in half a flying minute reached her side, lifted her out of her pitiful ruins, and sat her bolt upright upon a chair.

She had not fainted—not she. She was only a trifle dazed, and "not very strong," as she explained. She felt there was some explanation called for, for there was absolutely no misunderstanding the fact that the big doctor, having sat her upon her chair, had shaken her soundly.

"'Not very strong,' indeed!" (Another shake.) "I have heard about it! Miss Nora says you need a guardian, and I am come to be he." His voice was harsh and angry.

"Don't you know, *know*, you are killing yourself?" Then it came over him suddenly just how pale and thin and pitifully small she looked, this misguided bread-winner, and he looked about wildly until his eye rested upon a cushion across in the little window seat. He strode after it; then he put it gently at the back of her head.

"I—did I—shake you, you frail little mite of a woman? I might have killed you; Heaven only knows how easily I could do it. And rather than hurt a hair of your head——"

He stopped and looked unsteadily at her, for his eyes were swimming in sudden tears. And Miss Alice felt a strange yearning in her heart towards this man whom she had selected to be dear Nora's lover.

"You didn't—shake me—very hard," she stammered. "I must have provoked you to it, falling clumsily, like that——"

He stopped her short.

"What sort of an old party do you think me, anyhow, Miss Alice? Would you believe a thing I told you as solemn truth?"

"Oh, I would!" she cried, looking steadily into the kind, grey eyes.

"Then please believe that I love you from my very heart, and that, old bachelor as I am I shall always be, unless you let me come as business manager of this firm. As Mrs. Grimes you may paint tea-cups for me alone, and I'll promise unbounded admiration and prompt pay. Will you be my wife, Alice, and let the love and care of a lifetime atone for the ugly gruffness I've shown you to-night?"

He was holding both her hands, and, kneeling there perilously on those broken bits of fine arts, could look straight into the big, brown eyes.

"I thought I had given all my heart to—to Robert—but that was long ago, and——"

"And now?"

"And now you—you remind me of him—in being so grand and good, I mean — so much so that I believe in time——"

"How much time?" cried this impatient lover. "Don't you know that since that first day in the leaky Osgood cottage I've thought of you day and night, and loved you until I've been a perfect old fool? How much time? Can't you love me in five minutes? Now?"

And the little woman, moved by some impulse, leant suddenly forward and tremulously kissed the grey-sprinkled hair of the doctor. That kiss installed the new business manager.

When Miss Nora came in five minutes later, two happier people she was sure she had never seen. But it was only to her pillow she confided, and in the dead of night, that not until she saw the big doctor's protecting arm about the little spinster did she take much stock in that "special Providence."

Maude Rittenhouse.

JOHN ATHERTON'S WOOING.

Proving the All-Powerfulness of Love.

They had reached the little gate which led to the home of Esther Bryant.

"Mr. Atherton, please don't say any more. I cannot bear it. You do not realise what you are saying. Please don't interrupt me, but help me to do my duty. I fully appreciate the honour you would confer on me as your wife, but I also realise the barriers that separate us, and which can never be broken.

"I did not dream that you would ever care for me in this way, and I only hope that you may in time know that I am in the right; and believe that it has also cost me something to speak in this way. Perhaps it is for the best that I am going to-morrow, so let us say 'Good-bye' as friends, and when we meet again let it be as friends."

She raised her eyes to his face, those sweet eyes so deeply, purely blue, and they met the sad gaze of his dark ones bent upon her. His voice was husky as he asked:

"Is this to be the end, Miss Bryant? Can I not persuade you to change that little word when I tell you how dark the future will be for me without you by my side? Why need you go miles away to earn your daily bread by teaching when I can make you so happy—that is, if you love me—and you do love me, don't you, Esther?"

"Oh, Mr. Atherton, don't ask me that! Don't make my duty any harder, nothing can make me change what I know is for the best. If we should never meet again——"

"Esther, we shall meet again. I can't say when or how, but I feel that some time in the future we shall be together. I can't urge you any more, but remember, I shall never give up hoping that some day you will return to the arms that will be waiting to receive you," and suddenly he clasped her to his heart and pressed the first lover's kiss on her sweet lips.

That was all, and as he turned away she entered the little home that was so lonely and which she was so soon to leave, the home where all her childhood and girlhood had been spent, and where the dear departed father had provided for all the wants and education of his only child.

John Atherton reached his home many hours later; a home so different from the other, where all was happiness and mirth, with girlish voices ringing through the spacious halls, and all the luxuries that heart could wish. But he saw in all this the cause of his loss—the barrier between them—and he knew that, though "years might come and years might go," no other woman could ever be his wife.

Seven years passed away, bringing many changes into the home of John Atherton. He saw his dear mother laid to rest, his sisters wedded and far away, and himself the master of the old manor and heir to the Atherton millions.

A cool day in the latter part of October a man sat idly and alone by the drawing-room window.

Suddenly he heard a light step in the hall and the swish of a woman's skirt at the door, and he arose and faced the intruder, but spoke not a word. A tall, glorious creature, with red-gold hair and violet eyes, came towards him, and holding out her slim white hand said softly: "Mr. Atherton, don't you know me?"

At that familiar voice the deep eyes were raised to her own, and in that one glance she knew it all—that, though he looked at her, he saw her not. He was blind.

"Esther," he cried, "have you come at last?" and he opened his arms and the bright head was lying on his breast.

It did not take long to tell of all that had passed since they parted; of his long illness and its terrible results and of her success in her field of labour.

But no longer was John Atherton's face sad, no longer did he shun his friends and acquaintances, for he had found his sight, and he saw not with his eyes but with the lips of the woman he loved—his wife

Cecil Winter.

Digitized by Google

Why She Wanted to Marry.

Guardian: "Why should a rich and happily-situated young woman like you want to get married?" She: "I'm afraid of burglars."

Taking No Risks.

"I am not fond of the stage, Violet," said Augustus; "but I hear your father on the stairs, and I think I'd better go before the foot lights."

Very Little to Choose Between Them.

He (angrily): "You take me for a fool, don't you?" She: "No, I take you for a possible husband, but (dreamily) there's not much difference."

She Liked Married Life.

Friend: "Well, Ethel, how do you like married life?" Ethel (enthusiastically): "It's simply delightful. We've been married a week and have had eight quarrels, and I got the best of it every time."

Glad She Only Squeezed Through.

Professor (to a young lady student): "Your marks are very few, and you have only just passed." Young Lady: "Oh, I am so glad." Professor (surprised): "Why?" Young Lady: "I do so love a tight squeeze."

The Footprints Would Show.

"I'm afraid papa doesn't like you a bit, George," said the girl to her *fiancé*. He: "Well, what of it? I've got too much sand to be afraid of the old man." She (apprehensively): "Yes, but sand is just the stuff to make footprints in, George."

Mrs. Brown's Experiences.

Mr. Green (who has been listening to Mr. Brown's account of a trip round the coast): "And how did you like it, Mrs. Brown?" Mrs. Brown: "Well, I didn't see much of the scenery, but the cabin was very comfortable, and the stewardess a most sympathetic woman."

How He Got Out of It.

Frisky Spinster: "How many dances are you going to give me to-night, Captain Waxham?" Captain Waxham: "Oh, I'm so sorry, but there's not enough men, you know, and I've just been told by Mrs. Masham to dance with the girls who—a—who are not likely to get partners." (Asks the girl just behind him for three waltzes and a polka.)

Would He Return?

The parting was sad, the tears were bitter. Hide, sun, thy kindly face, and gather, ye storms, your blackest inky scroll! Tenderly kiss the pale wan cheeks; brush back the damp, clinging auburn locks from the pale, high brow which a fond mother's lips have kissed since infancy. Speak the last and parting words, the words which make us linger on their echoes. Say good-bye for aye; press the cold hand and watch his slow retreating form, which fades away for ever. He is going to play in his first football match!

What a Shame!

He: "That fellow over there cheated me out of a cool million." She: "How could that be?" He: "Wouldn't let me marry his daughter."

The Kind of Payment.

"Do you pay for poetry?" asked the pretty girl. "Y—yes," replied the editor with some hesitation. "What do you pay?" "Compliments."

Wise Tourists.

He: "And where are you going next?" She (Cook's tourist): "Milan." He: "Why, you are in Milan now." She: "Oh, are we? Well, then, Geneva."

Hard Work Steering!

"What is that place down there?" asked she (on her first voyage). "Why, that is the steerage," answered he. "And does it take all these people to make the boat go straight?"

Neither Was Correct.

"Which do you think is correct?" asked the studious young woman, "'I would rather go home,' or 'I had rather go home?'" "Neither," replied Mr. I. Nevergo; "I'd rather stay here."

It Made all the Difference.

Clara: "Why, Tony, do you have that candle up there on the electric light?" Tony: "Well, the electric light is, they say, equal to sixteen candles, but you have no idea what a difference the seventeenth makes."

Where He Had the Advantage.

"Janette, I'm afraid you are a vain little wife. You gaze into your mirror so much." "You oughtn't to blame me for that. I haven't your advantage." "What's that?" "You can see my face without looking into a mirror."

Papa Wanted Practice.

She: "And you say you would die for me?" Mr. Boresome: "A thousand times." She: "Would you mind doing it just once—straight away? You know papa has been appointed coroner, and he hasn't had any practice yet."

Looked Like a Proposal Soon.

Mother: "When do you suppose that young man who calls upon you will make known his intentions, Laura?" Laura: "I think he will propose pretty soon. Last evening he was very anxious to know whether I could dress on twenty pounds a year."

To Help His Memory.

Who should know a man's weakness if not his lawful wife? "What in the name of Jupiter have you sewn up all the pockets of my overcoat for?" asked Mr. Wilson. "My dear," said Mrs. Wilson, "I have an important letter to my milliner that I want you to post."

Where the Difference Lay.

He was going to propose to her, and he prefaced his proposal with the following conundrum: "Why," he asked, "is your house more notable than the Agricultural Hall, Islington?" "Is it so?" "It is." "In what respect?" "The Agricultural Hall contained only the World's Fair, but this house contains the world's fairest." His proposal was favourably received.

Getting His Own Back.

She had yawned, looked at the clock, pretended she was sleepy, and in other ways had given him to understand that it was time to go. He felt nettled on observing these signs of her desire to get rid of him, and determined to have revenge. "Won't you sing something for me?" he asked. "Sing at this time of night? Why didn't you ask me before? Why do you want me to sing now?" "Well—er, the fact is, I want to be reconciled to leaving you."

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

The Hall-porter's Doubts.

WHEN one o'clock came and Edith had not arrived, the three men waiting in the hotel made no further effort to conceal their anxiety. The impetuous Fairholme was eager to commence an immediate search of Marseilles, but Brett steadily adhered to his resolution not to stir from their sitting-room until either Miss Talbot came back in person, or it became quite certain that she was detained by some other influence than her own unfettered volition.

"It may be," he argued, "that she will require some action on our part the moment we see her, and nothing could be more stupid than for the three of us to be wandering about this great city hopelessly inquiring for a missing English lady, whilst she was impatiently awaiting our return in the knowledge that valuable time was being lost to no purpose. What is there to fear? Miss Talbot is absolutely unknown to all the parties concerned in the affair. Even if she attracted their attention, which is improbable, it is almost inconceivable that they should connect her with the search being made for them. The only risk she runs is that of insult by some semi-intoxicated reveller, and, even in a rowdy city like this, it must, indeed, be a strange locality in which she would be denied some protection. Of course I will be much relieved when Miss Talbot returns, but up to the present I see no reason for undue anxiety on our part. Indeed, we ought to congratulate ourselves on the fact that she deems it necessary to leave us for such a long period. The probability is that she is making highly important discoveries which may tend materially to reduce the area of inquiry."

With this view Talbot could not help concurring, so Fairholme had to content himself by smoking many cigarettes and walking uneasily about the room.

Sit down he could not, whilst any casual ring at the hotel door found him leaning over the balustrade of the inner court and listening intently for the first words of the new arrival.

But the Englishmen were not the only persons in the hotel that night whose composure was disturbed. Their extraordinary behaviour caused uneasiness to the manager and those members of his staff who remained on duty.

The facts disclosed by the hall-porter were certainly remarkable. Only one member of the party had behaved in a normal manner. Sir Hubert Fitzjames, soon after his arrival, went quietly to bed, but the hall-porter's report as to the conduct of the others was passing strange.

One of them, to his surprise, had rung up the Prefecture of Police in Paris on the telephone. The others were standing at the hotel door, gazing quietly enough at the passers-by, when suddenly about midnight much excitement arose amongst them. They conversed eagerly in their own tongue for a few moments, and the lady had rushed off down the street by herself, whilst her two companions ran with equal precipitancy to join the third in the sitting-room they had engaged, and there they were still seated in moody expectancy, apparently watching for some dramatic event to happen.

It was time that all good people were in bed. But it was hopeless to approach such lunatics with questions, for they were English, and no decent Frenchman could possibly hope to understand their actions or motives.

It was satisfactory that they could speak French well; therefore the manager counselled the hall-porter to exhibit patience and prudence. Moreover, milords upstairs would be sure to recompense him for an enforced vigil by a liberal tip.

At last when even the Cannebière was empty, and when the latest café had closed its doors and the final tramcar had wearily jingled its way up the hill towards a distant suburb, the electric bell jangled a noisy summons to the front door. It produced the hall-porter and Fairholme with remarkable celerity.

The Frenchman cautiously opened the door and saw outside a muffled-up female who eagerly demanded admittance. He knew by her accent that she was not a Marseillaise, but the shawl that covered her head and shoulders showed that she belonged to the working classes.

"Whom do you wish to see at this hour?" he gruffly demanded.

"I live here," said Edith. "I came here to-night with my brother from Paris. Please let me in at once."

In her excitement and breathlessness, for she had hurried at top speed from the harbour, Edith forgot that the homely garment she adopted as a disguise effectually cloaked her from the recognition of the hall-porter as from all others.

Moreover her French accent was too good. It deceived the man even more effectually than did the shawl.

"Oh, really now," he said, "this is for laughter! A woman like you staying at the hotel! Be off, or I will call a gendarme."

In his amazement at her demand he had not heard Fairholme's rapid approach behind him. He was now swung unceremoniously out of the way and the earl jumped forward to seize Edith in his arms.

"My darling girl," he cried "where have you been? We almost gave you up for lost. Where is your hat? Where did you get that shawl?" And all the time he was hugging her so fiercely that it was absolutely impossible for her to say a single word. At length she disengaged herself.

"Don't be so ridiculous," she said, "but let me come in and close the door. The hall-porter will think we are cracked."

She summarised the hall-porter's sentiments most accurately. He explained the transaction to the manager with most eloquent pantomime, and the two marvelled greatly at the weird proceedings of their strange guests.

"Ah," said the manager at length, "now that mademoiselle has returned, perhaps they will go to bed."

Digitized by Google

At this instant Brett's voice was heard upon the stairs. He wanted the telephone again.

Edith had rapidly detailed her adventures to her astonished auditors, and Brett seemed to resolve upon some plan of action with the lightning rapidity peculiar to him at once.

Owing to the late hour he got through to Paris without much difficulty, and then he returned to the sitting-room, where Edith was rehearsing in greater detail all that had happened since she left them at the hotel door. Brett explained to his companions the motives of his second telephonic message.

"I am convinced," he said, "that Grosjean is in communication with his daughter. For this reason I do not wish the police to put in an appearance at the Café Noir until to-morrow night, or rather to-night, for we have long entered upon another day. I wished to have a reasonable time for quiet inquiry at Marseilles before mademoiselle could be apprised of our presence here. Miss Talbot's remarkable discovery has, however, wholly changed my plans. Mlle. Beaucaire and her lover have set off for some unknown destination, and the best chance we have of discovering it is to secure the immediate arrest of her father. Possibly, being taken by surprise at this hour of the morning, some document may be found upon him which will reveal his daughter's destination. It occurs to me that she half expected him to arrive by a late train. Again, when the fishing-smack puts into port, the girl will probably adopt some method of communicating with him, and that communication must come into our hands, not into his. So I have telephoned the police officials in Paris to raid the Cabaret Noir forthwith, and it is probable that they may report developments within the next two or three hours."

"Is there no chance of your discovering the whereabouts of that fishing smack?" said Fairholme.

"In what way?" demanded Brett.

"Well, this is a big port you know, and there are always tugs knocking about with steam up, on the off-chance of their services being required. Isn't it possible to charter a steam-boat and set off after the smack?"

"I do not think so," said Brett. "I imagine it would be wasted effort. By this time the *Belles Sœurs* is well out to sea. She can go in a dozen different directions. She may beat along the coast towards Toulon and the Riviera. She can make towards Corsica, Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, Spain, or the mouth of the Rhone. She will certainly not show any lights, and I personally feel that although there is, perhaps, a thousand to one chance we might fall in with her, it will be far better for our purpose to remain quietly here and await developments in Paris."

"Anyhow," remarked Fairholme, convinced that his proposal was useless, "it will be an easy matter for the authorities to ascertain the port that she arrives at."

Brett shook his head dubiously.

"I have my doubts on that point," he said. "The man who has thus far kept himself so easily ahead of all pursuers, and exhibited such a wealth of resource in his methods, may well be trusted to cover up his tracks effectually. There is even a possibility that the *Belles Sœurs* will never be seen again, and that her number will long remain vacant on the shipping register of Marseilles. However, we shall see."

"Then, Mr. Brett," put in Edith quietly, with a tired smile, "I suppose we may go to bed?"

"Most certainly, Miss Talbot. You have earned your rest more than any of us to-night," he answered.

He held out his hand to wish her good-night, but she demanded with some surprise, "What are you going to do? Surely you want some sleep?"

"I will remain here," he said. "I have bribed the hall-porter to keep awake, and I may be wanted on the telephone at any moment."

"Then I will stop with you," cried Fairholme.

"And I, too," chimed in Talbot.

"You will do nothing of the sort," he answered with pleasant insistence. "You will just be off, both of you, and get some hours of sound sleep. You may need all your

RENEWAL OF YOUTHFUL GRACE

BY THE

"RUSSELL" TREATMENT.

To those persons, especially, who are able to boast of "good looks," there can be nothing more vexatious than the sudden development of stoutness which too frequently surprises the man or woman approaching middle age. Diet themselves as they may, the tendency to "put on flesh" is still manifest, with, sometimes, a detrimental effect upon the general health. This is the experience of thousands who, in their earlier years, have possessed an elegant figure and unbounded energy, physical and mental. When this objectionable fat-formation persists there are many who, with a sigh of despair, put it down as "constitutional." Others fly to exhausting and debilitating drugs and "systems" which, when they effect any reduction at all, do it at the expense of strength and vitality. There is no cause to despair; there is no need for strength-sapping remedies. The well-known "Russell" treatment for the permanent cure of corpulency is founded on the principle that healthy, muscular tissue should be formed in place of the mass of useless adipose which it gradually eliminates from the system. Hence the welcome return to youthful grace and symmetry is always accompanied by a corresponding return to youthful vitality and good spirits—a rejuvenescence of both body and brain. The originator of this wonderfully efficacious treatment is the author of the standard work on the causes and the cure of stoutness, and we most sincerely recommend our stout readers to consult its pages, which teem with useful hints and information. To procure a copy of * "Corpulency and the Cure," they must send three penny stamps to the author, Mr. Cecil Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., when they will receive the book by return under private envelope. There can be no doubt about the unique efficacy of the "Russell" treatment. If there were, that doubt would be quickly removed by the thousands of grateful letters from the author's patients. Extracts from this interesting and voluminous correspondence are given in "Corpulency and the Cure," and nothing could be more convincing. Mr. Russell also prints the recipe of the liquid vegetable tonic mixture upon which he chiefly relies for the permanent cure of obesity. By this it will be seen that the ingredients are entirely vegetable, and free from the slightest suspicion of anything harmful or disagreeable. There is indeed nothing unpleasant about the "Russell" régime, which calls for no unreasonable dietary restrictions, no violent purgative drugs, and no sweating exercises. In conclusion, let us note that the reduction of fatty matter brought about by the "Russell" treatment varies from ½lb. to 2lb. a day, commencing within the twenty-four hours following the first steps in the cure. The reduction goes on steadily, and surely, and pleasantly until the proper dimensions are reached, when the treatment may cease. There is little fear of the recurrence of corpulency if the patient uses ordinary prudence. No person with a tendency to fatness should omit to send for Mr. Russell's admirable book.

* *A copy of "Corpulency and the Cure" will be sent under plain sealed envelope to all readers of "Short Stories" who will forward their address, with three penny stamps, to the author, F. CECIL RUSSELL, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. All Correspondence strictly confidential.*

Digitized by Google

energy to-morrow. Do not be afraid. I will arouse you if anything dramatic should happen."

Some Old Acquaintances.

Left to himself, Brett again interviewed the hall-porter and returned to the sitting-room, where he disposed himself for a nap on the sofa. Like all men who possess the faculty of concentrated thought, he also cultivated the power of dismissing a perplexing problem from his mind until it became necessary to consider it afresh in the light of further knowledge.

Within five minutes he was sound asleep.

At length he awoke with a start. He was stiff with cold, for the fire had gone out, and the tiny gas jet he had left burning was not sufficient to warm the room. He sprang to his feet and looked at his watch. It was half-past six.

"Surely," he cried, "there must have been a message from Paris long before this!"

He ran downstairs, encountering on his way some of the hotel servants, who even thus early had commenced work, for your industrious Frenchman is no laggard in the morning. Going to the hall-porter's office he found that functionary snoring peacefully. The poor fellow was evidently tired out, and twenty telephone bells might have jangled in his ears without waking him.

So, for the third time, Brett rang up the exchange to get in touch with Paris. As he had anticipated, he quickly learnt that the prefecture had endeavoured to get through to him about 4.30 a.m., but the operators were unable to obtain any answer.

"I can hardly blame the man," he said to himself, "for I was just as tired as he."

The intimation he received from the prefecture was startling enough.

In accordance with his instructions a number of detectives had raided the Cabaret Noir soon after three o'clock. They found the place in possession of a waiter and a couple of female servants. Grosjean had quitted the house the previous evening, and, most astounding fact of all, with him were three Turks.

Neither the waiter nor the domestics could give any information whatever concerning the hidden room. They knew of its existence, but none of them had ever seen it, and the place was generally regarded as a sort of cellar for the reception of lumber.

The police forced a padlock which guarded its trap-door, and found to their surprise that the place was much more spacious than they anticipated. It really contained two apartments, one of which was so firmly secured that it had hitherto resisted all their efforts to open it. The other was a sort of bed-sitting-room, and it had recently been occupied. From various indications they came to the conclusion that its latest tenants were Hussein ul Mulk and his confederates.

Judging from the fact that these gentry had quietly left the café in Grosjean's company about half-past seven the previous evening, they were not in confinement against their will. In fact, the police theory was that this secret chamber provided a safe retreat for any person who desired complete seclusion other than that provided by the authorities.

"It is assumed," said the officer who communicated this bewildering information to Brett, "that the locked room contains a quantity of stolen goods. The police remain in charge of the café, and when the necessary workmen have been obtained this morning the door will be forced. We will at once let you know the result of our further investigations."

"But what about Grosjean and the Turks? Surely Paris cannot again have swallowed them up?" inquired Brett.

"Every effort is being made to trace their whereabouts," was the reply, "but you must remember, monsieur, that they had many hours start of the police, and that this period of the day is the most difficult of the twenty-four hours in which to make successful inquiries. You may rest assured that the moment we receive even the slightest clue we will ring you up, provided, that is, you arrange for someone at your end to answer the telephone."

"Oh," said Brett with a laugh, "there is little fear of further delay in that respect. It will be daylight in another hour, and the servants are already busy about the place."

He rang off and then darted back to his sitting-room to consult a time-table, for the thought came to him like lightning that Grosjean and the Turks had quitted the café in order to reach Marseilles.

He could not yet explain this strange alliance. It was impossible to believe that the innkeeper would betray his daughter to serve the ends of a political party. No; there must be some other explanation which the future alone could reveal.

He well knew that the last thought likely to occur to the Paris police would be to suspect the missing men of any desire to reach the south coast. It was with an almost feverish anxiety that he scrutinised the pages of the Indicateur des Chemins de Fer, and he heaved a sigh of profound relief when he discovered that the first train Grosjean and the Turks could catch left Paris the previous evening at 8.40 p.m., and was not due at Marseilles until 8.59 that morning.

It was now close on seven o'clock, so he went to his bedroom, effected some much-needed changes in his personal appearance and then consumed an early breakfast of coffee and rolls.

At half-past eight he called a carriage and was driven to the railway station, where, punctual to the minute, the Paris train arrived.

Brett managed to secure a favourable point, whence he could observe the passengers without being seen, for on the platform were stacked hundreds of baskets of fruit and vegetables which had arrived by a local train.

There were not many passengers in the express, and among the first to alight were Grosjean and the three Turks—Hussein ul Mulk and the two others he had seen in the Rue Barbette.

It would be idle to deny that the barrister experienced a thrill of satisfaction at his own shrewdness, and he smiled as he realised the consternation of the Paris commissary when informed that he had so easily allowed the rogues to slip out of the net.

The travellers were evidently tired after a sleepless journey. Grosjean, being a fat man, had wobbled about a great deal during the night. He much needed the restorative effect of a comfortable bed; whilst the Turks, though younger and more active, also showed signs of fatigue, for this long journey had to them merely served as a sequel to many hours of detention in an ill-ventilated apartment.

So that they paid not the slightest heed to their whereabouts, save in so far as to eye with suspicion a harmless gendarme who happened to be on the platform.

The policeman of course, took no notice of them whatever. Grosjean was to him merely a typical Frenchman, whilst persons of dark complexion and Moorish appearance are everyday sights in the streets of Marseilles.

A diminutive railway porter loitered near Brett in the conceit that perhaps this well-dressed stranger might have felonious designs on the oranges and cabbages. His intense joy may therefore be pictured when the barrister beckoned to him, placed a gold piece in his hand, and said—

"You see those Turks there. Go after them and find out where they are going to. They are sure to take a carriage as their luggage appears to be somewhat heavy."

Digitized by Google

The man darted off, secure in the belief that no one who could afford to give away twenty francs for such trivial information would be likely to pocket a cauliflower. In half a minute he returned.

"They have all driven off together, monsieur," he announced eagerly, "and the French gentleman first of all inquired of the driver how much he would charge to take them to the Jolies Femmes. Two francs was the fare, and this was agreeable, so they have gone there."

"I hope, in this instance," said Brett gravely, "that the Jolies Femmes is the name of a hotel."

"But certainly," replied the porter, elevating his eyebrows; "what else could it be?"

He meditated upon this question for five minutes after Brett's departure, and then an idea struck him.

"Ah," he cried, slapping his thigh with a grin, "he is a droll dog, that Englishman."

Brett, secure in the knowledge that his quarry had been located, drove back to his hostelry. He found Edith, Fairholme, and Talbot just sitting down to breakfast. He joined them, and had barely communicated his startling intelligence when Sir Hubert Fitzjames put in an appearance.

"Dear me," said the genial old soldier, smiling pleasantly at the assembled party. "I see you are all nearly as lazy as I have been myself. I hope you slept well and enjoyed a quiet night."

The burst of merriment which greeted this remark, not only amazed the worthy baronet, but startled the other guests in the dining-room.

"That is a strange thing," whispered a Frenchman to his wife. "I thought the English never laughed!"

The Yacht *Blue-Bell*.

After breakfast the party adjourned to their sitting-room, and there Brett detailed his immediate plan of action.

"The first point to determine is an important one," he said. "Which of you three—Sir Hubert Fitzjames, Talbot, or Fairholme—looks most like a Frenchman?"

The trio at once began to scrutinise each other carefully, to Edith's intense amusement.

"I am afraid, uncle," she laughed, "we must rule you out at once. You have 'British Major-General, late Indian Army' stamped so plainly upon you that here in Marseilles, a port accustomed to the weekly transit of P. and O. passengers, the smallest child could not fail to identify you. And as for you, Bobby! Good gracious! You are painfully Anglo-Saxon. I am afraid, Jack, that we must decide against you. That is to say, I suppose it hurts your vanity to be taken for a Frenchman, but you must not forget that Mademoiselle Beaucaire thought you were good-looking, and, I suppose she adopts Parisian standards."

Jack was amused by his sister's raillery.

"It is gratifying to find," he said, "that there are some handsome Frenchmen. But may I ask, Brett, why you wish one of us to haul down the British flag?"

"Because it is necessary that someone should keep a close eye upon Grosjean and the Turks. As a matter of fact, Miss Talbot is doubly right. Sir Hubert Fitzjames might possibly be made up to represent a retired French officer, but it is essential that he should speak French well."

"Then," cried Sir Hubert decisively, "I am out of court, because my French is weak, and I always want to go off into Hindustani whenever I open my mouth. Why, even this morning, when I rang for my hot water, I said to the waiter, '*Gurrum pani lao.*' I am sure he thought I was swearing at him."

"Very well," concurred the barrister, "it comes back to you, Talbot, and I regret to inform you that for the next few hours you must be content with the inferior cooking and accommodation of the Jolies Femmes Hotel. If you will come out with me now I will get you rigged up in a cheap French suit. That, and a supply of bad cigarettes, will provide a sufficient disguise for your purpose. You must pack a few belongings in a green tin box and betake yourself

13 Weeks in Hospital.

APPARENTLY NO HOPE OF A CURE

YET BILE BEANS MADE HER WELL.

GALLSTONES, LIVER DISORDER, AND BILIOUSNESS ROUTED.

After suffering for many years trying scores of prescriptions, passing through the hands of a succession of doctors, and being an in-patient at St. George's Hospital, London, for thirteen weeks, all without the slightest apparent benefit, Mrs. Mary Owen, of Siren House, Towyn, (Merionethshire), has been cured by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans. Here is her story:

"For many years I endured agony from biliousness, indigestion, and jaundice. My liver was completely out of order, and my strength failed at last completely.

"My doctor then told me that I had gallstones, and that a surgical operation was necessary if ever I wished to get better. Well, I went to St. George's Hospital, London, for the operation, but they put me under special treatment instead of operating, and I had to stay there for thirteen weeks. To my chagrin I got no benefit, and came from the hospital as bad as I went. All this

time the pains in my chest, especially after taking any food, were terrible. The jaundice had increased until I was an abominable colour, and I was in ceaseless agony all over my right side with pain from the liver. The doctor who then attended me gave me injections of morphia, as the only means of giving me relief from pain. In March last a gentleman whom I had known for some years told me that Chas. Forde's Bile Beans had done him a lot of good. His enthusiasm led me to try them.

"The first few doses made me feel a little better, and I determined to persevere. The improvement thus begun continued from day to day. I had not long been taking Bile Beans before I began to have a good appetite. I grew stronger and found the pains of indigestion less frequent, until they ceased altogether.

"The liver complaint and jaundice also disappeared from my system and the nasty bilious feelings left me. In the end Bile Beans cured me completely, and I have since enjoyed the best of health."

All sufferers from liver troubles, anæmia, rheumatism, debility, headache, constipation, piles, and female ailments who try Bile Beans will find in them a cure. You'll get them from any chemist at 1/1½ or 2/9 per box, or post free by sending prices to the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C.

to the Jolies Femmes. Do not make any inquiries about Grosjean. Simply keep an eye on him."

"But what about the Turks?" said Talbot. "Perhaps two of these scoundrels may be the identical pair who accompanied Dubois to Albert Gate. It is possible that they may recognise me at once."

"No," said Brett decisively. "This is a different gang. The two men who committed the murders never came to Paris. Dubois would not hear of it, I am certain. If you act with discretion, I am sure they will never suspect you."

"Can't you find me a job?" demanded Fairholme.

"Yes, a most pleasant one. It will be your duty to accompany Miss Talbot and Sir Hubert, and show them the sights of Marseilles. I will meet you here at luncheon, but we probably cannot see Mr. Talbot again until late to-night, when he will have an opportunity to come here quietly and detail the results of his observations. Of course," he added, addressing the young man directly, "if anything important happens during the day you know where to find me, either personally or by messenger."

It was natural that Edith's first steps with her lover and uncle would tend towards the scene of her overnight adventure.

But Miss Talbot was a clear-headed girl and took no risks. She knew well that in a chance encounter the sharp eyes of Marie and Eugenie might pick her out unless she was to some extent shrouded from observation.

So she donned a large Paris hat and a smart costume, which, with the addition of a thick veil, rendered her very unlike the girl who twelve hours earlier was pursuing a recalcitrant lover.

Secure in the changed appearance effected by these garments, and especially in the escort of two such English-looking persons as Lord Fairholme and Sir Hubert Fitzjames, she walked with them down the Cannebière and on the quay. She showed them the street up which she pursued Mlle. Beaucaire, and the point on the wharf whence the fishing smack took her departure into the unknown.

Then they strolled back around the harbour, still pursuing the track of Edith's midnight wanderings, when Fairholme suddenly whistled with amazement.

"By jove, look there!" he cried. "That's a piece of luck."

He pointed to the upper part of the basin, in which a number of smart yachts were anchored side by side. Marseilles is a natural point of departure for Mediterranean tours, and many yacht-owners send their vessels there to be coaled and stored for projected trips.

"What is it?" queried Edith, when she could see nothing in the locality indicated save the vessels and the small expanse of water dancing in the rays of a bright sun.

"The very best thing that could have happened. There is Daubeney's yacht, the *Blue-Bell*."

"Yes. So I see. It would be charming if we had time to go for a run along the Riviera, but I am afraid, whilst Mr. Brett controls our energies, amusement of that sort will be out of our reach."

"Not a bit of it. You do not see my point, Edith. Daubeney is a first-rate chap and a thorough sportsman. Suppose it becomes necessary for us to follow up Dubois and his fishing-smack, and we let Daubeney into the know. The *Blue-Bell* would pursue the *Belles Sœurs* to China. He would ask no better fun. I tell you that Brett will be delighted when he hears of it."

"Yes, dear, but we do not even know that Mr. Daubeney is in Marseilles."

"Let us go and see. It doesn't matter a pin anyhow, because a telegram from me to him would place the yacht at our disposal, and he would join us by express at the first possible stopping place. You do not know what a good chap Daubeney is."

"No," said Edith shortly. "He is evidently a most useful acquaintance."

It is a most curious fact that young ladies in the engaged stage regard their *fiancée's* male friends with extreme suspicion and the more enthusiastic the man, the more suspicious the woman.

Fairholme, sublimely unconscious of this feminine weakness, continued to dilate upon the superlative excellencies of Daubeney until they reached the yacht itself.

A smartly attired sailor was pretending to find some work in carefully uncoiling a rope which did not satisfy his critical eye. Before Fairholme could hail the man, a rotund form, incased in many yards of blue serge, surmounted by a jolly-looking face on top of which was perched an absurdly small yachting cap, emerged from the companion.

"Why, there he is," shouted the earl. "Halloa, Daubeney! Yoicks! Tally-ho!"

The person addressed in this startling manner stopped as though he had been shot. He gazed up at the sky and then gravely surveyed the gilded statue that surmounts the picturesque church of Notre Dame de la Garde.

"Here I am, you idiot," continued Fairholme. "I am not in a balloon. I am on the quay. Come here quick. I want to introduce you to Edith and Sir Hubert."

Luckily Miss Talbot's dark doubts had vanished after one keen glance at Daubeney. He was eminently a safe friend for her future husband. Such a fat and hail-fellow-well-met individual could not possibly harbour guile. So she passed over without reference the extent of Daubeney's acquaintance concerning herself, implied by the use of her Christian name. Indeed, was there not a compliment in Fairholme's unconscious outspokenness? If he only discussed her charms with Daubeney then Daubeney was a man to be cultivated.

The meeting on the quay was hearty in the extreme, and the Honourable James Daubeney further ingratiated himself by saying: "Even if Lord Fairholme had not told me who you were, Miss Talbot, I should have known you at once."

"That would be very clever of you," purred Edith.

"Oh, no, there is nothing remarkable in the fact, I assure you. He always sat in his chambers so that he could look at your photograph, and as, in addition to that speaking likeness, I know the colour of your hair, your eyes, I could not be mistaken."

Miss Talbot thought Mr. Daubeney rather curious. But still he was very nice, and unquestionably the services of the *Blue-Bell* might be more than useful.

So she was graciousness personified in her manner, and promptly determined to invite him to luncheon, thinking that the chance direction of their conversation with Mr. Brett might lead towards the use of the yacht being hinted at.

But she counted without Fairholme. The latter slapped his heavy friend on the back.

"Look here, old chap, are you fixed up for a cruise? Plenty of coal, champagne, and all that sort of thing?"

"Loaded to the gunwales."

"That's all right, because we may want the *Blue-Bell* for a month or so."

"There she is," said Daubeney, "fit to go anywhere and do anything."

(*Continued on page 254.*)

Digitized by Google

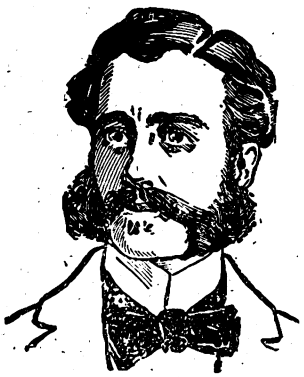
SICK MADE WELL WEAK MADE STRONG.

Marvellous Elixir of Life Discovered by Famous Doctor-Scientist That Cures Every Known Ailment.

Wonderful Cures are Effected That Seem Like Miracles Performed—The Secret of Long Life of Olden Times Revived.

The Remedy is Free to All Who Send Name and Address.

After years of patient study, and delving into the dusty record of the past, as well as following modern experiments in the realms of medical science, Dr. James W. Kidd, 522, First National Bank Building, Fort Wayne, Ind., U.S.A., makes the startling announcement that he has surely discovered the elixir of life. That he is

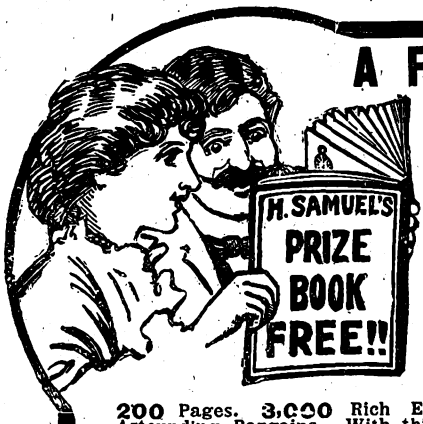


DR. JAMES WILLIAM KIDD.

able with the aid of a mysterious compound, known only to himself, produced as a result of the years he has spent in searching for this precious life-giving boon, to cure any and every disease that is known to the human body. There is no doubt of the doctor's earnestness in making his claim and the remarkable cures that he is daily effecting seem to bear him out very strongly. His theory which he advances is one of reason and based on sound experience in a medical practice of many years. It costs nothing to try his remarkable "Elixir of Life," as he calls it, for he sends it free, to anyone who is a sufferer, in sufficient quantities to convince of its ability to cure. so there is absolutely no risk to run. Some of the cures cited are very remarkable, and but for reliable witnesses would hardly be credited. The lame have thrown away crutches and walked about after two or three trials of the remedy. The sick, given up by home doctors, have been restored to their families and friends in perfect health. Rheumatism, neuralgia, stomach, heart, liver, kidney, blood and skin diseases and bladder troubles disappear as by magic. Headaches, backaches, nervousness, fevers, consumption, coughs, colds, asthma, catarrh, bronchitis, and all affections of the throat, lungs or any vital organs are easily overcome in a space of time that is simply marvellous.

Partial paralysis, locomotor ataxia, dropsy, gout, scrofula, are quickly and permanently removed. It purifies the entire system, blood and tissues, restores normal nerve power, circulation and a state of perfect health is produced at once. To the doctor all systems are alike and equally affected by this great "Elixir of Life." Send for the remedy to-day. It is free to every sufferer. State what you want to be cured of and the sure remedy for it will be sent you free by return mail.

Remember a letter to America from the British Isles requires 2½d. postage. Write your name very plainly, and be sure to give your full address, so there can be no mistake in delivery.



A FORTUNE FOR A POSTCARD

A line written to-day will bring you H. SAMUEL'S BIG FREE GUIDE.

200 Pages. 3,000 Rich Engravings of Astounding Bargains. With this marvellous volume in your hand you are enabled to do your shopping at your own fireside, from the largest and finest selection in the Kingdom.

NO MORE MIDDLE PROFITS!
GOODS FROM FACTORY TO WEARER!

Ladies' Gold Watches, 20/-; Gent's Silver Watches, 8/6; Gold Gem Rings, 3/6; Alarm Clocks, 1/6; Cutlery, Plate, &c., at

LOWEST FACTORY PRICES! ONE-HALF SAVED!
VALUABLE PRIZES TO ALL BUYERS!
SEND A POST-CARD NOW!

H. SAMUEL, Dept. 29, MARKET STREET, MANCHESTER

BEECHAM'S PILLS

are

THE REMEDY FOR THE PEOPLE.

RECOMMENDED BY FRIENDS TO FRIENDS.

NOT PUSHED BY DOUBTFUL METHODS.

DESERVING OF THEIR POPULARITY.

NOW ENJOYING A GREATER SUCCESS THAN EVER.

STILL WORTH A GUINEA A BOX.

Digitized by Google

The Chateau d'If.

MISS TALBOT had never heard of such extraordinary conduct in her life. She wondered how two women would have conducted the negotiations. The question was too abstruse, so she gave it up and contented herself instead with accepting Daubeney's hearty request that they should inspect the yacht.

The *Blue-Bell* was an extremely smart little ship of 250 tons register, and an ordinary speed of twelve knots. Incidentally Miss Talbot discovered that the owner made the vessel his home. He was never happy away from her, and the *Blue-Bell* was known to every yachtsman from the Hebrides to the Golden Horn.

To eke out her coal supply she was fitted with sails, and Daubeney assured his fair visitor that the *Blue-Bell* could ride out a gale as comfortably and safely as any craft afloat. Altogether Miss Talbot congratulated herself on Fairholme's discovery, and she could not help hoping that their strange errand to Marseilles might eventuate in a Mediterranean chase.

When the tour of inspection had ended Daubeney suggested an excursion.

"I understand you have never been to Marseilles before, Miss Talbot. In that case what do you say if we run over and see the Château d'If—the place that Dumas made famous, you know."

"Is it far?" said Edith.

"Oh, not very, about a mile across the harbour. Monte Cristo swam the distance, you know, after his escape."

"Shall we go in the yacht?"

Daubeney bubbled with laughter.

"Well, not exactly, Miss Talbot. You cannot swing a ship of this size about so easily as all that, you know. I have another craft alongside that will suit our purpose."

He whistled to a tiny steam launch which Edith had not noticed before, and without further ado the party seated themselves. They sped rapidly down the harbour and out through the narrow entrance between the lighthouses.

No sooner did Edith behold the splendid panorama of rocky coast that incloses the great outer bay, with its blue waters studded with delightful little islands, through which the fishing boats and small steam tugs threaded their way towards different points on the coast, than she clapped her hands with schoolgirl delight.

"I had no idea," she cried, "that Marseilles was half so beautiful. Why, it is a wonderful place. I have always read about it being hot and dirty. It certainly is untidy, but to wash its citizens would take away all the romance, whilst as for the climate being hot, just imagine a day like this in the middle of November. Can you possibly think what the sensation would be if you were plunged into a London fog at this moment, Mr. Daubeney?"

"I have hardly ever seen one," he replied. "I take mighty good care to be far removed from my beloved country during the fog season."

She sighed. "What it is to be a man and to be able to roam about the world unfettered."

"It all depends upon the meaning of the word 'unfettered,'" said Daubeney. "Have you got any sisters, Miss Talbot?"

They all laughed at this inconsequent question. It was impossible to resist Daubeney's buoyant good nature, and Edith felt certain that in half an hour she would be calling him "Jimmy."

They sped across the waves towards the Château d'If, and finally drew up alongside its small landing-stage.

The island supplies an all-the-year-round resort for the townspeople. Every fine day a steamer runs at intervals to and fro between it and the inner harbour. The good folk of the south of France, whether Marseillais or visitors to the city, find a constant delight in taking the short marine excursion and wandering for half an hour about the rocky pathways and steep turrets of the famous prison, whilst they listen with silent awe to the words of the guide when he tells them how the Abbé died, and shows them the hole between the two walls excavated by Monte Cristo. So the English visitors found themselves in the midst of a number of laughing, light-hearted French sightseers.

They wandered round with the crowd until Edith looked at her watch.

"It is past twelve o'clock," she said. "Should we not be going back to the hotel to lunch? You will come with us, of course, Mr. Daubeney?"

"I am famished with expectation," answered the irrepressible Jimmy, "but before we go away you certainly ought to climb up on the leads and get the panoramic view of the harbour which the tower affords on a clear day. It is a sight to be remembered, I promise you."

So they made the ascent, Daubeney leading in his capacity of guide, though he was quite breathless when they reached the top of the steps.

Edith followed him, and then Fairholme.

"Good gracious," said the latter.

"What's the matter?" cried Edith.

Fairholme dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Look," he said, indicating with his eyes a distant corner.

Edith followed his glance, and instantly comprehended the cause of his startled exclamation. For in that quiet spot stood four men, whom she could not fail to recognise as Grosjean, Hussein ul Mulk, and the other two Turks, although, of course, she had never previously set eyes upon them.

She instantly understood they must continue to talk and act in the guise of ordinary tourists. In this respect the presence of Daubeney was invaluable, for he naturally could not guess the community of interest between his aristocratic friends and the motley group in the corner.

As soon as he regained his breath, Edith and he commenced a lively conversation, whilst Fairholme whispered a word of warning to Sir Hubert, who had now joined them.

It was well that the earl took this precaution, for in the course of their casual stroll round the tower they passed close to the Frenchman and his companions.

A small staircase led up to the interior of the turret, which, as already described, formed part of the angle that sheltered the group of men.

When Edith and the others strolled past the door they glanced inside and caught sight of a shabby-looking Frenchman, who had paused half way up the stairs, and was leaning eagerly forward through an embrasured loop-hole, obviously intent upon hearing every word uttered by the quartette beneath.

Fortunately Edith, who was nearest to the door, was completely shrouded from Grosjean's observation. Else that astute gentleman might have noticed her involuntary start of surprise. For the shabby-looking Frenchman was her brother.

The instant Talbot heard footsteps he naturally turned to see who it was that approached, and he also was amazed to find Edith's wondering eyes fixed upon him at a distance of only a few feet.

She nodded her head and placed a warning finger upon her lips. As it happened, Daubeney caught her in the act, and for the next few moments that gentleman's emotions were intense, not to say painful.

"Who would have thought it?" he muttered to himself. "A girl like her making secret signs to a dirty scoundrel of that sort. The beggar was good looking, of course; but what—well, I give it up. Poor old Fairholme! What funny creatures women are, to be sure!"

How much further this soliloquy might have proceeded he knew not, for Edith sharply interrupted his thoughts.

"You seem to be preoccupied, Mr Daubeney. What has happened?" she inquired.

"I—I—really don't know."

His distress was so unmistakable that her quick woman's wit divined the true cause.

"You saw me make signs to that Frenchman, didn't you?"

"Well—er—I—er——"

"Oh, yes, I understand. Of course you were surprised. But don't jump now, or say anything; he is my brother!"

"It is a mystery," she whispered, "a deep secret. We will tell you all about it at lunch."

(Another long instalment next week.)

Digitized by Google

SECRETS OF PERSONAL MAGNETISM LAID BARE.

Thousands of Dollars' Worth of Books on Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism to be Given Away by a Noted Philadelphia College.

Hon. James R. Kenney, of Pennsylvania, Chairman of the Committee on Distribution.

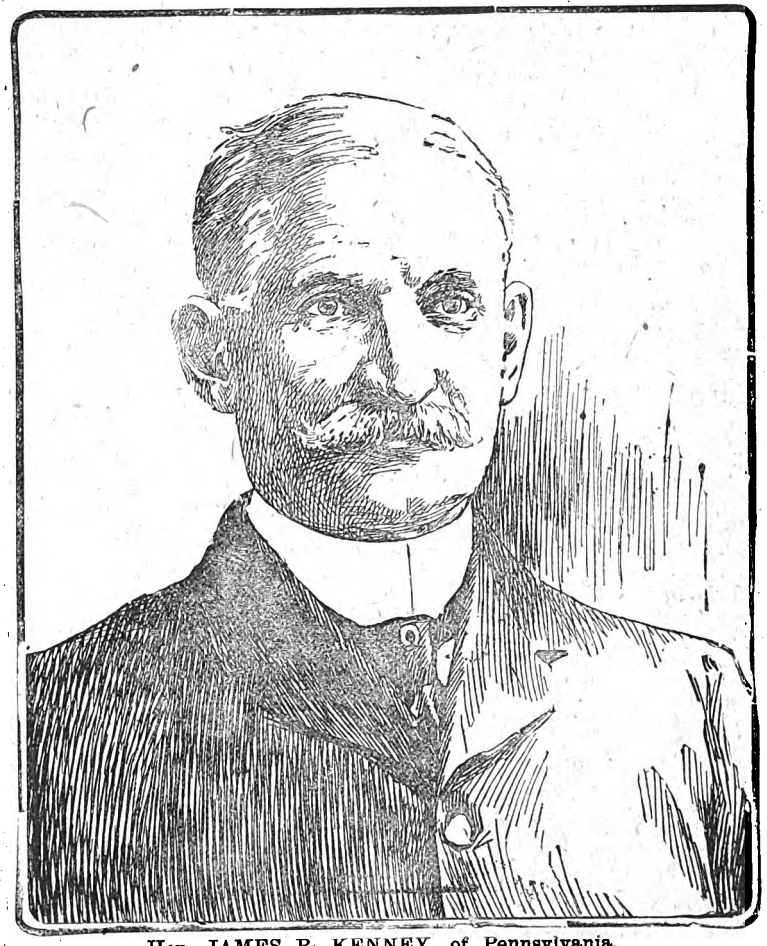
Every One May Now Learn All the Secrets of these Mysterious Sciences at His Own Home.

"I can honestly and conscientiously say from my long experience in dealing with people and from my personal acquaintance with many of the most prominent men in this country, that there is no other thing which will help one so much in life as a thorough knowledge of Personal Magnetism," says Hon. James R. Kenney, "and for this reason I accepted the chairmanship of the committee on distribution of works on Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism for the American College of Sciences of Philadelphia.

"The real secrets of Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism have always been jealously guarded by the few who knew them and kept from the masses of the people. One who understands these sciences has an inestimable advantage in the race of life. I want to put this information in the hands of every ambitious man and woman in this country.

"The American College of Sciences has just appropriated $10,000 to be used in printing books for free distribution, and if this does not supply the demand it will appropriate $10,000 more. The books are absolutely free. They do not cost you a single cent.

"Tell me what kind of work you are engaged in; or, if sick, the disease from which you suffer, and I will send you the book which will put you on the road to success, health and strength. It matters not how successful you are. I will guarantee to help you achieve greater success. The work which I will send you is from the pens of the most eminent specialists of the country; it is richly illustrated with the finest half-tone engravings, and is intensely interesting from start to finish. It has been the means of changing the whole current in the lives of hundreds of persons who were ready to give up in despair. You can learn at home in a few days and use personal magnetism in your daily work without the knowledge of your most intimate friends. You can use it to influence others: you can use it to keep others from influencing you. You can positively cure the most obstinate chronic diseases and banish all bad habits.



Hon. JAMES R. KENNEY, of Pennsylvania.
Ex-Mayor of Reading, Pa., noted orator, author, and Scientist.

"If you have not met with business or social success which you desire; if you are not successful in winning and holding friends; if you are sick, and tired of taking drugs that do not cure; if you care to develop your memory or any other mental faculty to a higher state of perfection; or, lastly, if you wish to possess that subtle, invisible, intangible power that sways and rules the minds of men, you should address penny post to me to-day and let me send you a free copy of our new book. It will prove a revelation to you." Address, JAMES R. KENNEY, WL 35, Commercial Union Building, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

An Anonymous Admirer.

CADFOR has received an anonymous letter from a young lady who attends the same chapel. The letter states that the writer's friend has taken a great fancy to CADFOR, and wants to be introduced to him. It is suggested that he should attend certain debates held at the chapel after service. CADFOR asks me how he is to find out the identity of the writer, seeing that there are about thirty or forty people attending there.

* * * * *

Well, CADFOR, I do not suppose there are thirty or forty persons of the kind that would write you this letter. If you are sufficiently flattered by the fact that a certain young lady has taken a fancy to you, and would like to avail yourself of the opportunity of meeting her, I should attend the meeting, and carefully scrutinise the audience for two young ladies together who appear to be looking in your direction.

* * * * *

Unless you are exceptionally attractive in appearance, I should not imagine more than a certain number of them will be thus honouring you, and you should not have much difficulty in locating the anonymous writer. I have read the letter in question, and personally like the tone of it very much. She must be very much smitten with you indeed, seeing that she has had to be so very forward in making your acquaintance. I hope the attraction will prove mutual.

Girls in the Colonies.

I AM always pleased to hear from Colonial readers, and no small portion of my correspondence comes from the outlying parts of the Empire, particularly South Africa. Referring to my warning some time ago to girls who seek to go to Africa on the off chance of finding husbands, A. H. writes me from Cape Colony:

* * * * *

"It is a foolish idea. I have seen plenty of reasons why it is dangerous for unprotected females to travel in this country. You will do immense good by impressing on your readers the necessity of having a good situation before leaving for South Africa. Of course, one can find as good and honest men as you see at home out here, and there are many of them. We should be glad of more British lasses out here to keep us company. But it would be disastrous of them to come here just on the chance of getting a matrimonial prize."

* * * * *

Thanks, A. H., for your confirmation of my advice. By all means girls desirous of emigrating should see that they either have actual employment or good introductions before going to the Colonies. When they have, then there is every reason why they should go out to fill the places that must be open to British girls there, as everywhere else, in the hearts and homes of their fellow countrymen.

How Often Should They Meet?

"OUGHT a man to get tired of a girl through seeing her twice a week?" asks HELEN. Well, what a half-hearted lover he must be if he does! The proper lover ought not to be tired of a girl at any time, whether waking or dreaming. If twice a week is too much for his devotion, I should recommend a girl to excuse him altogether.

* * * * *

But I do not wish to lay down the rule that a man should give up his whole time to his sweetheart. That would be bad for both of them, as the man in particular, if he is worthy of the name, should have some other interests in life besides his sweetheart, or he could never make the necessary headway in the world. Twice a week is quite a good average, however, and if a man thinks it is too often, he is no true lover.

An Indian Suitor.

VIOLET (Oldham) has a complication to unfold to me. Some time ago she encountered a young Indian native, who paid her a great deal of attention. After a year or so, he met her again and seeks to renew the acquaintance. He has asked her to meet him in the evening. Do I advise her to accept the invitation?

* * * * *

You must know whether or not you liked the man when you first met him. If so, then there is no particular reason why an Indian should not make as faithful and good a suitor as a fellow-countryman. But, as you know, they are a race not at all above enjoying flirtation—in fact, experience proves them to be adepts at the pastime. If you have no feeling whatever for him of a tender nature I should advise you not to agree to meeting him in the way he suggests. Wait until he makes his intentions clearer.

The Non-Lover Again.

So, UNRECIPROCATIVE (why use such a long name?), you are twenty-six, and have never yet had any feelings towards the opposite sex (feminine) save those of a platonic nature. Do I think it unnatural and unusual?

* * * * *

No, not at all. We cannot all be amorous, and it is quite as well that a select few keep their heads cool, and do not rush into complications. Evidently you have not as yet met the right sort of woman, perhaps because you have been too little in their company.

* * * * *

I advise you to cease worrying about your emotions at all, making the best you can ont of the platonic relations you speak of. After all, those friendships are often the most lasting, and you are to be congratulated on being able to enjoy them. If you are constructed as are most human beings, you will in course of time meet the one best suited to you, but do not attempt to hurry the work of "the destiny which shapes our ends."

An Affair of Names.

R. H. is in a "pickle." He knows a girl, and has been calling her by her Christian name. He then met her sister, whom he supposed to be the elder of the two, and addressed her as "Miss Brown," going so far as to send Christmas cards so addressed. Now he has discovered that his more intimate friend is the elder. How is he to compromise matters now when meeting the two?

* * * * *

I think you had better ask the other girl's permission to call her by her Christian name, prefixing "Miss." There is no need for you to call your original friend "Miss Brown" when you have once progressed so far as to use her Christian name. That would be reaction, a thing quite undesirable in affairs of the heart.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ZOX for Neuralgia at Night.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

FREE TO YOU

To advertise S.L.S Records, we are giving away our noted Phonographs for a limited time. Write, giving full address and nearest railway station; enclose stamp.

Symonds' London Stores, 128, City Road, London.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-: Co onies, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas AND 15 Guineas } Or from a Guinea per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.

TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.

1 & 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester.

ESTABLISHED

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½% repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director*

GIVEN AWAY

With this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 475)

A PAPER PATTERN of this

TUNIC

For a little boy (2—4).

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

TEST BOXES FREE TO ALL.

Any sufferer sending name and address to JOHN A. SMITH, 1007 Montague House, Stonecutter St., London, E.C., will be sent a Test Box of his marvellous Cure, GLORIA TONIC, for all Uric Acid Ailments, including Gout, Sciatica, and **RHEUMATISM.** *300 Recent Cures.*

DON'T COUGH *for* KEATING'S LOZENGES EASILY CURE THE WORST COUGH.

One gives relief. An increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 13½d. tins everywhere.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."*

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is simple and harmless.

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints, etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

"ASK FOR"

G.P. Government Tea

Eighteenpence Everywhere.

RICH, RIPE, REFRESHING.

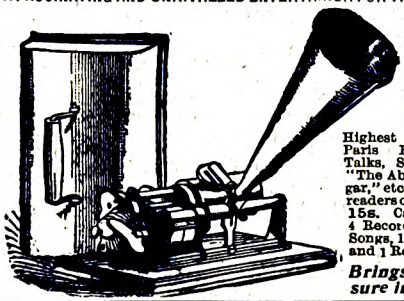
You May Know It by Its Red Tape and Seal.

WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE TO G.P. GOVERNMENT TEA CO., 16 AMERICA SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.

A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

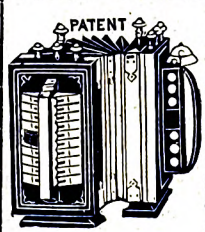


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. **No Home should be without one.** *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, " 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, " 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, " 16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount

Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1902-3, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.

Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

MACKINTOSH'S

Is DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!

PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.

A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

BUY FROM MAXEY'S AND SAVE MONEY.

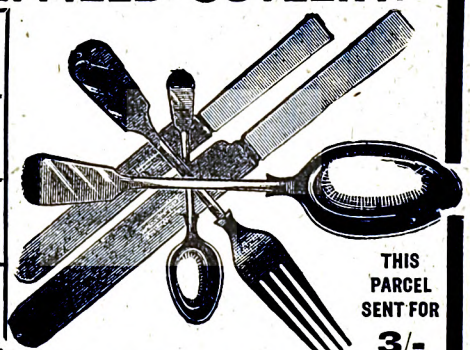
SHEFFIELD CUTLERY.

50 Articles.

Price 25s.

Deposit 3s.

9d. Weekly.



THIS PARCEL SENT FOR 3/-

6 Table Knives, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Teaspoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Jam Spoon, 6 Dessert Knives, 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 1 pair Sugar Tongs.

All you have to do is to send 3s. Deposit. We then forward the Cutlery at once carriage paid. The price only 25/-, and you pay 1/6 fortnightly, or 3/- monthly until paid for. If you wish to pay cash the price is 21/-, if paid in seven days' *Write for Cutlery, Jewellery, & Tropery Catalogue Illustrated.* AGENTS WANTED.

MAXEY & CO., Meadow St., Sheffield.

BRITANNIA CLEANS HER HELMET WITH

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

AND EVERY BRITISH HOUSEWIFE SHOULD POLISH ALL METALS WITH IT, TOO.

Most foreign polishes set up acid, are *sticky* in use and require much labour in cleaning. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is entirely made in England, and by using it you support British Trade.

Manufacturers: THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co. Ltd., LIVERPOOL.

Digitized by Google

Short Stories.

No. 739.] Week ending February 28, 1903. [Price One Penny.

From his hiding place behind the bushes he saw her throw a packet into the lake, causing the water to ripple. What could that packet contain?

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "Woman's Way Wins." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 BROWNIE is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3½ by 2½ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Eversot time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches*: 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%
repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive Free on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU—
NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at 2d. each, making 4/- altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Timekeeper or other Present of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of £2 10s. per week. Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE
Delamere Crescent, London, W.

Sulpholine Lotion.

For Clearing the Skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

"Don't Buy a Pig in a Poke."

On J. G. GRAVES' SYSTEM you are absolutely certain of what you are buying before you pay for it.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' System

You only send 5/- to start with . . .

The 'PERFECTA' - £2 10s. Od.

Lady's 18-Carat Gold Watch.

is then forwarded to you. You examine and test it, and, if satisfied, complete the purchase in nine more monthly payments of 5s.; or, *Handsome Bonus Present* for full Cash Payment. If you have the slightest cause for dissatisfaction, return the watch, and your deposit will be refunded at once.

The Largest Watch-Sales Firm in the World.

Specification. Decorated Gold or Opal Dial, Keyless or Keywinding, Jewelled Movement, Handsomely Engraved Gold Cases. A Highly Finished and Reliable Timekeeper.

Five Years Warranty.

50/-

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., post free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms and full particulars.

No Risk.

Good Commission. . .

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR **HEADACHE** AND **Neuralgia.**

Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is compos d of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

The Editor of the "Family Doctor," the People's Medical Paper, IN ONE OF HIS COMMENTS, SAYS:

"After a careful examination of Kaputine, and learning its component parts, we should certainly recommend it as a Safe and Reliable Remedy for Headache."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-, of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from

KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield for 12 stamps.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 739.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending February 28th, 1903.

WOMAN'S WIT WINS.

The Story of the Righting of a Wrong.

Containing the Incident Shown on the Cover.

"Ah! I want you, Arnold," said the chief, a man with iron grey hair and military moustache, addressing the younger man, who had just entered the room in obedience to a summons. "I've got something special on for you!"

"Very good, sir!" responded Richard Arnold. His voice was brisk enough, but there was a somewhat jaded appearance about the intelligent face, and the black eyes were not so keen-looking as usual.

The chief of the detective department fixed his glittering eyes on the newcomer and scrutinised him sharply before proceeding.

"You've been working too hard lately, Arnold! That Rugeley case has taken something out of you, but you scored over it, by Jove! Well, having gained some points over a notorious case, you can afford to take a quiet country job. That will give you the rest you badly need. Moreover, you're just the man for it! Sit down and I'll explain!"

Arnold did as he was bidden. He scarcely relished the country job; he was ambitious, and this quiet affair suggested that he would vegetate for a time instead of making further progress. However, he did need a rest. He listened patiently to his chief's remarks, as the latter unfolded so much as he knew of a story which had far more dramatic incident in it than either of the two men imagined.

"About a year ago," said the chief, "a man named Moulton, aged about twenty-six, was arrested for defrauding a bank. It was done by means of bills of acceptance, something after the manner of the great Bank of England robberies a quarter of a century ago. One almost wonders how such things can be done, but recent exposures show that our banking system is a long way from being perfect.

"Moulton was the chief of a small party apparently. At any rate, there was at least one other, but no clue could be obtained to the other rascal. Moulton would not utter a word. At the trial a good deal of evidence was forthcoming against him; the public was surprised, for he had a good character.

"That evidence was gathered by means of anonymous letters sent to the police, although the public didn't know that. The prisoner himself showed signs of surprise, and two or three times he seemed to be on the point of contradicting the police evidence, but checked himself. He had pleaded 'Guilty,' and he really courted conviction. He was sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

"Now, when he was supposed to be either mentally contradicting, or on the point of openly contradicting, the evidence, it was because his lips moved as if speaking. Some time afterwards, a man came to me and said that Moulton had really been conversing with someone in the court by means of lip language, just as the deaf read your conversation by the movements of your lips. He was not sure, but he firmly believed that it was so, and that Moulton had concluded with the words 'help me to escape.' I smiled at the notion and dismissed the man, but I now find that there is something in it.

"There was very little chance of escape till Moulton got into the Kentish prison, but there appears to be a chance of doing it from that place of incarceration. Well, he has been there for two months, and my friend, the Governor, has got hold of a rumour and wants me to assist him. That is where you come in, Arnold."

Arnold bowed and waited.

"Someone—it may be a man or a woman, probably the latter—is trying to help Moulton to escape. That is the supposition, you understand. This someone is staying in one of the country houses of the district. The only one in which visitors are staying at present is that of Sir Arthur Boyce.

"The Governor thinks that some latitude in the way of supervision may be given to Moulton, and a detective might watch Sir Arthur's visitors. The result should be that we get the accomplice, who is possibly trying to assist Moulton to escape. It is noteworthy that twice lately Sir Arthur has obtained permission for a small party to go over the prison.

"You are a young man, Arnold, well-educated; in fact a gentleman, and you could act the part of a visitor to perfection. My friend has obtained for you an invitation from Sir Arthur, and you will appear as Mr. Wilfrid Burnley.

"Sir Arthur was not keen about it at first, as he dislikes the idea of his guests being watched; but the Governor overcame those scruples by pointing out that it did not matter to honest men if they were watched, and that if there were any rogues among his company he would be well rid of them. So it is settled, and you go down at once."

Arnold made some inquiries and received further necessary instructions; he then bowed himself out and made preparations for carrying out what appeared to be a humdrum sort of task, but which was not to be so tame in reality.

It was an exceedingly pleasant company which Sir Arthur Boyce had gathered about him at his fine old mansion, Elm House, and Mr. Burnley quickly entered into the gay spirit that predominated.

Sir Arthur and Lady Boyce were middle-aged; they had both climbed the hill to fifty and were beginning the descent that leads to old age, but they were as full of go and fun as their son and daughter.

All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

There were more than a dozen guests, all young, and every one of the fine summer days was enjoyed to the fullest extent. As soon as one guest was due to depart another arrived, and so the continuity of amusement was maintained.

Burnley was a good oarsman, cyclist and tennis player; he could talk well and act as cavalier to the ladies as well as any man there; so he was an acquisition. Occasionally he sighed as he reflected that his life had opened in a manner that promised this kind of life for him, but unfortunate speculation by his father had forced him to earn his own living, and influence, added to natural ability, had made a detective of him.

Burnley's heart was as susceptible as that of most men of his age, and he would have quickly lost it to one of the feminine guests had he not steeled himself against the danger. Burnley had to admit reluctantly that Miss Millie Hartford did not blush or show any sign of trepidation in his presence; yet he reflected that—— But no, he had his duty to perform!

Burnley kept on the look-out for the possible accomplice of Moulton, but he was fain to admit, after the second day, that he was no nearer than he had been when he arrived. He had noted several facts, notably that Mr. Gerald Wynter was in love with Miss Hartford and that she did not appear to be averse to his attentions, although she did not wait for him to accompany her here, there, and everywhere. "As I should if I had the chance!" murmured the detective.

"What do you think?" asked Sir Arthur anxiously.

"It looks as if a mistake had been made, Sir Arthur!" replied Burnley. "However, time will show!"

"I hope to goodness it won't!" breathed the Baronet fervently. "Whatever Mabel—I mean Lady Boyce—would say if she knew that I had agreed to this, I daren't think! None of my family is aware of this business!"

Burnley could hardly repress a smile at the Baronet's anxiety, but he replied cheerily and dismissed the subject.

Burnley found it inadvisable to join any particular excursion party or otherwise "tie himself up" (as he expressed it) to any group; he was bound to play a game here or take a walk there with other members of the house-party occasionally, but it was necessary for him to remain free and keep a sharp eye on all.

He was down betimes in the morning, scrutinising letters whenever he had an opportunity, and also watching the letters that were dispatched from the house. At the end of the fourth day he felt that he was on the wrong tack, but he knew that he must keep on till orders came from the chief, to whom he reported every day.

After that, he allowed himself to follow his own inclination rather more, and that took him to Miss Millie Hartford's side. She was full of quiet dignity, less gay than the others—"less frivolous," Burnley called it—and her conversation was more serious.

She was witty and could join in outdoor sports with the rest; in short, a welcome addition to any house-party and yet superior to most of her fellow-guests. It was the kind of nature and temperament that attracted Burnley, who bit his moustache when Wynter was by Miss Hartford's side.

It was during a lag in the general conversation one evening that Burnley remarked, lazily, but with his keen eyes on the assembled company:

"I heard that a prisoner had escaped."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Sir Arthur. "You don't mean to say——"

He nearly betrayed himself. Several others chimed in.

"Really! I don't believe it!" "How interesting!" "I'm positive it is not true!"

"That would be exciting!" yawned Gerald Wynter, but his face was pale.

Miss Hartford raised her eyes from a book to meet Burnley's fixed upon her.

"Do you think it possible, Mr. Burnley?" she asked tranquilly. "I scarcely think so!"

He was looking at her with admiration which he could not repress; but she met his gaze with unruffled serenity.

"Oh! I have not gone into possibilities, Miss Hartford. I merely repeat a rumour."

His penetrating eyes were upon her face; she met them defiantly.

"Would you be afraid if it were true?" she asked with the slightest touch of sarcasm in her voice.

"Not if you were near!" he retorted. "I imagine that you would be deterred by very few things!"

They looked steadfastly at one another while the rest of the party laughed and echoed approval. The remark had sprung spontaneously to Burnley's lips and he had no ulterior motive in saying what he did; but he read in her bright orbs a *something* which thrilled him inwardly.

"Oh, Miss Hartford has been to prison, you know!" drawled one young lady. "As a visitor, of course!"

This sally provoked more mirth; Miss Hartford joined in the laugh, turning to the speaker, but that laugh from her lips sounded harsh to Burnley.

"Heavens! Could it be this woman?" he thought, and a confusion arose within his mind which rendered coherence of ideas impossible for a time. His ruse about the escape of a prisoner had succeeded in providing him with some clue.

His suspicions had been aroused by Gerald Wynter's pallor, but his detective intuition told him that this woman was at least implicated, if not the principal agent. The notion was detestable; he could not bring himself to believe that she was his quarry.

She was the kind of woman who would dare anything for a lover or for a friend to whom she had pledged herself; but, on the other hand, he was convinced that she would wash her hands of anyone convicted of a base action, and this Moulton had pleaded "Guilty!" to a charge of fraud and forgery! It was incomprehensible; his detective instinct must be at fault!

From that moment his feelings towards her were contradictory; he distrusted her, yet he felt that he was doing her an injustice; he tried to keep from the spell of her beauty and charming ways, but he was drawn nearer to her! He was becoming more and more in love with her, and all the while he knew that he should fight against this love.

As for Miss Hartford, after the little passage of words between them she became more affable than ever, and appeared to take a delight in his society. Gerald Wynter scowled at him, for he had less opportunity than before of accompanying Miss Hartford. Burnley returned the scowls with interest, and the two men developed a cordial hatred of each other.

The preference shown by Miss Hartford and Mr. Burnley for their mutual society developed so marked a character during the next two or three days that it formed the subject of whispered comment. They were partners in the games, they walked together during their excursions, they remained by one another's side in everything.

In that time Burnley had fallen completely in love with Millie Hartford, and was upon the point of making some kind of a proposal, when his mind cleared, and he remembered that he was wooing her under false pretences—she did not know his real social position—and he was forgetting his duty! The reflections brought him to an abrupt stop, and he set himself deliberately to spy on the doings of Gerald Wynter and Millie Hartford.

"They are the only two here who would do it, and it must be the man! Still, I'll watch both, although I hate the idea!"

Digitized by Google

A slight sprain of the foot would serve to release him from attendance on Miss Hartford without causing suspicion, and this was the device he adopted. His window was very convenient for his purpose; it had been especially chosen, and he used it.

On the following morning he saw Millie Hartford and Gerald Wynter together, and he crept out to shadow one or both. That day brought him no nearer the truth; the two suspects were not together long, and, although he contrived to keep both in view tolerably well, he discovered nothing.

On the next day he did the same, and still without result. It was rather a risky proceeding, because he was supposed to be getting over the sprain, and if he were found by any member of the house-party at any considerable distance from the house, he would be dubbed a fraud. He decided that on the following morning his foot should be well, but that he would not appear till the others had scattered.

He carried out this plan, taking breakfast in his room and slipping out in time to shadow Millie Hartford. To prevent immediate recognition he put on a false beard.

He saw her walking in the direction of the piece of water in one corner of the estate; she looked back occasionally, and he had to be careful. However, he had not been a detective without learning how to shadow his prey, and he flattered himself that he could manage this woman. There was something suspicious in her manner, and this fact struck chilly upon his heart.

He had learnt the topography of the estate, and he saw a chance of getting in front of her by a short cut. He was convinced that she was making for the water. This awkward path would take him there first, and he could get to the opposite side, where it would be easy to secure a hiding place from which to observe her movements.

Stepping out briskly, but lightly and cautiously, stopping now and then to get a glimpse of his victim, he reached the other side and took up a position favourable for the object he had in view.

He felt just a trifle excited as he saw her approaching the water with an air that indicated her intention to do something when she reached it. This was no casual excursion; it had a object. If the young detective had been engaged in any other case, he would have been as cool as a cucumber, but the circumstances were no longer ordinary. He loved her!

He saw her give a last quick look round, then raise her arm. In his eagerness to see what it was that she was about to throw from her, as the motion indicated, he exposed himself for a moment, but it was too late.

The splash sounded before he could see, and he could only judge by the size of the ripples that it was an object of fair proportions, not merely a stone or anything so trivial in dimensions.

Millie Hartford turned her back on the water at once, and began to retrace her steps at a good pace.

The young detective, cold at heart, deliberated for a few moments whether he should wait and plunge in after the mysterious object or follow Millie. He decided on the latter course; the water was deep enough to reach his shoulders, and it would be better to wait till night before fishing up what Miss Hartford had thrown away.

"It's no use taking it to heart!" he muttered savagely. "If the girl is a bad one, I don't want her! Yet—it's hard to be so disappointed in one of the opposite sex! Anyhow, I'll stick on her track now and go through with it!"

He soon caught up his lost ground, and he had reason to congratulate himself on deciding to follow her.

She made a long detour to another part of the estate, but she resumed the cautious look round when she approached the part where others were likely to be. Apparently she was satisfied, for she suddenly sped along a narrow path and disappeared.

Not to be outwitted, Burnley slipped along after her till he came within earshot of a shady bower especially erected for a quiet talk. As quietly as a mouse he glided up to the back of this bower, and his heart gave a bound as he heard her voice. She was speaking in suppressed tones, but passionately.

"I tell you, I cannot act as your tool any more," she said. "I have done as you have bidden me implicitly; but this Burnley suspects me, and it will be useless to expect success."

Burnley opened his eyes in amazement. To whom was she talking? And how had she guessed that he was dogging her movements?

"She's cleverer than I gave her credit for!" he said to himself, at the same time removing the beard.

He listened for the other to speak, but the voice was so low that he could catch nothing, much to his annoyance.

"I don't care a rap whether this man gets out or not!" was the next remark overheard by Burnley, and it was Millie Hartford who uttered it. There was a pause and some more inaudible talk. Then Millie spoke again.

"Of course, I'll help, for your sake, Ger—— I suggest this; I'll keep Burnley in hand; he's fond of me, and I rather like him; he's a good sort, but he's a detective! Well, I'll keep him in hand and you must do the work.

"We must change parts in this play now; if I continue to play the chief part, the game is over, for Burnley will trap me and spoil all. I'm so afraid that he will drop on me that I've just thrown into the water the wig and other things to make up the original disguise for M—— to get away in!"

The listener smiled with pleasure. He was not so simple as Millie Hartford imagined! It was Gerald Wynter to whom she was talking evidently.

"I must shadow him and yet do what I can to be agreeable to Miss Hartford!" murmured Burnley. "The conversation appears to be over. I'll saunter round to the entrance of this bower and see them both, just to make sure it is Wynter."

He carried out this intention so far as he could, but he was met at the top of the path leading to the bower by Miss Hartford, who at once held out her hand with an exclamation of pleasure.

"I'm so glad you are about again, Mr. Burnley!" she cried. "I hope the sprain is well?"

"Quite, thank you, Miss Hartford!" he replied, with just as much frankness. "Shall we go into the bower for a moment?"

"Oh, no!" she cried hastily. "I've been in there and it is full of horrid earwigs and things!"

The young detective smiled; he understood, but he agreed and they sauntered away.

Burnley's game was difficult now, but he managed to play it well. He kept a strict watch on Wynter, but he contrived to spend a little time with Millie Hartford—not much, though. His excuse to her was that he had something to study, and he could do this better while roaming about alone. He did not forget to fish up the packet, and found that it really did contain a wig, beard, and other small articles, for disguising the face and appearance of the head.

He received a message from headquarters to the effect that some informer had given intelligence that it was most probably a woman who was trying to effect the escape, but Burnley chuckled.

"That's a good move on their part!" he said softly. "They think that this will make me stick to Miss Hartford, and so Wynter will do the trick. It is the

Digitized by Google

hange of parts! The information comes from Wickham, eh?. Not very far from here!"

Gerald Wynter and Millie Hartford were seen together from time to time by the young detective, and the first-named took long walks every day.

Burnley kept on his track, but nothing transpired till another week had passed and the duration of his stay at Elm House had already exceeded its original limit. Wynter and Miss Hartford were the only two remaining of the party as constituted when he had arrived.

Now, to tell what passed at the end of that week, we must leave Burnley and follow Gerald Wynter. Burnley had lost sight of him for a time, and Wynter was strolling along in the direction of the railway station.

It was a secluded, winding lane through which he was walking when he saw in front of him a figure which he recognised as that of Millie. She was walking by the side of a bent old woman, who was leaning on her arm. Hurrying forward, he passed in front of them and turned.

"Whoever would have expected to see you here, Miss Hartford!" he cried. "Are you helping this old lady to the station?"

Millie Hartford's face paled, but she forced a smile.

"I always like to help old persons!" she said gently.

Her companion's head bent lower; the old lady trembled.

"Allow me to help also!" said Gerald courteously.

He held out his arm, but the next instant the bent figure straightened and a strong masculine voice cried:

"You double-dyed traitor! You scoundrel! You robbed me of my liberty, my good name, my love!"

"Moulton!" screamed Wynter, starting back in alarm.

The disguised convict flew at him and gripped him by the throat.

"You dog!" he hissed. "It is my turn now! I pleaded 'Guilty,' and suffered degradation in your stead because I thought that the girl I loved had asked me to do it for her sake, as she loved you! I sacrificed myself for love, only to find that it was your diabolical plotting! You cur!"

"Oh, Syd, don't lose time!" implored Millie, catching the supposed old woman by the arm. "Fly, fly, or you will be caught! The train will be gone!"

Sydney Moulton, the escaped convict, struck Wynter a violent blow with his clenched fist, stunning him.

"He will be safe for a time!" cried Moulton. "Kiss me, Millie!"

Millie uttered a scream.

"Run, run! Here comes the detective I spoke of."

She clasped her hands in alarm. Moulton stood irresolute, till Millie repeated her intreaty. "Do not fear for me!" she added.

Then Moulton, seeing capture probable if he stayed, held up his short skirts with both hands and sped along like the wind, presenting the ridiculous spectacle of an old woman running like an athlete. In a moment he was out of sight round a bend, while Millie remained to face Burnley, whose quick brain had grasped the truth.

"Stop, Mr. Burnley, I beseech you!" she cried, as the young detective ran up. He tried to avoid her, but she was quick and caught him in her outstretched arms.

"Mr. Burnley, for my sake, do not send an innocent man back to prison!"

The young fellow yielded; he felt that her last words were true. Moulton was innocent.

"Let me explain!" she cried. With passionate earnestness that was almost too terrible to witness, she told her story, freely giving vent to her feelings. "I love Sydney Moulton. He befriended Mr. Wynter, who had been fortunate enough to save Sydney's life when he was seized with cramp while swimming. Wynter took advantage of this to ask all kinds of help and favours, and he laid his plans in such a way that Sydney was seemingly inculpated in Wynter's frauds. Appearances were against Sydney. I had been ill, and the shock made me worse; I was unconscious for days, on and off, and Sydney was tried and condemned quickly, for he pleaded 'Guilty,' and the assizes were at hand.

"When I recovered I was horrified to hear that he had said he was guilty. I went to him at the prison, on the first visiting day, and he told me why he had done it.

"He had received a letter from me, asking him, by his love for me, to save Wynter, whom I loved to distraction! Oh, Mr. Burnley, I cannot tell you the infamy of it. Wynter told him lies upon lies; told him that I could not face him, as I was bound heart and soul to him—Wynter!

"Sydney loved me madly, and he sacrificed himself for me, to save the man he thought I loved, although it nearly broke his heart to learn that I did not love *him* after all! Wynter promised to help him to escape, but he never carried out the intention; he did not want to.

"When Sydney heard the truth from me, it was too late to withdraw the plea, and we felt that Wynter had purposely obtained false evidence. Sydney got off lightly, all things considered. I determined to scheme for his escape, and then go to him across the sea. I pretended to lend a favourable ear to Wynter's suit for my own ends.

"I found to my horror that you had come to spy on me, and I played my cards accordingly. Please forgive me, Mr. Burnley! I hoodwinked you. I helped you to fall in love with me. I threw that packet into the water expressly to deceive you, for I knew you were looking—I enticed you to look.

"I had no one with me in the bower; it was a bogus conversation! So I succeeded in throwing you off the scent, and I got Sydney out. During my inspection of the prison I saw him and handed him a note of my plan. *You* nearly upset it, but Sydney could not get his opportunity so soon as we hoped, which proved fortunate!

"Now, Mr. Burnley, I am in your hands. If you give me up to justice, Sydney and I must wait still longer before we meet. *He* will be safe, for the train is gone and I know he caught it, for I saw a handkerchief waving from a window as it went by over there."

"Who sent the anonymous letter from Wickham a week ago?" asked the detective suddenly.

"Not I! About what?"

"Then it was this precious rascal!" cried the young man, pointing to the still unconscious Wynter. "He was giving you away! Look here, Miss Hartford! I've been beaten by a woman's wit and through yielding to love! It won't increase my reputation, and I suppose it's my duty to split, but I won't. But you had better go, or it may leak out. I can understand that Wynter won't say anything, for it might bring him into the grip of justice!"

"Thank you, Mr. Burnley—is that really your name? Richard Arnold? Thank you"—as he handed her a card. "I will let you know some day."

And she was gone.

"There will be a scandal at the house. What will Sir Arthur think? And what about me? H'm! I must make a show!"

He walked away just as Wynter was opening his eyes. When near the end of the lane, the detective deliberately ran at a tree trunk with lowered head and fell unconscious. He was found by the search party, who understood that he had been knocked insensible by the convict, after a struggle.

George Day.

Effie: "Jack, papa said we must not see each other any more." Jack: "Indeed! Then I will turn the gas out."

"What part am I to take?" said Chappie. "You are to be the heroine's father," replied the stage manager. "What does he do?" "He dies ten years before the curtain rises on the first act."

Mrs. Jackson: "Did you see Mrs. Brown's collection of rare old china?" Jackson: "Yes; her family must have been quite poor." Mrs. Jackson: "Nonsense; why do you think so?" Jackson: "Well, if they had been able to keep servants she never would have had that collection of rare old china."

Digitized by Google

THE BLUNDERS OF JOHN CARSTER.

The Tale of a Lesson in Lovemaking.

"Well, I suppose this is the end of it." John Carster heaved a heavy sigh, and strode along moodily. Helen looked at him curiously and then asked:

"The end of what?"

"You know as well as I do to what I refer. To be perfectly plain, I hear it reported on very good authority that you are to marry this Monte Cristo. And that is what I mean when I say that I suppose we will not take many more walks together." He looked at her keenly.

"I suppose it is but a further exemplification of the doctrine announced by the Bible, where it says 'To him who hath, it shall be given, and to him who hath not, it shall be taken away,' and I want to add to that, 'even that which he may seem to have.'"

There was a silence for a few moments. Helen reached out and plucked at a foxglove. She did not look at him. After a few moments she said in a low voice:

"You are getting bitter, John. Don't do it. It does not help you."

"Don't you think I have cause to be bitter? A man can smile and stand a great deal more without giving evidence of his suffering, and there is still another degree of pain, which turns everything to gall. I have suffered that."

"You are very wrong to look at things that way," replied the woman. "What have you to be bitter over? You possess youth, and health, and strength, and ability—all those are priceless gifts. You are well thought of by everyone, and I see no cause for you to think your lot is hard."

"Yes, what you say is true, but I have not the great essential—money. I might be a paralytic, and just have enough sense to keep out of a lunatic asylum, and enough morals to keep from being locked up as a menace to society, but if I had money, all that would be overlooked, and I would be better thought of than I am now. As it is, I am not considered at all."

"Not considered by whom?"

"Everybody. And someone in particular whom I wish to consider me, and who has refused. I have tried everything else; I have placed myself at her feet. Love does not count."

Her face was crimson. She looked far away over the sere, brown fields, and at last said:

"Then what am I to deduce from that assertion—it isn't clear."

"You are not to deduce anything—I state it as my positive conviction that, given on the one hand a man with everything to make him desirable in the eyes of a woman, but with no money, and on the other hand a man with nothing to recommend him but money, a woman will choose the man with the money ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. That's what I mean."

"Why, John, why, John!" There was an infinity of reproach in those words.

"Yes, I mean it!" he added. "I mean every word of it. Women are essentially selfish, and they love the soft side of life. They know that money will make a soft side to anything, and therefore, they are on the side of money."

"I am sorry for you," she said simply. "I thought that you had a higher idea of women."

"Haven't I a right to be bitter?" he continued. "Haven't I every right to such ideas? If it has not been demonstrated to me, nothing has. There is nothing so convincing as personal experience, and it is from that I speak."

"I have known you a long time, John, and I know of no such instance in your career that you speak of. When was it?"

"You know very well to what I allude. You know that I have loved you for all these years, since we were little more than children. You know that my highest dream of earthly happiness was to some day make a home for you, where I could have you with me always. There has not been an ambition in my brain that was not caused by my wish to excel and make you proud of me.

"The rest of the world go can hang—you are my world, the all in all for me. And now, after all these years, all that counts for naught. There comes into your life a great big, beefy man,—you know little about him except that he is very wealthy, and in the course of two months he undoes what I have done, or rather in that time accomplishes what I could not accomplish in six times as many years. Is not that evidence enough? What is to be deduced from that except what I have stated?"

"I ought to be very angry with you, John. You have accused me of a wretched thing—that I would sell my life, my love, my soul, merely to provide myself with creature comforts. I don't know why I don't make you leave me, and never permit you to speak to me again, except that I realise that your anger has carried you off your feet. I realise what you say, that such a state of things is an awful blow to a man. But I do not grant that any such state exists—that is—I mean——"

"You mean what, that you are not going to marry him?" There was light and life and hope in the questioner's eyes now.

"Yes, I mean that; and that I have not intended to do so. And now let me do a little preaching to you—you have had your say, and you have said things you ought not to have said."

"It is a mistaken notion men have, that a woman wants to receive all and give nothing. True love is self-effacement, and bearing the burdens of those whom we do love, and nothing gives a woman so much pleasure as to suffer for the man she really cares for."

"Do you really mean that?" There was wonderment upon the face of the questioner.

"Yes. And there would be more women who would be glad to accept even the little in the way of wealth their sweethearts possess, if they were given the chance. Instead of going bravely to her and saying 'I have little or nothing, but I love you. I can provide enough to keep us from starving, and enough to furnish us with clothes. More than that, I do not care for, with you at my side. Will you accept that?' The men stand off and snivel about women wanting wealth. It makes me weary. It's weakness."

There was a long pause. The sun had sunk below the horizon, and the west was gorgeous with the opaline tints of the dying day. The couple stood a moment looking at the sunset. Perhaps it was the glory of the ruddy rays upon her face, or the reflection from the golden gates of the west that shone in her eyes. He paused, for a moment irresolute, and then taking her hand, looked her full in the eyes. She looked down and her face flushed.

"Helen," he said, very gently, "I have almost nothing in the way of goods or wealth, but I have a love for you that the wealth of Midas could not buy. Will you accept what I have?"

She looked up and smiled softly.

"Why didn't you say that a year or so ago? Yes, I will."

Gaston Harvey

Digitized by Google

THE MOTH AND THE STAR.

The Story of a Revenge which Ended Happily.

THE soft light of many lamps fell on as gay, as bright a scene as could be painted.

Charming girls in dainty toilettes, a capital band and a first-class floor for dancing—Mrs. Danesbury's ball bid fair to be a big success.

And of all the young and pretty girls here gathered not one so lovely as was Jessie Casselis, a golden-haired blonde with pink cheeks and big grey eyes, and a mouth designed, it seemed, for kisses!

Those same grey eyes were looking round the room in evident and eager expectation.

"He is not here, Nina," she said softly to a dark, pleasant-looking girl; "do you think he will come?"

"Surely, my dear. Why, if I mistake not, he is here already." She motioned to a fair, distinguished-looking man just entering the room.

"Yes—it is Cecil." Jessie's face flushed—she squeezed her friend's hand tightly. "Oh, Nina, doesn't he make the other men look *plain?*"

"Handsome is that handsome does, my dear. Cecil Warrington has the reputation of being a great flirt; mind you don't get caught, Jessie. Remember the pretty proverb about singed wings, and fly away in time."

"Nonsense," said Jessie sharply, and turned aside. But all the same a sharp pain shot through her heart at the words; it *could* not, it *should* not be that he was only *flirting*. She shook off the feeling by sheer force of will and talked, and laughed, was the gayest of the gay, flitting from one to another like a bright butterfly.

And yet, surrounded by men, besieged for dances, she could not be content. Cecil had made her promise to save all his favourite waltzes, made her promise with loving words and tender looks, but the evening was far advanced and he had not come to claim them!

Would another, to whom her thoughts went back, have so treated her? A year ago, at a ball at this very house, Guy Redmond had been her shadow, a slave to all her whims. She had been fond of him in a girlish sort of way, but nothing deeper. Nina told her she had treated him cruelly, inasmuch as he had made desperate love to her unrebuked, for the space of a year, only to be met with a refusal at the end of his wooing. But then Nina didn't know everything. Her aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Maynard, would never have allowed Jessie to make such a match. Guy had nothing but his pay, it was not possible to think of such a thing as matrimony. No, she was not to blame; and yet, and yet she could not forget the look in Guy's blue eyes when he had heard his fate.

Overwrought with excitement and disappointment, Jessie could hardly keep back the tears when at last Cecil came over to her side.

"Suppose we sit awhile in the conservatory?" he asked her. "It's terribly hot and noisy here. And I've something to say to you which can't be said in the middle of a ballroom."

He spoke so tenderly, holding her little hand in his the while, that all trace of resentment and indignation at his treatment vanished.

She went with him to the sweet-scented hot-house, finding contentment in the thought that, for a time, at least, they two would be together.

She noticed after a while that they were sitting in the same spot, under the very palm, where she had given poor Guy Redmond his *congé* a year back. She felt that she would have much preferred another seat, but notwithstanding this slight drawback, she was very happy. Cecil loved her, surely he loved her!

In the dim light his arm stole round her waist, her head drooped nearer, closer, until it found a resting place on his shoulder. "Darling," he whispered, kissing her fondly, "my own dear little girl."

"Do you love me, Jessie?" he asked her presently, and clasping her white arms round his neck, her whole soul in her eyes, she answered "Yes."

"You will hear from me to-morrow dear," he whispered, as he said "Good-bye," and the look she gave him in return was so full of tenderness that it struck her aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Maynard, as remarkable.

"Jessie," she questioned eagerly, "has Cecil Warrington proposed?"

Had he proposed? The question jarred on the girl. Of course he had, she told herself, virtually, if not in words. She hesitated a moment, and then answered quietly, "I shall hear from him to-morrow," and with that her aunt was fain to be content. Mrs. Maynard glanced approvingly at the slight figure in the corner of the carriage. Warrington was a very good match, she reflected, £10,000 a year and the chance of a title. Truly her niece had done well, and the worthy woman decided that Jessie's marriage portion should not be called a meagre one. For to her that hath more shall be given, and, inasmuch as the wife of Cecil Warrington would enjoy riches in plenty a greater supply should be at her command.

"Thank Heaven, I was firm about that good-for-nothing Redmond," reflected Mrs. Maynard. "I always swore if Jessie married a poor man I would not let her have a penny," and, swelling with complacency at such virtuous resolution, the good lady retired to bed—to dream of Jessie's future greatness.

Her niece, however, passed the night in a very different fashion. Again and again she went over every incident of that eventful evening. How lucky that she had worn her new white dress; he liked white! Had he not told her so a dozen times? "I'm not good enough for you, my darling," she murmured fondly, gazing with soft grey eyes into the fire.

She sat and thought until the sun rose behind the murky cloud of smoke that bounded the horizon, till its first beams touched the chimney tops with gold, and set the sparrows

Digitized by Google

twittering with delight. She threw the window open and looked out. The cool morning air, as yet untainted by London's dust and grime, fell like a caress upon her cheek, and with a smile curving her warm red lips, she dropped her head upon the window-sill and fell asleep.

It was some hours later when she awoke with a start, to find her maid regarding her with mild astonishment, while a terrible headache bore evidence to the fact that a window-sill is not the most refreshing place to take a nap.

In place of the bright sunshine of the early morning, the air was heavy with a thick yellow fog, and her spirits seemed to have grown dull in sympathy.

"A letter for you, miss."

A letter—one look was enough—it was from him! With eager, trembling hands she broke the seal, how good of him to write so soon. But, as she read, the flush upon her face changed to a deadly whiteness, her eyes grew strained and hard, the fair young face seemed to have aged by years.

"Some years ago," the letter ran, "Guy Redmond and I were boys at school together, and the friendship then commenced has lasted until now. When I tell you that the last time I saw my friend he was a wreck both in mind and body, his health gone, his prospects blighted, his career in the Army inevitably drawing to a close, when, I say, I tell you that I learnt the name of the woman whose heartless trifling had brought him to this pass—you will understand why I have striven to win your love, you will comprehend the delight experienced at my complete success, and you will, I trust, derive some benefit from the lesson I have tried to teach you."

"The lesson I have tried to teach you"—for a moment she could not grasp the full meaning of the words. With the memory of his kisses on her lips, with his love words ringing in her ears, how could she understand that they were false?

With wild eyes, and white, wan face, she paced the room. Her ball dress lying on a chair seemed to mock her with the thought of yesterday. She seized the dainty mass of silk and tulle, and trampled on it, treading it out of shape and form, tearing its costly laces with a mad delight. And then his face, tender and smiling, rose before her, she felt his arms about her, his kisses on her lips! With a sharp cry she fell upon her knees, striving in vain to keep back the sobs that shook her frame, the expression of her heart's dull load of sorrow.

Ah, Guy, could you have seen her, in the depths of her humiliation, you would have deemed yourself avenged indeed for every heartache that she made you suffer.

Cecil Warrington told himself repeatedly that the revenge he had taken on the girl who had so cruelly wounded his friend was not only justifiable but praiseworthy. "Served her quite right," he would exclaim viciously, and apparently the repetition of the phrase gave him great comfort, for if he said it once he said it twenty times within the first twenty-four hours of his reprisal.

But after awhile his revenge seemed to grow stale and unprofitable, and when he heard that "the heartless flirt," as he designated Jessie, was seriously ill, he experienced an utter revulsion of feeling, and even went so far as to apply the epithet of "caddish" to his own behaviour.

This being the state of his mind, it was clearly necessary to once more recount the sum of her iniquities against his bosom friend. "The best rider, the finest shot, the most popular man in the regiment brought to destruction by this woman's coquetry. Why, it was positively a moral necessity for her to understand something of what poor Guy had suffered."

But his indignation would not take fire, and in the midst of his expressions of delight that he had made her "sit up," as he called it, the thought of her soft, warm lips, her glorious hair, her eyes, would send the hot blood rushing through his veins and thrilling to his heart.

London gradually grew distasteful. Everywhere Cecil went the one topic of remark seemed to be Miss Casselis' sudden illness. Everybody seemed possessed with the idea that of all things he desired to hear, what would please him most, was the news of Jessie Casselis. "They've cut off all her hair," said Nina Hardy, tearfully, one evening in his hearing, "you know what lovely hair poor Jessie had."

None knew better than he, thought poor Cecil miserably, and forthwith reviled himself in terms of unmitigated bitterness.

"Is Miss Casselis no better?" he asked Nina. "I wish you would tell me just how she is. I'd give anything to hear that she was well."

"I wonder you dare to mention her name," blazed out Nina. "If I were a man I would thrash you for your shameful treatment of her, poor darling. How you *could* be so cruel, so mean, so unscrupulous, I don't know." And the fury of the tempest over, she dissolved in tears.

"I don't suppose you know quite how it all happened," he suggested deprecatingly, but at that Nina fired up again.

"You're mistaken," she said scornfully. "I know the whole affair. Highly creditable your conduct seems to have been, I must say."

"Did Jessie—I mean Miss Casselis—tell you."

"No, she didn't," snapped Nina, "*she's* too honourable to talk of other people's affairs. I came to see her the morning she was taken ill, and found your delightful letter on the floor."

"Miss Hardy," he said humbly, "won't you help me, for your friend's sake?"

"What do you want?" she asked, a thought less brusquely.

"I want to ask her to forgive me—to tell her that what I commenced in play has finished in earnest, and that, be she what she may, I love her and her only."

"I don't suppose she'll believe you," answered Nina, "besides, I don't understand this sudden transition from hate to love. It may easily veer round to hate again. You feel sorry and repentant now because she's ill. When she's better—if she does get better, poor darling—your causeless animosity will probably flare up once more."

"It wasn't exactly causeless," he answered. Not even though he loved her could he quite forgive Guy's broken life. "You don't know what a splendid fellow Guy used to be, Miss Hardy," he went on. "He gave such promise, everyone declared he would make a name for himself, and to see such a fine chap going to pieces through a woman's passion for adulation, is enough to arouse a fellow's animosity."

"It wasn't so much Jessie's fault as you suppose," said Nina. "She was very young at the time, only seventeen, and Guy Redmond was the first man who had ever paid her any attention. She had passed her life up till then in a village parsonage, and the little country girl was quite strange to the ways and manners of Society. Shedidn't understand that by accepting his attentions she was leading him on, and only felt surprise when he accused her of doing so. Still, I think she would have married him but for Mrs. Maynard. You see, when Jessie's father died two years ago, her aunt adopted her—very kind she has been too, in her way—and it would have been ungrateful, to say the least of it, if in return Jessie had married against her aunt's consent."

"Do you mean she loved Guy Redmond?"

"I don't say that. I think she cared for him in a quiet sort of way, which might have grown to something deeper, but she never loved, I am convinced, till now."

Cecil stood and listened with a sense of shame growing at every word. What a brute he had been! For the first time Guy's

Digitized by Google

conduct struck him in a different light. It hardly seemed dignified or manly; surely it would have been better to have kept a stiff upper lip, and not have gone over so completely. And yet, how terribly haggard the poor fellow had looked, the last time they had met—in Paris—some six months ago.

"Why, Warrington, old boy, how are you?" A hearty voice roused him from his reverie, and a friendly shake of the hand brought Cecil face to face with Guy himself. But what a different Guy from the one who had so occupied his thoughts of late! Cecil positively blushed under Nina's quizzical glances, as in place of the wan, despairing youth he had depicted, they were greeted by a broad-shouldered, deep-chested young giant, whose fair, good-looking face and hearty laugh betokened excellent health and a mind totally at ease.

For a while they were both silent. Nina, choking with laughter, had disappeared with her face buried in her handkerchief, and neither of the two men wished to speak first.

"You're looking considerably better, Guy," said his friend at last, somewhat grimly.

"Er—yes, old chap, I'm as fit as a fiddle. I got over that affair, you know, much quicker than I thought I should. Indeed, I feel quite grateful to Miss Casselis that she did refuse me, as otherwise I should never have met the sweetest little woman in the world."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, old chap—Daisy Martin—old Martin's daughter, you know, of 'Ours.' She was most awfully good to me all the time—and—er—in short, we're married, old boy, and I want your best congratulations."

"Married!" Cecil heard a strange voice, which he presumed was his own, uttering forced pleasantries, inane congratulations, and all the time the thoughts of the ridiculous muddle he had made of the whole affair—the senseless piece of idiocy he had perpetrated—held possession of his brain.

"Absolutely all the time I was nursing a hatred towards her, that fatuous idiot was making a fool of himself with Daisy Martin," thought poor Cecil. And now, what could he do? If only it were possible to see her, beg her forgiveness, intreat her love once more.

He jumped into a hansom, and arming himself with a large portion of the contents of a florist's shop, lilies, gardenias, roses, and white hyacinths—he drove round to Mrs. Maynard's.

Miss Casselis was better. the delirium had left her, but it would be weeks before she was strong enough to see any visitors whatever!

How should he ever get through the time, he wondered. And indeed his only comfort in those days was Nina. She had relented a little towards him, and daily sent word how the invalid was progressing, what books she liked, her favourite fruit and flowers. At last the welcome news arrived that one day shortly Jessie was coming downstairs, and that if he would be very careful he might see her for a little while.

On a sunny afternoon Jessie, packed up with rugs and cushions, was settled in the drawing-room by the fire. It was very cosy there, and closing her eyes, the girl did not notice that Nina and her aunt had softly left the room, nor that a visitor had been as quickly admitted. It was not till Cecil had reached her side that she roused herself. Before she had time to speak he had taken possession of her hand, and in an odd sort of voice asked her humbly to forgive him.

"I loved you all the time," he told her; "even when I was writing that abominable letter I was thinking of your golden hair, your little hands, your soft grey eyes. Will you forgive me, darling? Will you give me a chance to make you forget my cruelty?"

For a moment she hesitated, then with a little cry she stooped towards him.

"You are not playing with me *now?*" she said.

For answer he caught her in his arms—the heartless flirt he had so bitterly condemned!

And at his touch all memory of her suffering and her sorrow vanished. She nestled closer, her lips sought his again and again.

The woman had found her lover; the moth had reached its star!

John K. Prothero.

THE BEGINNING OF A LOVE STORY.

A Queer Mistake which Brought About Happy Results.

It was just four o'clock in the morning when Miss Clarissa Steele crept quietly downstairs and out at the side door. She stood for a moment on the broad stone steps and took a long, free breath, then she went down the gravel walk into the street.

She turned away from the village, and, as if with a definite object in view, walked swiftly toward the fields and hills to the north.

It was only since April that Elmville had taken a lively interest in birds. It had known vaguely that there were birds within its borders—sparrows, a jackdaw or two, and out in the country, crows, perhaps a few jays.

This limited ornithological knowledge had satisfied Elmville, and when it was heard that in London it was the thing to rise early, take one's opera glasses and go "birding" it had smiled indulgently.

That, however, was two years ago and Elmville was two hundred miles from London. A hundred miles a year was quite fast enough for a fad to travel towards Elmville, but when it finally arrived it was received with enthusiasm.

The little village suddenly awoke to the fact that there were birds in its trees of which it had never dreamt, and birds in its fields and pastures whose very names it had never heard.

It began to talk wisely of greenshanks and warblers, redstarts and lesser whitethroats. Quiet folk who had known of birds all their lives suddenly found themselves in great demand.

This popularity might have turned their heads had it lasted long enough, but when it was discovered that there were questions which they could not answer they were promptly made to know their proper place and to feel like impostors who had been found out.

The newly roused interest in birds took different forms. There were some who made up parties and took long walks in the woods, where they talked and laughed so loudly that all the birds fled before them. This class enjoyed the bird walks greatly and went every week.

Then there was young Mrs. Goodnow, who had seen more birds than anyone else in town, but who could not tell the song of a thrush from that of a cuckoo, declaring naïvely that she did not care anything about the noises the birds made.

Others wondered how she knew so many birds when she did not have her ears to help her, but she had a very fine pair of field-glasses and unlimited time

Digitized by Google

There were the two elder Misses Steele, who contented themselves with looking from windows into the tops of the elm and oak trees which grew about their home, and there was their sister Clarissa, who on this beautiful June morning, was out in the country at a little after four.

It was eight when she walked up the path to the side door. She was tired and very hungry, but she was also happy and had a quantity of bird news to tell her sisters.

Breakfast was ready and a delicious odour of hot coffee came out to her through the open door, and she went in eagerly. She hung her hat in the hall, then passed on to the dining-room.

Usually she greeted her sisters with a cheery good morning, but this time she had hardly crossed the threshold before she was aware that something was wrong.

A quick glance at Elinor and Caroline showed her that it must be something very wrong indeed. Her heart began to beat faster and all the happiness seemed suddenly to have gone out of the morning. She looked timidly at her sisters and they stared at her in stony silence.

"What is the matter?" she asked, tremulously.

"I should not think you would need to ask that question, Clarissa Maria," Elinor said in a hollow voice.

"No, I should not think so, too," echoed Caroline.

Now it was only about once in three years that she did anything bad enough for them to call her Clarissa Maria, and at that moment she felt that life was too full of bitterness to be borne. She sank down weakly in a chair and waited.

"To think," began Caroline, in a tone of sadness and reproof, "to think that you should disgrace us, and not only us, but the good name of our family, by making your pretended interest in birds an excuse for going out in the mornings and carrying on a flirtation——"

"A scandalous flirtation," interrupted Elinor.

"Yes, a scandalous flirtation with the curate."

Clarissa started to her feet with a little cry. "I—I never did," she gasped, while the colour rose in her face.

"You saw him this morning. You don't deny that, I suppose, though I don't know," and Caroline shuddered.

"Yes," said Clarissa eagerly. "I did see him. It was down in Mr. Ames' meadow, but he was on one side of the river and I on the other, and we just stopped to speak about birds for a minute."

Elinor smiled sardonically. "And then," she said, "he kissed his hand to you—not once, but several times, and you——"

"Yes, kissed your hand to him," finished Caroline, as Elinor paused and seemed unable to go on. "Yes, Clarissa Maria, you kissed your hand to him. We knew it because Sally Porter was on the hill and heard your voice and saw you do it."

"Oh!" cried Clarissa, her face lighting up, "he did not kiss his hand to me. How could you think he would be so silly? He was just showing me how to call the birds. You just put your fingers to your lips and make a smacking sound, so," and she illustrated, "and somehow it makes the birds come."

The elder sister looked sceptical. "That is a very ingenious excuse," said Caroline, coldly, "and how do you explain your conduct?"

There were tears in Clarissa's eyes now. "I just tried to see if I could do it," she said, with a little sob.

"Well," said Elinor, "I don't know how many people will believe you. You know what Sally Porter is like. You'd better eat your breakfast and then start at once to see and explain to all the people she has told the story to. Come, sit down, things will be stone-cold."

"I—don't want any breakfast; I'm not hungry," and Clarissa went out of the room with her handkerchief held to her eyes.

An hour later Elinor tried Clarissa's door and found it locked. "You'd better come down and eat something," she said, but there was no answer and she went away.

An hour later she came again. This time she shook the door vigorously. "Clarissa," she called in a subdued tone, "come downstairs at once. The curate is here and wants to see you."

"Oh, I can't!" cried Clarissa, in a frightened voice.

"You must," said Elinor, emphatically. "He says he will wait any length of time, but he will see you."

When Clarissa entered the parlour the curate rose to meet her.

"Good morning, Miss Steele," he said. Then they both remembered that they had met before that morning and there was an awkward pause. She looked down at the carpet and he looked at her.

"I think, Miss Clarissa," he said, desperately, when the silence had become unendurable, "I think that you have heard the same thing that I have."

He felt that he had expressed himself vaguely, but she understood and nodded her head without looking up. She tried to keep her lips steady, but she could not prevent the tears from coming. When the curate saw them they seemed to give him the courage of desperation.

"I cannot express to you my regret that I was the cause—the innocent cause—of giving you pain. I would do anything in my power for the privilege of living over this morning and omitting that scene. But only on your account, remember," he went on, impetuously, "only on your account. For myself, I would not care who knew or saw. I would not be content with merely kissing my hand to you, either, and I would be willing to—er—do it on the green in front of the post-office in sight of everybody."

Clarissa was looking at him now, and the curate moved his chair nearer. Her eyes made him think of drowning violets, and he had a strong desire to save them.

"Clarissa," he said, "did you ever want something very, very much, but, knowing that it was far beyond your reach, after a time almost forgot that you wanted it, and deceived yourself into thinking that you were happy without it? Did you, Clarissa?"

She nodded.

"Well," he went on, "that has been my experience, and this morning something happened that brought it all back to me, and—oh, Clarissa! I don't see how I can live without you any longer."

She was silent for a moment, then she said softly, "I don't think you will have to."

S. B. Robb.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

LADY HONORIA. Sister of the Duke of Eastacres.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF. A celebrated Russian beauty.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman, and friend of Lady Peggy.

Vera's Last Reception.

A SUDDEN panic spread through the room. There is always a latent terror of Nihilists in Russian society, and a vague suspicion that the face referred to might belong to one of the dread band thrilled the women, and some of the men, to fear.

Paul de Sonnaz put an end to the suspense. He hurried from the room and passed from the wide hall into the great court. We watched him approach the figure crouching by the window, the figure of a woman as we now saw it to be.

Paul laid his hand upon her shoulder, turning her so that the light of the moon fell full upon the face—indescribably haggard, thin to attenuation, with great hollow eyes, full of a fierce, almost wolfish, look of hunger.

She was dressed in a long and somewhat shapeless garment; its black folds enveloped her from head to foot. She raised her hand to her head in a bewildered fashion when de Sonnaz spoke. Something in the gesture struck me as familiar.

"Belinda," I said hoarsely; "do you recognise her? She——"

With a cry Belinda flung up the window.

"It is Honoria," she said; "my poor Honoria!"

And to her eternal shame and disgrace Honoria it proved to be!

Always of weak intellect, she seemed to have become quite imbecile, and was totally unable to give a coherent account of how she came to the palace, or what she purposed doing.

"I wanted Belinda," she said dully. Then when the girl came to her, and with soft words and tender gestures soothed her, she gave a piercing shriek, and put her hands once more to her head.

"The pain," she said, "the awful pain. Don't let him in"—she pointed to the door—"for Heaven's sake don't let him in. He will kill me." She glanced round fearfully. "He's tried to starve me," she went on, speaking under her breath; "but that isn't quick enough. He'll find me, he's sure to find me, but——" The poor creature fell on her knees and clasped Belinda's skirts; "don't let him in, say you won't let him in?"

"Nobody shall hurt you, Honoria dear," said Belinda softly. "Tell me of whom you are afraid?"

Honoria shuddered, but made no reply. Weak she was and foolish, and stupid to the point of idiocy, and yet she still possessed some strange distorted sense of loyalty that forbade her to reveal the name of the man who had so shamefully used her.

That man was her husband, Mark Striven. It afterwards transpired that he had started a gambling saloon in the environs of Paris, and having a numerous acquaintance, had speedily worked up a large and paying *clientèle*.

Honoria had assisted him at first; dressed in good taste, with her hair becomingly arranged, and her sallow skin touched up with rouge and *blanc de perles*, she had looked—I was assured—quite nice looking! At any rate, some of the *habitués* of the saloon thought so, and took no pains to hide their admiration.

A certain young and charming Comte had, I was told, been desperately enamoured of poor Honoria. He was wealthy and devoted to cards, and Mark Striven looked to make a year's income at the least from him. His expectations were, however, disappointed, his designs thwarted.

Honoria, like all plain women, was aggressively virtuous. She declined to have anything to do with the Comte and finally refused to see him! As a result the young man withdrew his patronage from Striven's saloon, and a large decrease of that gentleman's income immediately took place.

Mark bullied and threatened in vain, Honoria, with the obstinacy of a small brained woman, declined to hear reason. Of what followed one could not get a clear idea.

My own suspicions suggest that Mark Striven, who had insured Honoria's life after their marriage, had determined to waste no money in prolonging her existence. The seeds of consumption were already in her constitution, and phthisis, assisted by a light diet and insufficient warmth, is very easily encouraged.

Honoria, however, cut short her husband's plan; she escaped from the house in the Rue Burgoyne and made her way from one place to another in search of Belinda until she reached the palace of the Ortoffs.

I wired to Mark Striven in the morning, but, pending his arrival—he was to meet us on the road to Florence—I made no demur to Belinda's suggestion that Honoria should accompany us. I realised that I might have a use for Honoria.

Gossip was very rife in the palace concerning the girl, her terrible appearance and the strange fashion of her arrival, but the Eastacres generally had such a reputation for eccentricity that her escapade was not made so much of as would have been the case with any other woman.

"That Striven is a beast," said Toffy when the first alarm and surprise at Honoria's white face and wild air had died away. "It's my belief he'll kill the woman before he's done with her."

Digitized by Google

A belief that many of us shared, but which good taste prevented our expressing.

We knew—every one of us—that it was more than likely that Mark had designs on Honoria's insurance money, just as we knew that old Lady Calistares had put her unfortunate stepson to sleep in damp sheets in the hope that rheumatic fever would clear him off and make room for her own boy; and that the Marquis of Onnerton had fired the gun that killed his brother, Lord Chiverton—not by accident as the public believed—but from jealousy; he suspected Chiverton of an intrigue with his wife.

You people think you hear of all the strange affairs that take place in Society. In reality you don't know one half, and of those that reach your ears you have not the key.

As I say, we knew these things but never let our knowledge appear.

From the Ortoff Palace we started for Italy.

Of all places in the world, Belinda set her heart upon staying at Verona, with its sun-baked streets, its grim, dust-covered fortifications, its little lines of stunted trees; Verona, where the bitter, piercing mountain winds sweep through the town, stirring the grasses—all alive with brown lizards—that grow in the courtyards of the great, desolate houses.

Belinda, with her head full of romance, grew enthusiastic over the place, and raved of its wonderful palaces; for the most part in ruins, and let out in floors. We lodged in one of these mansions, and our rooms were typical of Italy.

The superb staircase was—before we came—coated in filth, the courtyard, which would have held a troop of soldiers, was given over to weeds and lizards; chambers, hung with costly tapestries, were knee-deep in dust, and on walls boasting world-famous cartoons, were hung the *padrona*—or caretaker's—garments.

Windows, thick with grime, were festooned with roses and vines, everywhere the luxury of beauty, side by side with the deepest poverty, the most hideous dirt!

The upper rooms of the palace were tenanted by workpeople and art students. A singer occupied the floor above our own, and the lower halls were the abode of the caretaker and her troop of children.

Verona is a city little visited save by artists and tourists; personally, I should never have gone near the place. I only did so by reason of Belinda.

At Verona, Mark Striven came to claim his wife. We received him in the *salon*, a huge chamber with a wonderful ceiling, where lovely women laughed down from frescoes of roses, and where the vine leaves arched round the casement.

The room was heavy with the scent of lilies and magnolia. Belinda, tall and stately, in a wonderful Venetian gown that the *padrona* had fished out from an old chest, wore a knot of the odorous blossoms at her throat.

"Where is Honoria?" said Mark abruptly.

"She is in my room," replied Belinda, "and"—the girl eyed him firmly—"she is going to stay there."

"I don't crave for her immediate society," he said sneering; "so long as she's ready to start with me to-morrow morning, she can stay where she is for to-night."

"She shall not come with you to-morrow," said Belinda. "You dare not risk a scene, a scandal, and if you try to take her away I'll summon the police."

"My dear Lady Peggy"—he turned to me with a smile—"your charge talks a little wildly. She——"

I interrupted him.

"Belinda is very anxious that Honoria should stay with her for a time. They are attached to each other, if you could spare your wife a little while we should be delighted." I beamed as I spoke, adroitly edging off Belinda to the door.

"Leave it to me, you silly girl," I whispered, "go upstairs out of the way, and I'll settle the thing in five minutes."

"Now, Mark," said I when Belinda had gone, "if you're prepared to discuss the matter quietly, so much the better—for you. If not——" I shrugged and seated myself beside him.

"What's the game?" he said abruptly—Striven never could turn a phrase.

"Matters stand thus, I believe: Your wife has run awa owing to your cruelty, you want her back, Belinda wishe her to stay. Well," I paused, "Belinda is prepared to pay something for Honoria's companionship."

"Five hundred down," snapped the wretch. "Not a penny less."

I laughed contemptuously. "You're dealing with me, my dear man," I cried, "and you might as well demand the moon as five hundred pounds!"

"Very good," he rose as he spoke. "I miss Honoria, I'd just as soon have her as not."

"Easier said than done, Mark. You don't know Belinda. She'll go to any lengths to stop you taking Honoria."

"There'll be no necessity to take her," he returned with a laugh. "I've only to say 'come' to Honoria, and she'll follow me like a lamb. Do you suppose I've lived with her these six months and not discovered how to manage her? She obeys me like a dog, or a slave. She's mine, body and soul."

"While you're there, yes, but in your absence——"

"She'd never have got away but for that scoundrel Stanley Forbes," he said, raising his voice in anger. "He came to the Rue Burgoyne when I was out and bribed the woman there to let him see Honoria. He put the idea of leaving me into her head. I'll swear it. Once she's back she won't get clear again," and he laughed vindictively.

"But do you want her back now?" I asked suggestively. "Why not leave her here with us? I can manage to lend you one hundred pounds if it's a question of ready money."

He paused, then leaning forward, brought his face, his evil face, close to mine.

"You've some scheme on foot," he said slowly. "What is it? It's no good to try to bluff me, Lady Peggy. You're not so fond of Belinda as to put up with Honoria for her sake. Come, what is it?" And he smiled with an attempted familiarity that revolted me.

"Belinda has expressed a wish for Honoria's society," I returned. "I am prepared to pay for that wish——"

"To the extent of five hundred pounds?" he queried.

I saw that he was determined, and wearied by the struggle and just a little fearful of what he might discover if the conversation were prolonged, I made a compromise.

"I'll give you a hundred down," I said, "and the remainder—when she returns."

"And that will be?"

"Within six months," I answered steadily. "Possibly within three."

"Give me the cash," he said, "and I'll clinch the bargain."

I handed him notes to the value of one hundred pounds, and then, after a little further talk with Mark, I summoned his wife.

"Honoria," I said, "Mark wishes you to return with him."

For a moment she stood still, glancing at me with wild, startled-looking eyes.

"Must I?" she whispered. "Oh, Lady Peggy, won't you let me stop? I'll work," she wrung her helpless-looking hands, "or do anything if you'll keep me."

"Come here!" said Mark abruptly, and at the sound of his voice she shrank as from a blow.

"You want to stay here?" he said.

Her eyes studied his face, seeking in abject submission to discover what he wished her to reply. What she read therein emboldened her to answer truthfully.

"Yes, if you please, Mark, if you don't mind."

"Very well, you shall stay, but on one condition." He grasped her arm tightly as he spoke, so that he hurt her. "You stay here on the understanding that whatever Lady Peggy tells you to do, you do without question or demur."

Honoria glanced like a frightened, fascinated rabbit, from Mark's keen eyes to mine.

"I don't quite understand," she said.

Mark's face grew grim.

"You're not asked to understand," he said, "only to obey. Lady Peggy may want you to do certain things for Belinda's good," he chuckled as he spoke, "but to which she may object.

Digitized by Google

Are you prepared to obey orders in spite of Belinda, or," he tightened his grip on her arm so that she gave a low, faint cry, "or will you come back with me?"

There was a short, tense silence. The roses blown by the night wind beat against the casement, and the vine leaves shivered with the cold.

Honoria's great eyes searched her husband's face, and she trembled and turned a more ghastly white than she had been before. There were strange, dark secrets in her married life, short though it had been.

She had a great and well-founded dread of Mark, it would be to her a living martyrdom to return. And yet the price of liberty was a high one.

Belinda had been good to her, of all the women she had met, this girl alone had shown her love and kindliness. Did she consent to obey me, her powers of reasoning, small though they were, convinced her that the obedience would be hurtful to Belinda.

I watched her in suspense. That any woman should put another's comfort before her own is surprising, but, that a woman so miserable as Honoria should weigh Belinda's happiness against her own wretchedness, struck me as phenomenal.

"Well," said Mark, "well?" he gazed at her fixedly, and something in his look must have recalled past scenes of cruelty, for Honoria wrenched herself from his hold, and, in a high-pitched, gasping voice, cried—

"I will do whatever Lady Peggy wishes. Indeed, indeed I will, if I may stay!"

Late that night, when Mark had taken his departure, I was aroused from slumber by the entry of a tall, ungainly figure, garbed in a hideous dressing-gown. Honoria, for it was she, stumbled across the room, and fell on her knees at my bedside.

"You don't mean any harm to her?" she cried, "say you don't mean any harm! I'd rather die than hurt Belinda. I wish that I had died long, long ago. What shall I do—what *can* I do?"

She rocked herself to and fro, her weak face distorted with grief, her long thin hands clutching the drapery upon the bed.

"Why didn't you let me take the poison long ago, in Cairo? There's only one person in the world who cares for me, who has been kind to me, and I have promised to go against her. Don't hurt Belinda, Lady Peggy—*don't!*"

It was an unpleasant and an unnerving scene. In my heart I felt a little sorry for Honoria. She was one of those persons who are condemned to act as pawns upon life's chess board, moved hither and thither at the bidding, and for the convenience of the stronger and more powerful pieces, and yet she was a contemptible object, with her tears and her protestations! I gave her a dose of sal-volatile and got her off to bed, under the assurance that I intended no ill will to Belinda.

Next morning we left the city of Verona. The mountain wind was cold; Belinda shivered in her furs, and the roses, yellow as gold, that lay in her lap, shivered before the blast. Slowly but surely the cold, cruel hand of Fate would shrivel the roses of her faith, her hope, her love. She was looking wan and pale, and she was strangely apathetic. Things were working as I had planned them.

That night I sent to Eastacres an urgent and imperative letter; what I said to him, and how that which he and I conspired to bring about took place, you shall learn in the sequel.

One word I must say here in my own defence. What you have learnt of me up to the present has doubtless shocked you, secure in your respectable, if dull and commonplace, homes. What you will learn before this series ends will cause you to condemn me more bitterly than before. But, in passing judgment, remember this—

I was a woman past middle-age, fighting desperately and fiercely to keep her place in the world. I had no son to keep me, and my daughters one and all were ungrateful and averse to me. I was fighting for a security against the poverty and all the attendant horrors of a penniless old age. And in the fight I gave no quarter—in like case would you, most respectable of British matrons, have done any better?

We came to Florence, the City of Flowers, at the close of a glorious day.

The great white statues of the church of Santa Trinita rose like snow against the golden sky. Monte Oliveto towered dark against the rosy glory of the west. There was a sweet sea wind blowing which fanned out as it went all the spiced odours of the woods and fields.

The shops of the goldsmiths and mosaic sellers, and alabaster workers, gleamed and sparkled in the light. Everywhere there was some beauty, some fragrance, some treasure; and above all rose the wondrous shaft of the Campanile, gleaming like gold and ivory in the sun.

Near the great square in the centre of the city where Savonarola was put to death, lies the Palace of the Ubertas, once the stronghold of the noblest and most powerful family in Florence; it has now fallen into the hands of a little Jew, who lets it to those English or Americans who can afford to pay the extravagant price that he demands. Here it was that Princess Vera had established herself. A few nights after our arrival she gave a reception.

The rooms were filled with late violets, narcissus and rich red roses. The front of the palace was decorated with innumerable lights—quaint lanterns fashioned in the shape of butterflies, dragon-flies, and wreaths of lotus-lilies. The balcony was hung with scarlet, and from it a band of sweet-voiced Florentines sang the songs of the country.

In the great reception-rooms, stately women with wonderful dark eyes and lustrous hair talked to young English girls; secretaries of Legation chatted to American explorers and men of business, who in turn listened in wonderment to the ecstasies of a picturesque Italian enthusing over a work of art.

Vera had arranged a surprise for her guests. A little before midnight she and some twenty other ladies disappeared, to re-enter on the stroke of twelve, fantastically attired. Each had selected the costume of some world-famous heroine. Belinda had chosen Joan of Arc, and habited in clanking armour, her fair hair loose on her shoulders, she looked to the life the peasant maid who freed her country.

Vera had chosen a strange, a sinister *rôle*. She was robed as the great woman-poisoner— Lucrezia Borgia. Her gown was a marvel, and a murmur of admiration followed her. The train was of cloth of gold, and the scarlet skirts beneath were studded with tiny flames of rubies.

In her hair she wore a snake of gold with emeralds for its eyes; round her neck hung a gold chain, from it suspended a number of charms, a death-head in silver with diamond eyes, a cross with a crown of thorns in pearls and sapphires.

Last, but most strange, most beautiful of all, poised just above the apple of her soft white throat, there hung a huge moth, with iridescent wings and jewel-like body. The thing was fastened to a tiny brooch, the pin of which went through its exquisite body. It was alive, quivering in a prolonged and terrible death-agony.

It was the mode at that time for women to wear live things as ornaments. Jewelled tortoises hung with other costly trifles on a chatelaine, tiny snakes whose bright green bodies glittered in the light, were used to clasp the bodice of an evening dress. It was a strange craze, but it was original and among our set had a great vogue.

Vera took a keen, almost a savage delight in these additions to her toilette, but to-night she had eclipsed herself. The moth or beetle, whatever it might be, was the most lovely thing imaginable.

Other women there were garbed as Beatrice whom Dante loved, Margaret de Medici of evil fame, but none so superb, so wonderful as Vera. She stood at the end of the great chamber side by side with Belinda, and the guests applauded to the echo.

Belinda looked sad and wistful.

She was just as dreamy and distracted as Joan of Arc

Digitized by Google

herself. It was a wonderful scene typical of modern luxury and modern art.

Outside lay Florence of five hundred years ago ; the white moonshine falling on the statues in the square, the bronze Perseus, the famous Hercules and David.

"A horrible sight!" murmured one of the guests, a clever but sardonic man, who has made himself a reputation as the most daring traveller in Europe.

I glanced round quickly in surprise.

For answer he motioned to the moth glittering on Vera's neck.

"A savage opens fire on the living body of his enemy, and you people at home shriek at his inhumanity and demand his punishment. Your great lady is crueller far than the savage ; she takes a gentle, pretty creature and tortures it for her amusement. Look!" he pointed to the beetle which was making a last convulsive struggle to get free.

As the man—his name was Francis Claverton—watched, a change came over his face. Surprise, interrogation tinged with fear, chased over his countenance, and he pressed through the throng closer to the Princess.

A sudden stir at the other end of the apartment diverted my attention. Two guests—late, but most welcome—had arrived.

Alphonse Hervé and David Carr entered together.

I watched the two men closely, and read their secret in a glance. Alphonse looked at Vera, and his eyes remained on her face. David flashed a look at the brilliant beauty in red and gold, then turned his eyes to the quiet, pure face of the girl beside her.

She did not seem surprised or glad to see him, but smiled in a vague, and to him a disappointing fashion. But as she met his eyes, burning with love, the colour mounted to her face. She put out her hand and clasped his own.

Watching, I set my teeth. Despite my skill, my plotting, and my cunning, love for a time had worsted me. Memory had knocked at the door of the girl's heart, and while a woman has life she will thrill to the memory of the first kisses that burnt on her lips and her throat, the first clasp of the arms that unlocked for her the gates of the garden of love.

In the background stood Farringdon, pale and quiet. He had come there that night for his answer ; but the look on Belinda's face, the light in her eyes, was answer enough. She was not for him, nor for any, but David the man she loved.

Vera had eyes for none of this. She was conscious only that Alphonse had returned to her, forgetful of the past, conscious only that she was beautiful exceedingly, and that he loved her.

That he might see her robed in a queen's magnificence, and receiving the homage of a crowd, she had defied prejudice, laughed at comment, and in the third month of her widowhood had held a great reception. Society was shocked, but it flocked to the reception all the same.

Alphonse bent over her hand with perfect grace.

"Forgive me," he murmured. She raised her eyes, the message that they gave needed no words. She swayed towards him, the scent of the roses that she carried filled the air. She was at the zenith of her youth and beauty ; the moth at her throat trembled in an ecstasy of pain. It had twisted itself free from the pin and in its death struggle lay close to her skin. The Princess put up her hand to brush it aside.

"Stop!" cried a hard, clear voice—the voice of Francis Claverton—"don't touch it. The thing is deadly if it stings you. Ah!" he broke off short. Vera's slim white fingers had grasped and flung the insect from her in contempt.

There was a tiny mark upon her throat ; it might be the mark of the gold chain. It might be——

Claverton stepped forward.

"If the insect has bitten you," he said, "*in three days you will be dead!*"

(A further exciting instalment will appear next Tuesday.)

Your Editor Chats.

On the page overleaf you will find the sixth of the Love Problem stories. It is called "A Secret Hoard," and the problem dealt with is "Should a Husband Tell His Wife His Business Troubles?" If any readers know of problems of a similar kind they would like to see discussed in *Short Stories*, I shall be glad if they will send them along, and, if suitable, I will get them written up in story form.

There has not been time yet for me to receive many more opinions regarding what Lady Peggy Carstairs wrote about middle-class people. One correspondent, however, thinks that Lady Peggy was a very wicked woman to scheme as she did to get money out of Belinda's father by chaperoning his daughter, and trying to force her into an undesirable marriage, even though it was to a man of title. In this week's instalment of "How I Chaperoned Belinda" you will see how Lady Peggy endeavours to justify her behaviour in this matter.

Next Tuesday will be a red-letter day in the annals of *Short Stories*, for on that day your little favourite will contain more good things than it has ever done before.

In the first place, there is a new serial from the pen of Mr. R. Norman Silver. Its title is

"HELD APART."

Mr. Silver's work is well known to readers of *Short Stories*. His serial "The Golden Dwarf" is perhaps best known. "Held Apart" is a present-day romance, in which the love element is very strong, and powerful new situations are introduced.

Secondly, there is the first of a series of true stories called

"THE CONFESSIONS OF A SELF-MADE GIRL."

These will appeal more particularly to my lady readers, I expect, and I hope many of them will gather useful hints from the life of this self-made girl. Though she has got on so well, she had to go through a great many unpleasant experiences, and country girls coming to London to make their living will do well to take warning, and so perhaps they will be able to avoid some of the pitfalls which are so plentiful in this great city.

Thirdly, and perhaps not of the least interest, is an entirely

NEW COMPETITION,

of which I will not say more now than that valuable prizes are offered to the winners, and that everyone will have an equal opportunity of winning the prizes.

So, altogether, you will see that next Tuesday's *Short Stories* is not to be missed if you like getting good value for your money. The three things mentioned above will all be fresh next week.

Further instalments of "How I Chaperoned Belinda," and "The Albert Gate Mystery" will appear as usual, as well as several complete short tales.

Your Editor.

RESULT OF THE "LIFE" COMPETITION.

The Gramophone prizes have been awarded as follows: T. Tatlow, 136 Main Street, Bulwell, Notts; G. Lilley, 40 Sea View Terrace, Swansea; B. Carthew, 51 Hawthorn Road, Willesden Green, N.W.; G. A. Hughes, 11 Virgil Street, Cornbrook, Manchester; H. Lynch, 16 Broad Street, Miletown, Sheerness; A. Barnes, 16 Scott Street, Maidstone; Mrs. Amos, 7 Harold Mews, St. Leonards-on-Sea; Miss Ada Thompson, 34 Rowena Crescent, Battersea; J. G. Persich, 88 Eglisfield Road, South Shields; E. Walters, 5 Mayfields, Kirkdale, Liverpool.

Digitized by Google

Love Problem No. 6.

A Secret Hoard.

Should a Husband Tell his Wife his Business Troubles?

Many women have a kind of subtle instinct which teaches them at once when their menfolk are in trouble. This applies more particularly to married people, perhaps, for marriage intensifies a mutual sympathy, which in its turn brings forth the instinct which we mention.

Now Nora Heywood couldn't have written out this theory to save her life, but she could do better still, she could illustrate it, and she did so every day of her life.

The manner in which she attended to her husband's comforts and saw to his wants almost before he had time to express them, was enough to make a bachelor turn all kinds of assorted colours with envy; and if Jack Heywood should be so fortunate—we use the word advisedly—as to have any trouble, business or otherwise, then indeed she was in her element.

It was then she rose to the possibilities of a woman's powers of consolation, and appreciated her position as the one to whom he looked first and foremost at such times.

And yet, in spite of all this devotion on the part of his wife, Jack was an undeserving kind of fellow.

If it were a matter they both knew about he would tell the progress of the trouble as it rose to its height, and then gradually disappeared, as such things do when they are bravely met.

But in the case of some business worry of which she had no preliminary knowledge he kept it to himself as long as he possibly could. He valued her warm-hearted, comforting little ways more than anything else in the world, and yet when possible, he bore his trouble alone rather than throw a single shadow across her happiness.

And so he was an undeserving kind of fellow, and not worthy of a wife who would have been only too pleased to have sacrificed anything for his sake. And not only would have done so, but actually did. She had pinched and scraped ever since they had been married to save out of her housekeeping allowance.

When they drew their chairs to the fireside after their two-year-old daughter had gone to bed, they divided the newspaper and solemnly tossed-up to see who was to have the better half, that is, the half with most news in.

Jack and Nora would have been in very serious trouble indeed before they would have neglected such an old family custom as this.

"Heads!" said Jack absent-mindedly, as the coin spun, but it came tails, the first time for more than a fortnight.

"Will you let me see the penny, please?" Nora said next moment.

Jack handed it to her without a word, and she looked at it very carefully, both sides. Then she placed it on the mantelpiece, and threw her arms round his neck

"What is the matter to-night?" she murmured. "You must tell me at once, Jack, you really must."

"The matter?" he stammered.

"Yes, I thought something was wrong when you came home because I had baked a cake and you didn't make any jokes about it, and you took scarcely any notice of little Chirps, although you talked and laughed quite a lot to me, and generally it's more the other way about. Not that I'm jealous at all."

"And why did you want to look at the penny?" said Jack, who was rather staggered by all this circumstantial evidence.

"Because for over a week you've been tossing with a double-headed penny," she answered indignantly. "I don't know where you got it from, and I couldn't understand why you won so often until about a week ago I found it in your lounge coat, when I had to sew on a button."

"And you didn't say anything about it!"

"No," she said sturdily. "I liked you to have first choice. And to-night you were so worried, my poor old Jack, that you forgot all about your patent penny, and brought out an ordinary one, and so you lost. And that confirmed my suspicions. Now just tell me all about it instanter."

And she looked so determined and yet so sympathetic that it is very probable he would have yielded, and told her what the trouble was. But just at this moment there was a thundering rat-a-tat-tat at the front door. Little Chirps was awakened by the noise and gave them a vocal hint to that effect.

Nora ran upstairs to soothe her off to sleep, whilst Jack attended to the front door. And as he turned to go, all the forced smiles and the gaiety disappeared from his face, and a look of intense suffering came in their place.

"Fifty pounds!" he groaned. "Fifty pounds, or ruin and disgrace. It seemed such a safe speculation at the time, and so simple to borrow the money by a bill of sale. My poor Nora! Oh, it will break her heart to have the home broken up like this! The time expired to-day, and he says he can't wait. If I could even pay something substantial on account! If I could—— Oh, anything, rather than bring such trouble upon her!"

The next day was Saturday. As Jack was going off to business Nora suddenly remembered the question she had asked the previous night, which had been driven from her mind by the arrival of the visitors.

"You didn't tell me after all?" she said reproachfully.

"What about? I can't wait now, Nora. The train's coming," and he started down the garden walk.

"I shall remind you at dinner-time!" she cried.

"Very well, I'll tell you then," and to himself he muttered: "They may come this afternoon. He only gave me till two o'clock."

Nora walked slowly along the hall, trying in vain to guess what the trouble was. When she reached the dining-room, she found to her dismay that little Chirps had taken possession of the jam-dish, and was engaged in painting a gorgeous design of strawberries upon the table-cloth.

"Baby's pik-ker," said the young lady, with conscious pride, and was astonished at the lack of appreciation her mother showed.

Nora was feeling rather hurt just now at her husband's refusal to explain his troubles. "But I suppose he thinks a woman is of no use for business," she sighed, with just a touch of bitterness. "Although I might have comforted him a bit if he'd told me what was wrong. Perhaps he'll feel better when he gets his birthday present.

Digitized by Google

"If I hadn't a head for business I couldn't have saved twenty pounds in less than three years. Three heads for three separate businesses, in fact, a dressmaker, a cook, and a housekeeper," she added triumphantly, some of her good spirits returning at the thought. "But we'll get our work done, Chirps, and then we'll go and buy some meat, and some potatoes, and a cabbage, and—*A piano!*" she said, in such a tone that even her daughter cried "Tum, muvver!" as though she would set out forthwith.

And then began such a bustling, and hurrying, and clearing away, and washing up and dusting and I don't know what else. Little Chirps was eager to help, and solemnly dried her tin breakfast cup some forty times over with a miniature dish cloth, being a great believer in doing her work thoroughly.

Then they went upstairs to make the beds and to do more dusting and cleaning and hurrying and bustling. And little Chirps, to show her willingness, successively climbed on to nearly everything above floor level, and then fell off again. And so at last their morning's work was done, and the house, to unappreciative male eyes, would probably have appeared just as nice and clean as when they began.

And then they started on their way to the shops, Nora with one of those tiny baskets, too small to hold anything, but which every self-respecting woman finds absolutely necessary when she goes shopping. Little Chirps pattered by her side, bearing a woolly doll with glass eyes, whom she affectionately addressed as "Tummy."

"You'll be sure to send the meat up before half-past eleven?" said Nora sternly to the butcher.

"Certainly mum. Jim," to an incredibly busy assistant, who looked as though he had all the beef and mutton in England to deliver before midday, "Mrs. Heywood's leg, go 'fore 'leven-thirty prompt. Yes'm, g'morn'm."

Then the greengrocer staked his reputation that the vegetables should also arrive by eleven-thirty, and Nora departed, knowing full well that neither of them would fulfil his promise.

There was still one more purchase to make, but that was the most important of all. "Won't he be delighted when it arrives?" she thought rapturously, as she entered the shop. "I'll ask them not to deliver it until the 27th, and then it will be a real birthday present. And he doesn't know I've saved anything. I want to look at some pianos," she said to the shopman.

"Yes'm. Thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred guineas?"

"N—no, about twenty pounds, please."

It was half-past two before Jack arrived home. Nora and the child had their dinner, and then walked down to the station to meet him.

The train had just come in, and the people were crowding out of the narrow gates. Nora waited in her usual place on the other side of the road, for it was understood from the first that Jack, on leaving the station, was to glance across towards a certain shop in front of which Nora always stood when she came to meet him.

But to-day he hurried away without even a glance towards his wife and little daughter. One or two friends tried to detain him for a minute, but he nodded curtly, and almost ran down Barton Road.

"Jack Heywood seems upset," said someone who stood close to Nora. "He's been looking rather bothered for a few days past."

Nora waited for no more, but set off at the highest speed that Little Chirps could muster. When they reached the house she let herself in with the latchkey. Jack did not seem to have heard them, for he sat beside the table with his head buried in his hands.

"Oh, you poor, poor Jack!" she cried, and ran towards him; then stopped suddenly, frightened by his haggard expression.

"Rather say 'poor wife'!" he groaned. "It is upon you that the blow will fall worst."

"Well, I'm quite satisfied," she answered, bravely. "Now tell me all about it."

Rat-a-tat! Nora looked impatiently towards the door. "I'll go," she said, "and I'll get rid of them as soon as possible. Don't you trouble, Jack. You're not well."

"I must go," he answered hoarsely. "I'll tell you everything in a moment."

The arrival was ushered into the front room. Jack spoke to him for a few minutes and then returned to Nora. She met him at the door with one finger held out warningly.

"Now, remember," she said, with a sternness that only intensified the quivering of her lips, "You've got to tell me all about it, everything; but if you dare to apologise for the slightest little tit or jottle—or jit or tottle," she added hurriedly, "for I'm not sure which is correct; or if you dare to say you are to blame in any possible way, I won't believe you, so mind." And she plunged herself down upon a foot-stool, with her head against his knee.

"It's soon explained," he said sadly. "Business was quiet and someone offered me an agency which seemed to promise well, and is actually doing well, though slowly. They required a deposit of fifty pounds, and, as you know, we haven't a fifth of that sum—here is all we have, about seven pounds—so I went to a firm of money-lenders, and gave them a bill of sale on the furniture, expiring to-day.

"The agreement gives him the right to seize our furniture—the very chairs and tables—whether I have paid the interest or not. He says he wants his principal to-day, or at any rate half to-day and the rest in three months."

Nora rose to her feet with her eyes almost on fire, so brightly did they shine, and yet in every other way she was as calm as possible.

"Then I suppose we must pay the fellow a half," she said carelessly, and put her hand in her pocket for her purse, while Jack, who had also risen from his chair, looked at her in amazement.

But the next moment she uttered a scream of terror. All her pretended calmness vanished like a puff of smoke.

"Oh, my purse! My purse!" she cried piteously. "I've lost it, Jack!"

"Muvver c'ies," said Little Chirps gravely.

Jack looked round suddenly. There sat his daughter beneath the table with an open purse on her lap and an absolute crowd of sovereigns arranged in rows upon the carpet.

"There's the money!" cried Nora, who had turned round at the same time. "She must have taken my purse from my pocket or from the table. I was going to buy you a piano to practise your songs on but they were rather expensive, so I left it until nearer your birthday. But I'll never save out of 'housekeeping' again without telling you."

"On the other hand," said Jack. "If I had told you at once what the trouble was, we might have saved a lot of this."

"No, dads," said Chirps solemnly. But it must be explained that as the young lady could not say "Yes" she said "No" in either case, leaving it to her audience to apply her word in the best possible manner.

Jack lifted her suddenly to his shoulder. "Come along," he said to Nora, "and we'll pay the fellow a half as you suggested."

Wal Fratik.

SOME FEATURES OF NEXT WEEK'S *SHORT STORIES.*

A long first instalment of R. Norman Silver's powerful serial "Held Apart."

The first of a series entitled "Confessions of a Self-Made Girl," which will appeal more particularly to our lady readers.

A Competition of quite a new kind, in which valuable prizes of money gifts are offered.

Besides these attractions, *Short Stories* will contain the usual instalments of "How I Chaperoned Belinda," and "The Albert Gate Mystery," as well as several short, complete tales.

The price will as usual be

One Penny.

Digitized by Google

BELLE'S CHAMPION

OR

A QUESTION OF HONESTY.

"BELLE, my dear, you must consider yourself on trial, with the girls in the workroom as jury. Girls, the charge against Belle is that she was caught in the very act of—h'm!—exchanging more than brotherly greetings with Jack Hassell; in fact, the charge is that they were kissing each other!"

A titter of merriment passed along the workroom; the girls dared not laugh outright, lest the sound brought Madame Brunetti, the head of the firm of Court dressmakers, to the door to inquire into the unseemly conduct.

"Don't be absurd!" cried Belle, with flaming cheeks. "It was nothing of the kind. It's too bad of you!"

The girls appeared to enjoy Belle's vexation and her indignant denial. They were a merry set and this teasing was all fun. Life in a dressmaking establishment is not so full of enjoyment that they could afford to forego a little joke.

"That remains to be proved," proceeded the accuser, with difficulty preserving a straight face. "It is well known that you and Jack are on excellent terms, to begin with."

"He helped me, and his mother helped me, long ago, and I tried to do him a good turn if I could, by speaking for him when Madame wanted a young fellow downstairs in the shop!" said Belle earnestly. "It was a better situation than he had, cleaner and more money. We are good friends, of course. Why shouldn't we be? But it's utterly wrong, what you are saying, and you are only doing it to tease and annoy me, and I won't listen!"

The self-constituted prosecuting counsel, still proceeding with her work, for it was a busy time, and the day's task had to be got through, was about to continue her speech when the joke was interrupted by a long whistle from the speaking tube. One girl answered the summons and called out to Belle that she was wanted in the showroom.

"I expect old Brown has seen you and she is going for you!" said the prosecuting advocate.

Belle smiled with exaggerated disdain and went downstairs to see Madame Brunetti, whose real name was, in fact, Brown.

Isabel Lawrence had been chaffed more than once about Jack Hassell, but the jesting had not assumed the present proportions. She was between seventeen and eighteen, and had had a hard struggle to support her crippled brother and herself since the death of her father. During the earlier part of this fight against want, she had received many kindnesses at the hands of Mrs. Hassell and also from Jack, who was about her own age and with whom she had lodged. Then Madame Brunetti, who had known her mother in former times, chanced to hear of her and assisted her to the extent of taking her as an apprentice without premium and paying her a fair wage for her work. From that time things began to look brighter for her.

Mrs. Hassell was a poor woman, and was glad when her boy was old enough to leave school and go out to work as an errand boy. He was a splendid specimen of a muscular lad, but his education had been greatly interrupted and his upbringing had been rough. The only thing he took to was music, and it really appeared as if the boy had an inborn passion for it. Neighbours said it was a pity that he couldn't have good training, but that was out of the question. Jack was a rough-an'-ready lad, and rough work fitted him better than clerical employment; but music has a refining influence and, after a time, under the combined influence of the music and Belle's society, his manners altered.

But Mrs. Hassell's health failed and she was taken to an infirmary, from which she was afterwards drafted to a Home. The little household was broken up; Belle and her brother going to lodge with someone else in the next street, and Jack making arrangements with his chum's mother to board him.

Belle had to wait a long time before she obtained an opportunity of doing Jack a good turn, but it came at last, as she herself has just mentioned.

"Miss Lawrence," said Madame as the girl entered. "Come along, please! I want you to put on this skirt; you are just about Mrs. Milner's height. The train is too long and she couldn't wait, so you must put it on while we mark how to shorten it. She wants it quickly. Very impulsive woman, she is! Never seems to have time to spare for anything!"

Belle stood erect while Madame and the first skirt hand, Miss Cliff, arranged the offending garment about her graceful figure. She was a budding woman and the satin skirt became her.

Madame left them to finish, intending to return in order to supervise, but a moment later she sent in for Miss Cliff, who obeyed the call at once, leaving Belle standing in the satin skirt.

The girl surveyed herself in the mirror and blushed prettily as she suddenly caught herself indulging in a little self-admiration. She turned her head away, but her thoughts wandered and she came to herself as she found that she was again looking in the mirror and that another form was also reflected therein.

"Jack!" she cried involuntarily, turning hastily to the young fellow, who was standing just behind her. "You mustn't come here!"

"I had to bring a parcel into this room, so I have a right to be here!" he remarked with a low laugh. "I say, Belle, you may call it flattery if you like, as you did the other day, but I can't help it! You're as pretty as—oh, I've forgotten the name of that statue, but it doesn't matter! You are pretty, and that's the plain truth. If you hadn't turned round, I should have looked at you all day."

"Don't be foolish, Jack, please don't, and go away!" she pleaded, anxious but not displeased. "I shall have the girls talking about us again!"

Digitized by Google

It appeared to be pleasing to Jack to learn that they were coupled by others, but he quickly realised that it was not fair to the girl.

"I'm very sorry, Belle," he said contritely. "I'll be off, but I must come round and see you this evening. I'm engaged to play in a concert and—that is, I want to talk to you about—what the girls say!"

There was great love in the eyes of the lad and Belle saw it. "Lad's love" some might have called it, scoffingly, but with him it was the beginning of a man's love. Belle, fingering the skirt in her excitement, gave a little cry; her hand had touched something which had been left in the pocket of the skirt. Not knowing what she was doing, she drew it out and saw that it was a purse.

"I say, that's been left in the pocket by the lady!" cried Jack, opening his eyes. "Better put it back and say nothing."

The door creaked as it opened. Belle hurriedly thrust the purse back into the pocket and Jack skipped lightly towards the door and assumed the air of one in considerable haste to do his work. Both were confused, and Belle, in her agitation, forgot to mention the fact that a purse was in the pocket.

The arrangement for shortening the dress was not of long duration now and Belle was in her chair in a few minutes, stitching away for dear life, as it seemed.

It was past eight before Belle reached home that evening, but she had hardly taken off her things before Jack Hassell arrived. Belle's brother welcomed Jack enthusiastically; he liked to hear the music and Jack had brought his violin.

"I'll leave you two," said Belle, "while I do a few odd things upstairs. I shall be down directly."

"Belle," cried her brother, "I have something to tell you! Oh, it will do when you come down, though!"

When she came back, she declared that Bob look fatigued and must go to bed. Bob demurred at first, but ultimately gave in and was helped upstairs by Belle and there he told her what had happened during the afternoon.

If Jack had counted on a quiet half hour with Belle, he was disappointed, for they were surprised by the sound of wheels stopping outside the door and a moment later the bell was pulled energetically. Mrs. Halliday, the landlady, answered the ring and unceremoniously ushered Madame Brunetti and Miss Cliff into the presence of the young couple.

The two visitors glanced at Belle and Jack and then at each other.

"Hum!" coughed Miss Cliff significantly. Madame's features assumed a sterner expression.

"I am here on an important errand, Miss Lawrence!" said Madame coldly. "Some money is missing and suspicion rests on you. I am bound to say that those suspicions receive some confirmation from the fact that you two are here together!"

Belle went pale and Jack's fists began to move uneasily.

"You had to try Mrs. Milner's dress on this afternoon," pursued Madame, before Belle could reply. "That skirt never went out of the hands of Miss Cliff and myself the whole time, except for five minutes! With the exception of that short time, my eyes were on that skirt the whole afternoon—all the while that Miss Cliff was engaged in shortening it and until it was delivered into Mrs. Milner's own hands. I took it to her myself, because I wished to be very attentive. Now, Mrs. Milner declares that there was a purse in the pocket containing two sovereigns and some silver, and a German silver coin which she prized highly. She had placed the purse in her pocket because she intended to wear the dress, but she changed her mind. She forgot to take the purse out. The purse was in the pocket when she examined the alteration in my presence, but the money was gone. It was only a tiny purse, so that's how it escaped Miss Cliff's notice."

"Then you mean——" began Belle.

"I mean that it will be better for you to give up the money and we will let the matter drop. I have no desire to prosecute you, although I cannot, of course, take you back in my employ!" said Madame stiffly.

"I did not take it!" cried Belle, indignantly.

"It's false!" exclaimed Jack, standing by the side of the girl and preparing to defend her.

"Do you deny that you knew there was a purse in the dress?" asked Miss Cliff, speaking for the first time and making a random shot. "Ah!" she cried as she noted the look that came over their faces. "Of course you knew it was there!"

"You were both in the room by yourselves, and you knew the purse was in the pocket," said Madame icily. "Your looks betray your guilt! Give me the money and consider that you are both out of a situation!"

Belle and Jack protested indignantly, and if there had been any chance of Jack's retaining his situation in Madame Brunetti's establishment he would certainly have lost that chance by his warm, not to say excited, defence of Belle. As to his own defence, he contented himself with the statement that he knew nothing of the contents of the purse.

"I have spent nothing since I left work this evening," said Belle. "I have only a few pence in my pocket. You are at liberty to search the place if you like. I can only say that I am innocent of this dreadful accusation."

"Of course she is!" declared Jack. "Anyone can see that! It's a thorough shame to come here and make such a charge! I'd sooner believe you took it yourself!"

"Don't, please don't!" whispered Belle, fearing that the energetic championship would injure rather than help her, although she was otherwise proud and glad to have such a friend at hand.

Madame flushed angrily at Jack's words.

"Do you deny that you knew there was a purse in the dress?"

Digitized by Google

"I daresay I shall be able to find proof sooner or later!" she cried petulantly. "I shouldn't be at all surprised to find the gold hidden away in something here!" In her anger, she went to the mantelpiece and began to shake the small vases. To the surprise of Belle and Jack, something rattled in one of them. Madame unceremoniously turned it upside down and out fell two sovereigns.

"I thought you were both very innocent!" sneered Madame. "Here is the gold and you have spent the silver; I suppose you will be telling me that you came straight home, and that you can produce all the shopkeepers along the route to prove you didn't purchase anything, or something equally absurd?"

"I didn't come straight home," said Belle helplessly, not knowing how the remark would be turned.

"Oh, it's clear as possible!" declared Madame haughtily. "You disposed of the silver—gave it to this boy, your companion in crime, no doubt! Well, let this be a warning to you, and think yourselves lucky that I did not have you arrested!"

She motioned arrogantly to Miss Cliff to follow her and swept out of the room. A minute later, Belle and Jack heard the sound of wheels.

"Whoever could have been wicked enough to put it there?" cried Belle, dropping into a chair and sobbing hysterically.

"It's like a conspiracy!" asserted Jack dejectedly. "But I don't see who did it! If Miss Cliff had touched the vases, I could have understood it."

Who could have done it? Bob's story was repeated to Jack, and it seemed to throw light on the mystery. He had been left alone in the house during the afternoon; being hot and tired of lying on the couch, he had got on his feet with the aid of crutches and had struggled to the window, which was open. As he appeared at the window, an elderly lady passed and, probably attracted by the wan face, had gazed lengthily at him; in trying to turn so as to avoid her gaze, he had slipped and hurt himself against the window frame.

The benevolent-looking lady had observed the tumble and, the street door having been left open, had entered and done what she could to relieve him. The question now was: "Had she slipped the two sovereigns into the vase?"

All three felt confident that she had, but could they find her in order to prove it?

Jack and Belle made all possible search and inquiry, but to no purpose, and they had to give up and face the difficulties of their position. They were without work and de arred from obtaining situations for want of a reference. Belle did a little dressmaking on her own account, but she did not succeed in obtaining sufficient to enable her to keep up her lodgings and she and her brother had to retire to a poorer neighbourhood, where she hired a small room. Jack did his best to get work and, failing regular employment, picked up a precarious living by doing odd jobs and occasionally playing his violin in the busiest streets in the evening.

Several months passed and things went from bad to worse with Belle; the weight of the unjust accusation and a hard life in a locality that was not congenial resulted in an illness which would have left the sister and brother destitute but for the loving care of Jack Hassell. He threw aside all feelings of pride and worked at anything honest; no matter what it was, he would do it in order to earn money to support his sweetheart—that was what he called her, although nothing had been said on either side. He earned most by his violin, however, and he fiddled away in the market streets to earn the coppers and take them to Belle.

Life was very dark to Belle just then, but it was cheered by the love of Jack, and that trial proved to be the darkest hour that comes before the dawn. Unable to get an odd job one day, Jack took his violin and went afield to a semi-fashionable locality to play. He played some old songs—such as "Annie Laurie"—and his attention was arrested at the conclusion of one song by a window being thrown up and a coin dropping at his feet. He looked at the window to see who the donor was and he gave a start of surprise. There sat a little lady, beaming benevolently at him, exactly in the manner described by Bob in the account of his strange visitor! Jack looked intently, remembering Bob's words and forgetting the silver coin.

"I believe she is the very one!" he gasped. "Oh, if she is! I must find out!"

He picked up the coin without looking at it and went straight to the steps leading to the front door. As he reached it, the door was opened by a maid.

"I was just coming after you!" she cried. "Mistress has thrown out a coin that she wants to keep—some old thing that she has taken a fancy to!"

"Bring him inside, Susan!" cried the old lady from within. "He was bringing it back! A very honest young fellow!"

"This is good!" muttered Jack with a touch of humour. "I was called a thief when I didn't steal anything, and now I'm very honest for taking back a coin that I'd no intention of taking back. Well, it gets me an introduction!"

Jack made no pretence, however. He owned that his object was not to restore the coin, for the reason that he had not looked at it, but to ask a question. Then he asked the benevolent lady if, on a certain day, she was going down a certain street and saw a boy at a window—and so on.

"I remember it!" cried the lady. "What about it?"

The little lady's distress was great on learning that her act of secret charity had helped to cause so much mischief.

"I will take steps to clear up the matter at once!" she said decisively. "I'll have a cab at once and go to the boy and his sister, and then to Madame Brunetti! Of course, I can't solve the mystery of the disappearance of the money, but I can clear you both to an extent. Oh, have you got that coin?"

Jack handed it over.

"Yes, yes," continued the lady. "That coin completes my collection of old German money. I must put it back; I took it out this morning to show a friend and I nearly lost it you see!"

"Yes, ma'am!" said Jack, for want of something to say.

"I bought it on the very day after I slipped those two sovereigns into the vase. I was so glad to get it! Mr. Spokes has been on the look-out for such a specimen for me during the past three years—it isn't very valuable, but I wanted it!"

Jack only heard part of the speech.

"Madame said there was an old German coin in that purse!" he cried. "I wonder——"

"If so," said the old lady, reading his thoughts, "we may catch the real thief! We'll see Mr. Spokes about that!"

Benevolent Mrs. Barrington did not do things by halves. She was busy for the next three or four hours, Jack being with her all the time. She went straight to Belle and made arrangements for the comfort of Bob and his sister. She next paid a visit to Madame Brunetti, where she explained the presence of the two sovereigns in the vase; then she went to Mrs. Milner, showed her the German coin and received a positive assurance that it was the one stolen from her. From Mrs. Milner to the shop of Mr. Spokes, and then, to the surprise of Jack, Mr. Spokes took a seat with them in the four-wheeler and they went back to Madame Brunetti.

"The description you give of the seller of that coin to you, Mr. Spokes," said Mrs. Barrington, "tallies so much with that of an employee of Madame Brunetti, that I wish you to see her!"

The young woman in question proved to be Miss Cliff, who reeled and grasped a heavy chair for support when she entered and found herself confronted by Mr. Spokes.

"I recognise her!" said that gentleman drily. "I think there is no need for me to say more!"

Miss Cliff confessed to having extracted the money from the purse while Madame was not looking, and begged abjectly for mercy. She was dismissed at once. Madame wished to reinstate Belle and Jack, but Mrs. Barrington said that she had other plans. She took Belle into her own household, sent Bob to an institution where he would have expert treatment, and placed Jack in a musical college.

There is to be a wedding soon, and the bridegroom is spoken of as a coming musician.

George Day.

Digitized by Google

- A - Deal in Journalism.

Telling of an Editress, an Author, and a Paper.

She was the editress of a smart ladies' weekly, and chanced furthermore to be a brunette, a dazzling beauty. He was an author of repute, and a splendid specimen of well-groomed English manhood.

They had met at the house of a mutual friend a month or so prior to the production of *Feminine Fancies* which, being published to supply an alleged long felt want, was destined to revolutionise the literary world—always supposing that it existed long enough to do so.

As to the latter supposition proving to be a correct one, Iris Berenger had no doubt, especially since Nigel Wallace, taken by her piquante loveliness, had agreed to write the opening serial at a figure which, had he but known, would have caused the editor of the *Metropolitan Magazine*, with whom he had contracted, to wriggle on his chair with envy,

As it was, noting the name of Nigel Wallace beneath the serial, he concluded that *Feminine Fancies* had a substantial financial backing, a belief which was substantiated by Wallace's reticence on the subject, when he tackled him on the matter.

"Oh, yes," he replied, smiling amusedly when he remembered that his account was four weeks overdue. "I am getting a very fair screw, thanks."

"It's the best thing you have done so far," grumbled Williams. "It beats ours hollow."

"As does their screw yours," laughed Wallace, as he left the editorial sanctum.

In the street, the smile deepened. For a moment he stood on the kerb, then, hailing a hansom, he stepped inside, saying as he did so:

"The F.F. Publishing Co., Ltd., Fetter Lane."

The smile intensified, as, leaning back in the hansom, he waited till it pulled up in front of the offices of *Feminine Fancies*.

"Is Miss Berenger in?" Wallace inquired of the commissionaire.

"Yes, sir," he answered, with a grin. "The whole staff's in—preparing the double number."

An audible titter broke from the lips of two messenger boys, who lounged in the hall-way.

Wallace heard the sardonic merriment and knew the significance of it. As he had guessed, the journal had run its course, and salaries were evidently owing.

Outwardly he was placid, inwardly he foamed, though his calm, immobile features did not betray by a single twitch the tempest of fury which raged within.

"Kindly inform Miss Berenger that I should like to see her." His accents were so frigid that the tittering behind him ceased abruptly.

"Yes, sir." The commissionaire forgot his facetiousness, as he telephoned the novelist's name to the editorial realms. For a moment he listened, then added, "Miss Berenger says, will you write?"

"I am afraid that there will not be time," he said gravely. "Will you kindly tell Miss Berenger that I shall only keep her a moment. My business is *re* next week's instalment of the serial. I think that she may see me if you tell her that."

"All right, sir," grinned the man, as, calling the telephone again into requisition, he bellowed into the receiver, "Mr. Wallace wants to see you about next week's instalment of the serial."

Wallace could have cheerfully broken his neck at that moment. As it was, he merely flung the best end of his cigar with unnecessary violence, into the middle of the street. The commissionaire was irritating in his ill-timed levity.

"Miss Berenger says, will you step up," the man remarked with a yawn, as leaning back in his box, he took a well-thumbed daily from a ledge beside him and commenced to read it.

Wallace did not reply, but raced up the stairs two steps at a time till he stood outside the editorial room. He tapped at the door, and, receiving an invitation to enter, did so.

"Good afternoon, Miss Berenger!" he said, easily, as he crossed the room to where she sat at her desk. "As I chanced to be in the vicinity, I thought that I would drop in myself and give you the next instalment of my serial personally. I wanted to speak to you on a few matters."

He bent his keen, grey eyes on her searchingly as he spoke, to find that her gaze faltered before his, whilst a dull flush mounted to her temples.

"You—you have come for the cheque—which I owe you?" she suggested, timidly, tugging nervously at a stray bit of ribbon, depending from the wrist of her dainty blouse. "I know that I ought to—to—have sent it before, but——" She paused, then added quickly—"How much does the account work out at, Mr. Wallace?"

"Thirty-two pounds," he replied briskly, gazing at the ceiling. "That, of course, includes the present instalment, which I have brought with me." Wallace placed a roll of neatly-written M.S. on the desk before her.

"Thirty-two pounds!" she echoed helplessly, her eyes brimming with tears. "I—I had no idea—I owed you so much?"

"No?" he laughed, easily, glancing at her out of the corner of his eye the while. "You asked for the last two instalments to be close on three thousand words longer, did you not?"

She nodded her head mutely.

"Hence the increase of the account," he said lightly, gazing smilingly at the face she turned to his, and reading its dumb helplessness. "Do you chance to have the advance of number twelve? I forget if Enock got out at Charing Cross or the Temple to pick up that clue."

A grey look stole over the pretty face before him, which had lost all its mutinous beauty.

"An advance copy!" she said huskily, her lips commencing to quiver ominously.

Digitized by Google

"A galley pull will do," he replied mercilessly, seating himself in a comfortable arm-chair at the corner of the desk.

A silence followed his remark. A silence so tense, that the ticking of the tiny timepiece on Iris Berenger's desk, alone broke the stillness, till its feeble sound was drowned by the echo of a woman's sob.

"I—I don't think that there will—be a number—twelve," she said quiveringly. "I—I am awaiting a telegram from—a gentleman before whom I put the matter. If I get a wire from him—all will be well. If not—I shall be bankrupt and have to——"

Her voice broke, and he remained silent.

"Well," he said abruptly. "When is this telegram likely to turn up?"

"You don't believe me?" she faltered, glancing at him with brimming eyes.

"I never said that I did not," he remarked quietly. "But I am an eminently business man, and *Feminine Fancies* owes me thirty-two pounds!"

"You shall be paid—every farthing!" she said abruptly.

"*If* the telegram turns up," he said, whimsically.

"Without that condition, Mr. Wallace."

"How? There will be other creditors besides myself."

"I—I shall sell up—my—flat!" she faltered, her accents dying away in a whisper.

Feminine endurance has its limit, and she had reached hers. As the last word left her lips her courage vanished. Hot, scalding tears, which no effort of will on her part could control, splashed down on the hands which nervously gripped the desk before her.

In an instant the smile vanished from his face, as rising from his chair, he laid his hand on her shoulder, saying, in a voice which was strangely unlike his own—

"Miss Berenger. Please don't think that I came here to worry you about my cheque. If I spoke to you bluntly a few moments ago it was only that you should be able to appreciate your position in this affair."

"Do you think that I have not been able to do that for a month past?" she interrupted bitterly, dashing the tears angrily from her eyes.

"All the better then, for I have a business proposition to make."

"A business proposition to make?" she echoed, wonderingly.

"Precisely," he said, drily. "I believe that there is a future in front of this little paper, and that being so, I propose to finance it."

"Mr. Wallace!" Iris Berenger started to her feet in surprise. "*You!*"

"Exactly! Always supposing that you are agreeable to the arrangement," he said, smiling.

"Of course, you would not let me continue to edit it, I suppose?" she said, wistfully. "You want the journal free of all conditions. I am not in a position to impose them. I accept your proposal."

"Good," he said, briskly. "Then I will have the deed confirming the sale drawn up by my solicitors to-morrow. As to the editorship, I don't think I should want you to do that!"

He spoke thoughtfully.

"You do not consider me sufficiently capable in that capacity?" she said, colouring.

He flushed.

"It isn't that," he cried, impetuously. "I—oh, Iris, it is no use beating about the bush! I love you, dear, and if I don't want you to be the editress of this paper, it is because I want you to be my wife! I am not going to have your little head bothered with business worries, if I can—that is, if you will let me prevent it."

"But——" she hesitated, then raised her eyes, bright still with tears, to his.

A strange light illumined them, a sudden wealth of love and pleading looking up at him from their velvet depths.

"Let there be no 'buts' dearest," he said, hoarsely, as he ventured to draw her slim figure to his. "I have loved you from the very first moment I saw you at the Soulby's 'At Home,' and I have loved you ever since. I have had it on my tongue to tell you this a score of times, yet have somehow or other always failed to do so. I was afraid that I might lose you if I were too precipitate.

"I love you, darling, love you as man has never yet loved woman! I want you to resign your position as editress of this paper in favour of that which will be yours as my wife! Will you, Iris, darling?" he cried pleadingly, as drawing her slender figure to his he rained passionate kisses on her resistless lips. "Will you, dearest?"

A flash of her old mutinous defiance leapt into her eyes, to fade, as burying her face against his shoulder she shyly whispered:

"I think that I will hand in my resignation, dear, and——"

An impetuous kiss stayed her further utterance, and before she could speak again a knock at the office door caused them to start aside as though in guilty confusion.

"Come in," she said, quickly.

In answer to the summons the door was pushed open, and the Commissionaire walked in.

"Mr. Griffin, the paper man, is here, and wants his cheque," he said insolently. "And it's about time he got it, I reckon."

"Send him up," said Wallace frigidly, eyeing the man before him, as he placed his hands behind his back. "Jones, there are going to be some changes in this paper before the week is out. Oddly enough, you are going to be the first one! Your talents are lost in this office, and such being the case, I have decided that you shall leave next Saturday."

The Commissionaire stared surprisedly at the novelist, who, fixing a monocle in his eye, looked fixedly at him.

"Thank you for nothing!" he said defiantly. "I don't need no notice when the paper's a dead un!"

"That is where you make the mistake," replied Wallace coolly. "I will trouble you to kindly inform those two errand boys below that their services will be dispensed with after next Saturday as well."

"Who are you to give orders, I'd like to know, in this office?" retorted the man, insolently.

"Who am I?" replied Wallace, placidly. "I am the new proprietor."

Tristram K. Monck.

Ten Gramophones for Ten Sentences.

It is quite the exception to find people who don't like music; there are many who are fond of it, but yet either cannot make it themselves or if they can are not able to afford to buy a piano or other musical instrument. To such, a Gramophone would be an inestimable boon. The only thing you have to do to get the sound is to put in the record of the song or piece you want to hear and then set the machine in motion.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by writing on the back of a post-card the best and longest sentence you can in which the last letter of one word is the first letter of the next. For example: Racing (g) ives (s) ome (e) ducated (d) onkeys (s) erious (s) orrow.

A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers who submit the best sentences.

Post-cards only must be addressed to the SAME LETTER EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, March 3rd.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors may only enter on that understanding.

Digitized by Google

Plenty of Encouragement.

"Has she given you any encouragement?" "Oh, yes! She says she will get all her father's money some day."

It Was so Sudden.

Frank Frankleigh: "Yes, Miss Antique, to be frank with you——" Miss Antique (with a chirp): "Oh, Mr. Frankleigh, of course you may be Frank with me—but this is so sudden."

A Penetrating Voice.

Mr. Wickwire: "What is that woman across the way trying to sing?" Mrs. Wickwire: "'My Sweetheart's the Man in the Moon.'" Mr. Wickwire: "Well, if he doesn't hear her it isn't her fault."

He Knew the Look of Paste.

Mrs. Shears (in a jeweller's shop buying diamonds): "I wish my husband were here." Jeweller: "Is he an authority on diamonds, madam?" Mrs. Shears: "Not exactly; he is an editor, and knows paste whenever he sees it."

No Need for Alarm.

Father: "I am inexpressibly shocked. Your mother tells me that you are engaged to three young men." Daughter: "Don't alarm yourself, papa. They are all football players, and when the season closes I can marry the survivor, you know."

What the Initials Meant.

Angelina: "That was a lovely engagement ring you gave me last night, dear; but what do those initials, 'E. C.' mean on the inside?" Edwin (who had bestowed the ring before, and had it back): "Why—er—that—is—don't you know that is the new way of stamping eighteen carats?"

Hard Work Selling It.

She: "Do you know, Mr. Smithy, you painters are a perfect enigma to me. You work about a month in twelve, turn out one picture or so, and then seem perfectly satisfied. What you do during the other eleven months, goodness only knows! I don't." He: "You'd soon learn, though, if you'd the said picture to sell."

He Interrupted Her.

"No, George," faltered the maiden. "I fear it cannot be. I admire you as a gentleman, I respect you as a friend, but—" "Laura!" he exclaimed, "before you pass sentence, hear me out. A recent lucky stroke in business has enabled me to buy a beautiful house in Kensington, which shall be in your name. I will insure my life for ten thousand pounds, and——" "George," calmly interposed the lovely girl, "you interrupted me. I was about to say that the sentiments of respect and esteem I feel for you, though so strong, are feeble in comparison with the deep love which I—which I—which I have long—don't, George, dear." For George had interrupted her again.

Other Things to Think About.

She: "Do you think of me as much as you did?" Cholly: "No, not quite. I'm raising a moustache now."

Only Her Bonnet.

He: "My dear, here's someone with the green-groceries." She: "Those are not vegetables. That's my new bonnet."

An Incriminating Question.

She: "Do you make love to every girl you know, as you do to me?" Young Lawyer: "My dear young lady, you should not ask a question that would tend to incriminate the witness."

Good Value for Money.

She (on the honeymoon): "I suppose, George, it must have cost a lot of money to build a railway like this?" He: "Oh, yes. The tunnels alone cost a million or so—but they're worth every penny of it."

Complimentary!

Mrs. Hard: "Do have some more cream, Miss Sweetooth!" Miss Sweetooth (hesitatingly): "Well, just a little, Mrs. Hard. Only a mouthful." Mrs. Hard: "Bridget, fill Miss Sweetooth's plate up again."

That Troublesome Cook.

Mrs. Newed: "We will have to have a speaking tube from the dining-room to the kitchen." Mr. Newed: "Why?" Mrs. Newed: "Well—I must get some way of talking to the cook without having her throw dishes at me."

Wanted the Lot.

He was a buyer in a large wholesale house, and he was in love. One night he snatched a kiss. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "I am so well pleased with this sample that I should like to negotiate for all you have." He was accepted on the spot.

The Only Thing to be Done.

She: "Just think, Edgar, I ordered the dressmaker to make me a dress for the street, and she has sent me a travelling costume instead." He: "Well, what are you going to do about it?" She: "All we can do is to take a trip abroad."

How He Satisfied His Wants.

Romantic Miss: "Have there not been moments in your experience when life seemed full of unsatisfied wants?" Mr. Hardhead: "Y-e-s, that's so." "At such times I always fly to music for relief. What do you do, Mr. Hardhead?" "I advertise."

Bargain in Telegrams.

There was a vivacious smile on her face which was winsome. "Oh, dear me," she murmured happily, "I've just got such a bargain!" "How, dear?" inquired her friend. "I sent a telegram—only sixpence for twelve words, and at least six of them were words of more than three syllables!"

Rather Mixed.

"I don't know what you ever saw in me to admire, she remarked demurely. "Oh, well, you know, little one, a fellow who *is* anything doesn't look for mere beauty in a girl. It's——" He stopped, because his heart was all right; and, besides, he wasn't entirely a born fool—only impetuous and thoughtless in his way.

Quaker Wooing.

"Martha, dost thou love me?" said a young Quaker. "Why, Seth, we are commanded to love one another." "Ah, Martha, but dost thou feel what the world calls love?" "I hardly know what to tell thee, Seth. I have tried to bestow my love upon all, but I have sometimes thought perhaps that thou wast getting more than thy share."

Digitized by Google

OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Talbot's Adventures.

ALTHOUGH Miss Talbot spoke so confidently of revelations that should accompany the expected meal, it is idle to pretend that any of the three people who were cognisant of Talbot's mysterious appearance on the island betrayed undue haste to return to the waiting launch.

Sublimely unconscious of the excitement raging in their breasts Sir Hubert Fitzjames could not understand why they each and all answered him in such a flurried manner when he dilated upon the beauties of the bay. Finally he turned to Edith with an air of apprehension.

"I fear," he said, "that your expedition of last night has upset you. Have you a headache?"

Then she could contain her news no longer. Drawing him close to the rampart, and bending down so as to apparently take a deep interest in the laughing excursionists beneath, she murmured:

"Listen to me carefully, uncle. Upon no account look round. Have you noticed the party of Turks and a Frenchman grouped together in the opposite corner?"

"Yes," he said. "You do not mean to tell me that they are the people whom Mr. Brett met this morning at the station?"

"Yes, unquestionably they are. Had your attention not been otherwise taken up you must have recognised them from their description. But the most marvellous thing remains. You know the little turret close to which they are standing?"

"Yes."

"Well, in the staircase leading to the top, and leaning out through a window, trying to hear what they are saying, is Jack!"

"What an extraordinary thing," said the major-general, who was really very annoyed that such a meeting should have taken place under his very nose and yet its significance should remain hidden from him.

"Can we do anything?" he added.

"Nothing save to remain here a little while longer and be most careful not to appear to have the least knowledge of their identity. I have told you lest we might chance to meet Jack face to face, and you should be taken by surprise if you recognised him."

"Is he in disguise, then?" gasped her uncle.

"Yes, in a sense. Mr. Brett has put him into a sort of French working-man's holiday suit. He looks so odd, but it is evident that neither Grosjean nor the Turks have the least suspicion of his presence. It was very clever of Jack to get into that turret without alarming them."

They were joined by Daubeney and Fairholme, and Edith knew by a single glance at the expressive expanse of the former's face that, should he be again brought into close proximity to the Turks and her brother, it was quite possible the quick-witted Grosjean might detect the look of interested amazement which must inevitably appear upon his honest British countenance.

"Bobby," she said at once, "I want you and Mr. Daubeney to go down to the launch and await us there. We will join you in a few minutes."

"Certainly," was the reply, for Fairholme knew that some motive lay behind the request. "You cannot do much by remaining here, can you, so I suppose you will not be long?"

"No; uncle and I will survey the view until it is firmly fixed in our minds. After that it is full steam ahead for the Hotel du Louvre."

The two young men disappeared down the stairs leading to the courtyard. On their way they encountered a number of holiday makers, climbing up to the top of the tower. In they came, twenty or more of them, and promptly spread themselves around the walls, the Marseillais amongst them indicating to their country cousins points of interest in the city and around the coast.

At this moment, too, the siren of the small pleasure steamer at the quay announced she was about to make her hourly trip back to the town. Whereupon Grosjean and the Turks, having apparently ended their consultation, crossed the roof and disappeared down the staircase.

Instantly Jack Talbot strolled after them, but no sooner had the bulky form of Grosjean—who was the last of his party—vanished than Talbot ran towards his uncle and sister, and said rapidly:

"Dubois and the girl have gone to Palermo. Grosjean and the Turks have been in communication with the Sultan, and there is a movement on foot to buy back the diamonds. That is all that I can tell you now, but let Mr. Brett know. When I have seen these chaps safely home, I will at once come to the hotel."

Then he, too, vanished.

Edith felt a thrill of elation that her good judgment should have led her to remain sufficiently long on the tower to glean such important information.

When Brett heard the news it seemed to annoy him.

"I feared as much," he said. "I had not much faith in the patriotism of the young Turks. I wonder how much the Sultan has offered. It must be a severe wrench for him to dip his hands into his money-bags, and Dubois will certainly demand a handsome figure before he disgorges his booty. However, we must possess our souls in peace until Talbot comes here and tells us all that he has learnt. At this moment I cannot help marvelling at the strange coincidence which should have led the Turks and yourself to select the Château d'If for a morning stroll. I fully expected

Digitized by Google

that Grosjean would be in bed. He must have received some startling intelligence to keep him away from his rest after a long journey. Meanwhile, I have not been idle."

Every one awaited with interest his next words, for Brett seldom made such a remark without having something out of the common to communicate.

"I telephoned to Paris," he explained, "to tell the prefecture that Grosjean and the Turks had arrived at Marseilles. The police were surprised, and perhaps a little sore, that they had not discovered the fact for themselves, but when I soothed them down they informed me that 'Le Ver'—the diminutive scoundrel whom we rescued from the Rue Barbette—had faithfully kept his appointment with me at the Grand Hotel yesterday.

"It seems that he was much upset when he learnt that I had left. He went straight to the commissary to inform him that, contrary to expectations, the Turks were acting in complete accord with mademoiselle's father. This naturally puzzled the commissary a good deal, and the affair became still stranger when an attaché from the Turkish Embassy called a little later and urged the police to do all in their power to discover the whereabouts of Hussein ul Mulk, as he was particularly anxious to have a friendly talk with him.

"Close on the heels of the Turk came a confidential messenger from the British Embassy, requesting the latest details and, when questioned by the commissary, this man admitted that he had in the first instance called to see me at the Grand Hotel.

"In a word, Miss Talbot, I had suspected the existence of the negotiations, which your brother's smart piece of work this morning has confirmed."

Whilst they were talking Fairholme took Daubeney on one side, and with Brett's permission gave him a detailed account of the whole affair.

The Honourable James Daubeney was delighted to be mixed up in this international imbroglio. He told the earl that the *Blue-Bell* was at his disposal at any moment of the day or night she might be required. Indeed, he forthwith excused himself on the ground that certain little formalities were requisite before he could clear the harbour, and he must hurry off to attend to these immediately.

"I tell you what," he added, with his hand on the door, "I will come back and dine with you, if I may, at half-past seven, because I shall not sleep to-night until I hear how things are going on. But I promise you, if I meet a single Turk between here and the harbour, I will cross over to the other side of the street."

No one quite knew what he meant by this portentous guarantee, but it was evident that Daubeney, if nothing else, was a man of action, and his yacht might become very useful.

He had hardly quitted the hotel when a waiter announced that a young Frenchman wished to see Mr. Brett.

"Show him up," said the barrister, and a moment later Talbot entered. He stood near the door twiddling his hat in his hand until the waiter had gone. Then he told them what had happened since he took up his quarters at the Hotel des Jolies Femmes.

"When I got there," he said, "I was under the impression that Grosjean and the Turks were in bed. I hired my room, sent my tin box there, and then settled myself in the café to smoke cigarettes and read these vile Marseilles newspapers until lunch time. You may judge my surprise when I saw the three Turks and Grosjean come out into the street and ask a waiter the way to the post-office.

"They set off, and, being sure of their destination, I did not quit the café myself until they were well out of sight. Then I walked away in the same direction, inquired of a policeman the quickest way to reach the post-office, and stepped out rapidly.

"I had not gone far when I overtook them. They reached the building. The Turks remained in the street and Grosjean went inside, so I followed him and found him inquiring for letters at the Poste Restante department. Whereupon I sent a telegram to London."

"Who on earth did you telegraph to, Jack?" broke in Edith.

"To my shirt-maker, telling him to put a couple of dozens in hand at once."

This unexpected answer evoked a general titter.

"The funny thing to me," said Talbot, "was the effect of the message on the telegraph clerk. He could evidently read English, and he surveyed me curiously, for in my present appearance I looked a most unlikely person to order shirts by telegram from a well-known London house. However, I achieved my purpose, which was to overhear Grosjean's request. He asked if there were any letters for M. Isidor de Rion."

"Good gracious," cried Edith, "what a swell name for that fat man."

The Race.

"Well, anyhow it was effective. There was a letter for him, and he evidently only expected one, for, before the clerk who handed it to him was able to examine the remainder of the packet, he tore it open, glanced briefly at its contents, and then hurried out to join his friends in the street. After a short conclave they entered a café and procured a railway guide. I tried hard to find out what section of the book Grosjean was looking at, but failed, for the double reason that he did not consult the Turks, nor did he seem to make up his mind, for he looked through the book, sighed impatiently and suggested to the others that they should go out again. I followed them into the Cannebière, and thence down towards the harbour. When we reached the quay a small pleasure steamer was whistling for passengers, and a placard announced a fifty-centimes return trip to the Chateau d'If.

"Seemingly on the spur of the moment, Grosjean invited the others to accompany him. It probably occurred to him that the island would supply a safe nook in which they could talk without fear of observation, as their presence on board the steamer would stamp them as excursionists. So, of course, I followed them. When we reached the island, I quickly perceived that the castle filled the whole of it. Therefore, in place of keeping behind them I went in front. We all passed on with the stream of sightseers until we reached the court-yard.

"I had never been in the place before, but Grosjean seemed to know it well. Owing to my policy of preceding them I found myself halted for a moment at the foot of the stairs leading to the tower. It struck me that the Frenchman was making in this direction, so I took the chance and ran up. I reached the top and looked over before the party had entered the doorway at the bottom. They came in. Thus far I was right. I looked around, and found, as you know, the square roof surrounded by bare battlements with a turret in one corner.

"I decided instantly that it would be hopeless to try to get close to them if they halted at any other point save in the vicinity of the turret. Elsewhere I must remain too far away to catch any portion of their conversation. So I darted across and entered the turret, noting on my way up the stairs the existence of the loopholed window where you finally saw me.

"It would never do to be caught there, so I went to the top and peeped over. You can guess how delighted I was when they came straight across and settled themselves in the angle beneath. Then I crept halfway down the stairs and leant as far as I dared through the loophole, being just in time to hear Grosjean read a letter from his daughter.

"The letter was quite short. It told him that H. had decided to leave France, and had made arrangements to proceed at once to Palermo, whither the writer would accompany him.

"One sentence I remember exactly: 'H.,' she wrote, 'has friends in Sicily, and he feels assured of a kind reception at their hands.'"

"Friends," interrupted Brett, "that means brigands!"

"The information seemed to annoy the Turks very much. They were very angry at what they described as the enforced delay, and discussed with Grosjean the quickest means of

Digitized by Google

reaching Palermo forthwith. Then he told them that he had endeavoured to find out the trains running through Italy to Messina but they could not leave Marseilles until to-night, and he thought it best that they should have a quiet talk on the situation before deciding too hurriedly upon any line of action.

"The rest of their conversation was inconsequent and desultory, alluding evidently to some project which they had fully discussed before. But it is quite clear from the drift of their remarks that an emissary from the Sultan had approached Hussein ul Mulk, and had offered such terms for the recovery of the diamonds that not only were the Young Turkish party in Paris eager to compromise with him, but they had succeeded in convincing Grosjean that Dubois also would be likely to accept the proposition."

Brett smiled grimly. "The commissary in Paris always follows up the wrong person," he said. "Had he only used his wits yesterday morning he would have discovered that the agent of the Embassy got in touch with Hussein ul Mulk. Hence the presence of the quartette in Marseilles to-day."

Talbot was naturally mystified by this remark until Brett explained to him the circumstances already known to the reader.

"Was there anything else?" inquired the barrister, reverting to the chief topic before them.

"Only this. I gathered that Grosjean did not know his daughter's whereabouts in Marseilles, but she had arranged that if circumstances necessitated her departure from the town she would leave a letter for him in the Poste Restante, giving him full details. Nevertheless this presupposes the knowledge on her part that he would come to Marseilles, so I assume therefore that telegrams must have passed between them yesterday afternoon."

"Obviously!" said Brett. "Anything else?"

"Yes," and now Talbot's voice took a note of passion that momentarily surprised his hearers. "It seems to me that this underhanded arrangement, if it goes through, condones the murder of poor Mehemet Ali and his assistants, and places upon me the everlasting disgrace of having permitted this thing to happen, whilst an important and special mission was intrusted to my sole charge by the Foreign Office. Dubois has been able to commit his crime, get away with the diamonds, hoodwink all of us most effectually, and, in the result, obtain a huge reward from the Turkish Government for his services. I tell you, Mr. Brett, I won't put up with it. I will follow him to the other end of the world, and, at any rate, take personal vengeance upon the man who has ruined my career. For, no matter what you say, the only effective way in which I can rehabilitate myself with my superiors is to hand back those diamonds to the custody of the Foreign Office. No matter how the panic-stricken sovereign in Yildiz Kiosk may sacrifice his servants to gain his own ends, I, at least, have a higher motive. It rests upon my shoulders to prove that the British Government is not to be humbugged by Paris thieves or Turkish agitators. If I fail in that duty there remains to me the personal motive of revenge upon my betrayers."

"No, Edith; it is useless to argue with me," for his sister had risen and placed her arms lovingly round his neck in the effort to calm him. "My mind is made up. I suppose Mr. Brett feels that his inquiry is ended. For me it is just commenced."

The young man's justifiable rage created a sensation which was promptly allayed by Brett's cool voice.

"May I ask," he said, "what reason you have to suppose that I should so readily throw up the sponge and leave Monsieur Henri Dubois the victor in this contest?"

"Do you mean," cried Talbot, starting to his feet, "that you will stand by me?"

"Stand by you!" echoed the barrister, yielding himself for an instant to the electrical condition of things. "Of course I will. We will recover those diamonds and bring them back with us to London if we have to take them out of the Sultan's palace itself!

"And now, Lord Fairholme," he added, before Talbot could do other than grasp his hand and shake it impulsively, "we want your friend's yacht. We will set out for Palermo at the first possible moment. We must reach there many hours, perhaps a whole day before Dubois, who is on a sailing vessel, and even with the start he has obtained cannot hope to equal the performance of a fast steamer. Let Grosjean and his Turks travel overland. We will beat them, too. Come, now, no more talk, but action. You, Fairholme, go ahead and prepare Daubeney. I will see to your luggage being packed. Talbot and I will join you in half an hour."

"Eh! what is that?" broke in Sir Hubert. "Fairholme, Talbot, you—what are Edith and I going to do?"

"Mr. Brett, of course," said Edith, in her steady, even tones, "did not trouble to include us, uncle, because we shall be on the yacht first. A woman can always pack up much better than a man, you know, and I will look after you, dear."

Brett gave one glance at her flushed and smiling face, and forthwith abandoned argument as useless.

An hour later the *Blue-Bell* was skimming merrily past the outer lighthouse in Marseilles bay. For a wonder the Gulf of Lyons was not boisterous, so they had a pleasant journey through the night, and Daubeney assured them that his handsome yacht was doing twelve knots an hour without being pressed.

The next morning they reached the Straits of Bonifacio, and here they had to slacken speed somewhat, for the navigation of that rocky channel was difficult and dangerous. Far behind them they could see a huge steamer approaching. As the morning wore on this vessel came nearer, and Daubeney, important now in his capacity of commander, announced that she was the P. and O. steamship *Ganges*, bound for Brindisi and the East, *viâ* the Straits of Messina.

"She left Marseilles at a late hour last night," he said, "and will call at Brindisi for the Indian mails."

An idea suddenly struck Brett. "Do you know how fast she is steaming?" he inquired.

"Oh, about thirteen and a half knots an hour. That is her best rate. The P. and O. boats are not flyers, you know."

"And does she stop at Messina?"

Daubeney now caught the drift of the barrister's questions.

"No, I don't think so, but Macpherson, my chief engineer, will probably tell us."

Macpherson was produced, a bearded and grizzled personage, hailing from Dundee. Being a Scotsman he would not commit himself.

"I havena' hear-rd o' the P. and O. ships stoppin' at Messeena," he announced, "but aiblins they wad if they got their price." And "Mac" would not commit himself any further.

Another hour passed, and the *Ganges* was now almost alongside. Although both ships were well through the Straits of Bonifacio, and the *Ganges* should have followed a course a point or two north of that pursued by the *Blue-Bell*, she appeared to be desirous to come close to them.

Digitized by Google

Suddenly the reason became apparent. A line of little flags fluttered up to her mast-head.

"She is signalling us," cried Daubeney excitedly. "Here you," he shouted to a sailor, "bring Jones here at once."

Jones was the yacht's expert signaller. He approached with a telescope and a code under his arm. After a prolonged gaze and a careful scrutiny of the code, he announced:

"This is how the message reads: 'Turks on board. Stopping Messina.—WINTER.'"

For once the barrister was startled out of his usual quiet self-possession.

"Winter!" he almost screamed. "Is he there?"

A hundred mad questions coursed through his brain, but he realised that to attempt a long explanation by signals was not only out of the question, but could not fail to attract the attention of passengers on board the *Ganges*. This he did not desire to do. Quick as lightning, he decided that by some inexplicable means the Scotland Yard detective had reached Marseilles full of the knowledge that Dubois and the diamonds were *en route* to Sicily, and had also learnt that he, Brett, and the others were on board the *Blue-Bell*.

He had evidently taken the speediest means of reaching the island, and found himself on board the same ship as Grosjean and the Turks. Hence he had approached the captain with the request that the *Blue-bell* should be signalled.

"What shall we answer?" said Daubeney, breaking in upon the barrister's train of thought.

"Oh, say that the signal is fully understood."

Whilst the answering flags were being displayed Daubeney asked:

"What does it all mean?"

"It means," said Brett, "that if the *Blue-Bell* has another yard of speed in her engines we shall need it all. It perhaps will make no material difference in the long run, but as a mere matter of pride I should like to reach Palermo before Grosjean. If I remember rightly Palermo is six hours from Messina by rail. Can we do it?"

"Mac" was again consulted. Of course he would not commit himself.

"We will try ver-ry ha-r-rd," he said.

And with this resolve the *Blue-Bell* sped onwards through the sunlit sea until, late in the evening, the *Ganges* was hull down on her quarter.

Macpherson came on deck to take a last look at the P. and O.

"It will be a gr-reat race," he announced, "and I may have to kill a stoker. But——"

Then he dived below again.

The Message.

So rapidly did the *Blue-Bell* speed over the inland sea that as night fell upon the face of the waters on the second day out from Marseilles the look-out forrard announced "a light on the starboard bow," and Daubeney, after scrutinising it through his binoculars and consulting a chart, announced it to be the revolving light on Cape San Vito.

This discovery occasioned a slight alteration in the course. The *Blue-Bell* ran merrily on until the small hours of the morning, when everybody on board was suddenly awakened by the stoppage of the screw.

This is always a disturbing incident at sea when people are asleep. Travellers not inured to the incidents of ocean voyaging cannot help conjuring up vivid pictures of impending disaster.

It is useless to tell them that for the very reason the ship has slackened her speed it is obvious she is being navigated with care and watchfulness. Reason at such time is dethroned by the natural timidity of the unseen, and it is not surprising therefore that the passengers on board the *Blue-Bell* should one and all find some pretext to gain the deck in their eagerness to find out why the vessel had slowed down. The answer was a reassuring one. She had burnt a flare for a pilot, and quickly an answering gleam came from afar out of the darkness ahead.

The pilot was soon on board. He was an Italian, but, like most members of his profession doing business in those waters, he spoke French fluently.

A Minister Cured by Bile Beans.

Indigestion Completely Banished After the Doctor had Failed.

EVERY class is represented in the unanimous chorus of praise of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans, from titled persons, ministers, and leaders of commerce down to the miner, the artizan, and the humble workers in the fields.

Here is a letter received recently by the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co. from the Rev. Joseph Lindsey, of Spalding, Lincs. He writes as follows:

"Donington, Spalding.

"DEAR SIRS,—I beg to add my testimony to the benefit I have derived from the use of your Bile Beans. Some short time ago I was a sufferer from indigestion, which brought on severe pain. My doctor prescribed for me, and I was shut up in my room for three weeks, but nothing seemed to give me relief. I then determined to try Chas. Forde's Bile Beans, having seen the advertisements in the paper that they were invaluable for indigestion and liver disorders. So I sent for a box from the chemist, and to my surprise—for I had always looked with a little doubt upon advertised remedies—when I had taken only a few doses I felt great relief. I continued taking the Beans until I was completely cured, and there has been no return of the ailment. I can now eat and enjoy a hearty meal as well as anyone else, and I owe my present good health entirely to persevering with Bile Beans.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Rev.) JOSEPH LINDSEY."

Again and again Chas. Forde's Bile Beans have been shown to be an absolute specific for indigestion, biliousness, headache, weakness, liver and kidney disorders, pains in the side, loins and back, constipation, piles, dizziness, sleeplessness, nervousness, anæmia, and all female ailments. Also for colds, chill, neuralgia, lumbago, rheumatism, and as a preventive of influenza.

The action of Bile Beans is perfectly natural. They regulate the flow of bile, on which the whole process of digestion turns. If this bile—which acts upon the partly-digested food after it has left the stomach—be deficient in quantity, the process of digestion is not fully completed, and the food fermenting in the intestines, gives rise to flatulence, belching, and severe abdominal pains. If, on the other hand, the bile be in excess, then part of it becomes absorbed into the blood along with the food, causing what we know as biliousness. This, again, throws more work on the kidneys; they become deranged, the natural waste products which should be discharged as soluble urea become converted into insoluble uric acid, and rheumatism, lumbago, and other kindred ailments result. It will thus be seen that by acting directly upon the liver, Bile Beans remove the cause of so many ailments, varied in nature, yet all arising primarily from disorder of this most important organ.

Bile Beans may be had of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., on receipt of prices 1/1½ or 2/9 (2/9 box contains three times 1/1½ size). They are only sold in sealed boxes; never loose.

Digitized by Google

Brett asked him how long, with the north-easterly breeze then blowing, a small sailing vessel, such as a schooner-rigged fishing-smack, would take to reach Palermo from Marseilles.

The pilot seemed surprised at the question.

"It is a trip not often made, monsieur," he said. "Fishing vessels from Marseilles are frequently compelled to take shelter under the lee of Corsica or even Sardinia, but here—in Sicily—why should they come here?"

"Oh, I don't mean a schooner engaged in the fishing trade, but rather a small vessel chartered for pleasure, taking the place, as it were, of a private yacht."

"Ah," said the Italian, "that explains it. Well, Monsieur, with this breeze I should imagine they would set their course round by the north of Corsica in order to avoid beating through the Straits of Bonifacio. That would make the run about 650 knots, and a smart little vessel, carrying all her sails and properly ballasted, might reach Palermo in a few hours over three days.

"Thank you," said Brett. "Is Palermo a difficult port to make?"

"Oh, no, monsieur. There is deep water all round here, no shoals, and but few isolated rocks, which are all well known. The only thing to guard against is the changeful current. According to the state of the tide and the direction of the wind, sailing ships have to alter their course very considerably, for the currents round here are very strong and consequently most dangerous in calm weather."

Brett smiled.

"It would be an ignoble conclusion to the chase if the *Belles Sœurs* were wrecked with her valuable cargo. I most devoutly pray," he said to himself, "that the breezes and currents may combine to bring Dubois safely on shore. Then I think we can deal with him."

Soon after daybreak the *Blue-Bell*, after a momentary halt at the Customs Station, crept past the Castello a Mare, and amidst much gesticulation, accompanied by a torrent of volcanic Italian, she was tied up to a wharf in the Cala—the small inner harbour of the port.

Edith, who could not sleep since the advent of the pilot, made an early toilet and climbed to the bridge, whence she had a magnificent view of the dawn arising over the beautiful city that stands on the Conca d'Oro, or Golden Shell—the smiling and luxuriant plain that seems to be provided by Nature for man's habitation. It lies beyond a lovely bay, and is inclosed on three sides by lofty and precipitous mountains.

Naturally Fairholme was drawn to her side as a chip of steel to a magnet.

"We are certain to have a furious row here," he remarked when they had exhausted their superlative adjectives upon the splendid prospect opening up before their eyes.

"Why?" cried Edith wonderingly. "I understood that our present adventure may at any moment have exciting developments, but I do not see the association between the view and the possibility."

"It is this way," he answered. "I have not read a great deal, as you know, but I have always noticed in my limited way that wherever Nature is most lavish in her gifts, she seems to take a delight in setting people by the ears. Italy is a fine country, you know, yet there are more murders to the square inch there than in any other place on earth. Then again, it is likely that several armed policemen are at this moment chasing bandits among those hills over there," and he nodded towards the distant blue heights which looked so peaceful in the clear atmosphere, now brilliant with the rays of the rising sun.

Edith laughed. "Really, Bobby," she pouted, "you are becoming sentimental. I half expect to find you break out into verse."

"I can do that, too," he said, "though it is not my own. Hasn't Heber got a hymn which tells of a place where

Every prospect pleases
And only man is vile.

I forget the rest of it." Miss Talbot turned round rapidly upon him.

"Good gracious, Bobby, what is the matter with you? I never knew you in such a melting mood before?"

"How can I help it?" he half-whispered, laying his hand upon her shoulder. "We have never been together so much before in our lives. Don't you realise, Edith, what it means to us if Mr. Brett discovers those diamonds within the next few hours or days?"

He bent closer towards her and his hand passed from her shoulder round her neck. "When we return to England if you are willing we can be married within a week."

A bright flush suffused her beautiful face. She bent her head and was silent.

It is quite certain that Fairholme would have kissed her had not Daubeney shouted:

"Look here, you two, flirting on the bridge is strictly forbidden. You will demoralise the whole crew. Even the pilot cannot keep his eyes off you."

They laughed and giggled like a couple of children caught stealing gooseberries. Yet the incident and the words were fraught with a solemn significance which often came back to their minds in other days.

The party breakfasted on board and then set out to survey the hotels.

Brett's first care was to ascertain the scheduled hours of the train service between Messina and Palermo. To his joy he discovered that neither Winter nor the gang he was shadowing could possibly reach the city until a quarter to four in the afternoon. They decided in favour of the Hotel de France as being most modern in its appearance and centrally situated.

The next thing to do was to provide an efficient watch upon all sailing vessels entering the harbour, and here the pilot proved to be a valuable ally.

Brett explained to him that he was most anxious to meet some people who were coming from Marseilles on a fishing smack named the *Belles Sœurs, No. 107.*

It was possible, he explained, that both the number and the name might be obliterated, so he wished the pilot, or any helpers he might employ for the duty, to take particular note of all strange boats answering to the description given to him, and at once report their appearance.

This the man guaranteed to do. He said that it was quite impossible for a French-rigged smack to enter Palermo without attracting his notice.

As the daily remuneration fixed for his services was far beyond any sum he could earn as a pilot, he promptly set about his task with enthusiasm. He engaged two assistants to take turns in watching the harbour, and gave the barrister such assurances of devotion to duty that Brett felt quite satisfied that Dubois could not arrive in Palermo without his knowledge. Of course it was quite on the cards that some secluded creek along the coast might be preferred by the astute schemer as a point of debarkation, but that must be risked.

By approaching the police authorities and requesting their co-operation, and also using Grosjean and the Turks as a stalking-horse, Brett felt tolerably certain that the time would soon arrive when Dubois and he would stand face to face.

In making these manifold preparations the morning passed rapidly. The barrister insisted that his companions should go for a drive whilst he busied himself with the necessary details, and they should all meet together at the hotel for the mid-day meal. It was then that he singled out Sir Hubert for his personal share in the pursuit.

"You know Mr. Winter?" he said to the baronet.

"Yes, I remember him perfectly."

"In that case I wish you to go to the station and meet the 3.45 p.m. train on arrival. You will probably see the Turks and Grosjean, but pay no attention to them. Keep a bright

(*Continued on page* 284.)

"Held Apart," R. Norman Silver's Great New Story, Starts Next Tuesday]

Digitized by Google

Alfosco Regd

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

Alfosco Regd

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 435

10/6

Design No. 435. 10/6.
Special Value for Half-a-Guinea. Costume made in ALLEN FOSTER & Co.'s world-renowned Specialite Serge or Venetian Cloth, also in their new **Zibeline** Cloth (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect). All colours and sizes kept in stock. The bodice has pouched front, and is stylishly trimmed strappings of Taffeta Silk, and small buttons. Well made skirt, bell shape, fasten at side, pocket and trimmed silk and buttons to match bodice. Price only **10/6**; carr. 6d. Skirt alone, **6/6**; carr. 5d. BEST VALUE IN LONDON. Good fit guaranteed.

Design No. 730. 10/6.
A Splendid Line in Ladies' Costume Skirts. Excellent in design and style and unrivalled for value. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & Co's new **Zibeline** Cloth, also in their Specialite Serge or Venetian Cloth—all colours and sizes in stock (patterns post free). The skirt is lined throughout and is tastefully trimmed round with rows of cording, and is also trimmed downwards with piping of black satin. A skirt any lady can wear. Price only **10/6**; carriage paid 5d. extra. SEND FOR ONE.

Design No. 434. 14/9.
Stylishly and handsomely trimmed Costume in ALLEN FOSTER & Co.'s new **Zibeline** Cloth, also in their Serge and Venetian Cloth, all colours. The Bodice is cut in the Russian style, lined throughout, and stylishly trimmed rows of cording and bands of stitched silk. Full flounce Skirt, trimmed silk and cording. Extraordinary value for **14/9**. Carriage 6d. extra. When ordering Costumes please give bust measurement under arms, size of waist, and length of skirt in front.

Send Postcard for
PATTERNS & NEW SKETCH BOOK of SPRING FASHIONS,
Free on Application.
CALL OR WRITE.

Design No. 44.

14/9

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

SPECIAL BARGAINS.

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE £ d $

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH**, extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished, elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6**; approval before payment.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval before payment.

REAL DIAMOND and EMERALD doublet **HALF-HOOP RING**; large, lustrous stones, massive solid gold setting (hall-marked); weight 2½ dwts.; sacrifice, **21/-**; approval willingly.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER**, jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument. 12-fold bellows (metal bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

DARK RUSSIAN FUR MUFF & NECKLET to match, with large, bushy tails; never worn; sacrifice, **12/6** together: also another set of extra fine quality very handsome muff and necklet, accept **16/6**, worth 3 guineas; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING**, 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6**.

BROOCH; very handsome, 18-carat rolled gold; 3 swallows in flight; set lovely turquoise and pearls, in velvet case; accept **6/9**; approval before payment.

NECKLET WITH HEART PENDANT, very pretty Princess of Wales rope pattern; heart set with pearls and turquoise; accept **9/6**; approval.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH**, jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-**.

A full list of **Special Bargains**, New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, PAWNBROKER & JEWELLER,
284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.
(The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

All Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 55 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.) 2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-.
Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

RUN NO RISK

KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE

THE WORST COUGH

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent. Books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

Digitized by Google

look out for Mr. Winter. Walk up quite openly and speak to him, and the probability is that should Grosjean have become suspicious of this Englishman who follows in the same track as himself, your presence on the platform will convince him that he was mistaken in imagining the slightest connection between Winter's journey and his own."

"That is good," said the major-general. "It would never have occurred to me. Any other commands?"

"None, save this," continued Brett, smiling at the old soldier's eagerness to obey implicitly any instructions given to him. "When you meet Winter, tell him, if possible, to so direct his movements as to find out Grosjean's destination, if it can be done without giving the Frenchman the slightest cause for uneasiness. Otherwise the matter is of no consequence. I have already interviewed the chief of police here, and it will only be a question of an hour's delay before the local detectives effectually locate the quarters occupied by Grosjean and the Turks."

Close Quarters.

Sir Hubert was all eagerness to set out upon his mission. He reached the station at least half an hour too soon. And anyone seeing him there would readily admit that the barrister could not have chosen an agent less guileful in appearance. The very cut of his clothes, the immaculate character of his white spats bespoke the elderly British gentleman.

At last the train arrived. The vast majority of its passengers were Sicilian peasants or business men returning to Palermo from the interior of the island. To Sir Hubert's delight he at once caught sight of Grosjean and the Turks, whom, of course, he quickly identified as the loungers on the tower of the Chateau d'If.

It occurred to him that there was a remote chance of recognition by Grosjean, so he busied himself for an instant in seeming scrutiny of the bookstall until they had passed. A little further down the platform he caught sight of Inspector Winter, that worthy individual being engaged in a fiercely unintelligible controversy with an Italian porter as to the possession of his portmanteau.

Sir Hubert hurried forward and seized the amazed policeman by his hand, wringing it warmly. To tell the truth, Winter did not know for a moment who it was that accorded him such a cordial greeting, for, as it subsequently transpired, the policeman was not aware of Sir Hubert's journey to Marseilles, nor did he guess that Edith was with him.

"Held Apart," R. Norman Silver's Great New Story, Starts Next Tuesday.

The stolid detective, however, quickly recovered himself, and his first words were:

"Did Mr. Brett fully understand my signal?"

"I think so," said the other; "but he will tell you all about that afterwards. At present he wishes you to ascertain, if possible, Grosjean's intended residence."

Mr. Winter smiled with a peculiar air of superiority affected by Scotland Yard.

"Oh, that is easy," he condescended to explain. "I have been talking to him."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, I have. My French is bad, and his English is worse, but he understands that I am in the wholesale grocery trade. I have come to Palermo to buy currants!"

"Most extraordinary! How very clever of you!"

Mr. Winter drew himself up with an air of professional pride.

"That is nothing, sir," he said. "We often make queer acquaintanceships in the way of business. But Grosjean is a smart chap. He eyed me curiously when he happened to hear that I was the fifth passenger who wished to leave the steamer at Messina, so I took the bull by the horns and made myself useful to him in the matter of getting his baggage out of the hold."

"Marvellous!" gasped Sir Hubert.

"The upshot of it was that he gave me some advice about currants. We stayed in the same hotel at Messina, travelled together in the train, and I am going to put up at the Campo Santo Hotel, where he will stay with the Turks."

Meanwhile the subject of their conversation had quitted the station, and Sir Hubert's respect for Mr. Winter's powers as a sleuth hound yielded to anxiety lest the slippery Frenchman might vanish once and for all.

"Hadn't we better follow him?" he suggested.

Mr. Winter winked knowingly. "Don't be anxious, sir. He wants to be seen in my company. He believes I am here for trading purposes, and the association will be useful to him."

Nevertheless the baronet was glad to find that Mr. Winter's confidence was not misplaced, when, ten minutes later, he again encountered the Frenchman and the Turks at the door of the Campo Santo, a cheap and popular hotel near the square that forms the centre of Palermo.

The detective was eminently suited for the *rôle* he now filled.

"Ah, monsoo," he cried, with boisterous good humour, "permittez—moi introducer un friend of mine, Monsoo Smeeth, de Londres, you know. Je ne savez pas les noms de votre companiongs, but they are très bons camarades, je suis certain."

Grosjean was most complaisant.

"It ees von grand plaisir, m'sieu," he said, whilst the Turks gravely bowed their acknowledgments.

The upshot of this extraordinary meeting was that when Mr. Winter had secured a room and the party had ordered dinner, the six men set out for a stroll through the town.

Sir Hubert strove hard to so manœuvre their ramble that they should pass the Hotel de France, and perchance come under the astonished eyes of Brett and the others.

But this amiable design was frustrated by Grosjean's eagerness to visit the post-office, which lay in a different direction.

One of the Turks, none other than Hussein-ul-Mulk, spoke English fairly well, and he puzzled the old baronet considerably when the latter was called upon to answer his questions.

Yet the situation passed off well. Grosjean came out of the post-office, apparently without having obtained any missives—a letter, of course, could not possibly await him—and suggested that they should wander towards the harbour.

Sir Hubert strongly recommended the spectacular beauty of the street where the Hotel de France lay, but Grosjean politely insisted that he wished to make some inquiries at the shipping office, and Mr. Winter backed him up, being ignorant of the baronet's real motive. There was nothing to do but yield gracefully.

They walked along the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. Sir Hubert, fresh with memories of his morning's drive with a guide, pointed out the chief buildings, becoming sadly mixed up in the names of some of them.

Still, this was a safer topic than his previous conversation with Hussein-ul-Mulk, so he persevered gamely.

They soon reached the quay. Sir Hubert became almost incoherent with agitation when they passed the *Blue-Bell* and came into full view of Edith, Jack, Fairholme, and Daubeney, who happened to leave the hotel shortly before five o'clock in order to visit the yacht and secure a good cup of tea.

Brett refused to accompany them, on the ground that his Italian scout, the pilot, might ring news at any hour, and he must remain within immediate call. It was a supreme moment when Grosjean halted and called general attention to the smart-looking vessel and the tea-drinkers.

Sir Hubert keenly examined the top of the funnel, and tried simultaneously to yawn and light a cigar. In the result, he nearly choked himself. Mr. Winter, somewhat more prepared for emergencies, endeavoured to interest Grosjean in the wonderful clearness of the water.

But Hussein-ul-Mulk and his two sedate friends suddenly betrayed a keen interest in Fairholme.

(*Continued on page 287.*)

Digitized by Google

Throat Deafness.

The close relation between throat ailments and chronic Deafness is shown by the fact that out of every 1,000 Deaf patients applying to the Drouet Institute, an average of 234 have some form of nose and throat complaint. The Editor of "The Journal for the Deaf" pursues this subject still further in a special article, and also dwells upon the Cure of Deafness by the Drouet Method of external application. One of the cures of throat Deafness described is the case of Mr. E. Terry, of 4 Veldt Villas, Ashcroft Road, Cirencester. In this case the Deafness was associated with catarrh of the throat. In response to an enquiry by the Editor, Mr. Terry wrote as follows:—"I followed the Drouet Treatment, as you recommended, and can now hear well with both ears, which I could not do before." Those who are interested in this subject can obtain a free copy of the "Journal for the Deaf" by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The "Journal" also contains a Special Report Form, by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to the treatment of Deafness and Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases. The Editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination.

NEW IDEAS FOR SPRING.

Noble's New Catalogue,

'DISTINCTION IN DRESS'

Contains all the best ideas for Spring Attire, in Costumes, Jackets, Blouses, and other Wearables. Write for the Catalogue to-day,

SENT POST FREE

and Save Money by its guidance.

MODEL 1629.

You can purchase this becoming design right from the seat of manufacture. John Noble Ltd. make it in their well-known **Cheviot Serge and Costume Coating.** The Russian Blouse has pouched fronts, shoulder capes, and fashionable bell-sleeves, all nicely stitched. Skirt full and graceful. Price **10/6**, carriage 6d. Skirt alone 5'6' carriage 5d. This design is also made to measure in **New Black and White Flake Tweed** at 21/-. **10/6**

JOHN NOBLE LTD., 148 Brook St. Mills, **MANCHESTER**

TEST BOXES FREE TO ALL.

Any sufferer sending name and address to JOHN A. SMITH, 1007 Montague House, Stonecutter St., London, E.C., will be sent a Test Box of his marvellous Cure, GLORIA TONIC, for all Uric Acid Ailments, including Gout, Sciatica, and **RHEUMATISM.** *300 Recent Cures.*

GIVEN AWAY with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 476),

A Paper Pattern of

A SMART COAT FOR A GIRL.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of a **marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

JUNO CYCLES For LADIES & GENTLEMEN

Free Wheels. Bowden, New Departure Coaster Hub and Rim Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, Valise, Wrench, &c., and carriage paid.

For **Cash** or **12** Monthly Payments of

£8 8s.	15/10	£9 10s.	17/6
£9	16/8	£10 5s.	19/3

Cycle an Motor accessories of best quality at lower prices than any other house: Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6. Write for New Season Illustrated Cycle and Motor List, over 100 pages and 500 illustrations, sent post free. — **METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd.** (*E.E.* Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate St. Without, London, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

HYPNOTISM.

Would you possess that strange mysterious power **which charms and fascinates** men and women, influences their thoughts, controls their desires, and makes you supreme master of every situation! Life is full of alluring possibilities for those who master the secrets of hypnotic influence; for those who develop their magnetic powers. You can learn at home, cure diseases and bad habits without drugs, win the friendship and love of others, **increase your income,** gratify your ambitions, drive worry and trouble from your mind, improve your memory, overcome domestic difficulties, give the most thrilling entertainment ever witnessed, and develop a wonderfully magnetic will power that will enable you to overcome all obstacles to your success.

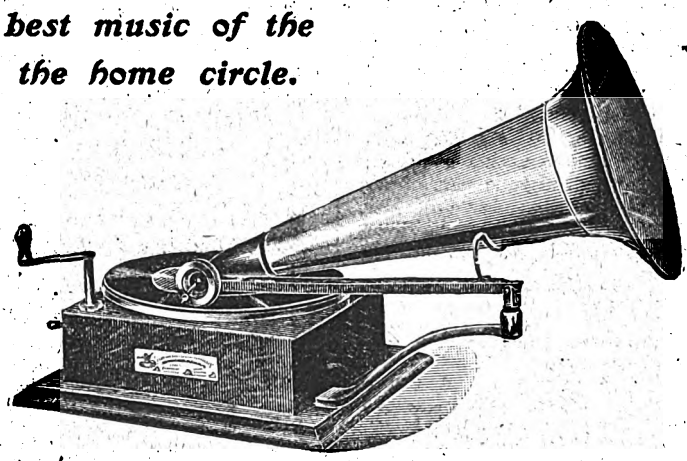
You can hypnotise people instantaneously—quick as a flash—put yourself or anyone else to sleep at any hour of the day or night—banish pain and suffering. **Our free book** tells you the secrets of this wonderful science. It explains exactly how you can use this power to better your condition in life. It is enthusiastically endorsed by ministers of the gospel, lawyers, doctors, business men and society women. It benefits everybody. It costs nothing. We give it away to advertise our college. Write for it to-day. Address penny post-card **American College of Sciences,** Dept. WL36, 420 Walnut St., Philadelphia, Penn., U.S.A.

THE GRAMOPHONE

SHOULD BE IN EVERY HOME.

TRADE MARK "GRAMOPHONE"

The Gramophone is an educator and instructor. It brings the best music of the world into the home circle.



MONARCH JUNIOR, £5 10s.

CONCERT RECORDS, 5s.; 7in. RECORDS, 2s. 6d.; RED LABEL RECORDS, 10s

THE OPINIONS OF TWO GREAT WOMEN.

Madame ADELINA PATTI writes:

Craig-y-nos-Castle.

To The Gramophone Company, London,

"I have much pleasure in stating that I have heard your Monarch Gramophone and that I consider it a very remarkable instrument of its kind and quite the most perfect that I have ever heard. It reproduces the human voice to such a fine point that in listening to the records of Caruso, Plangon, etc., it seemed to me as if those artistes were actually singing in my Saloons. I have never heard anything to equal it.

Yours truly,

Adelina Patti (Baroness Cederström)."

Madame SARAH BERNHARDT writes:

"I desire to express to you my entire admiration for your magnificent Gramophone. Yesterday, while listening to the Habanera of 'Carmen,' I thought I was listening, not to the echo of the voice of Calvé, but Calvé herself—the marvellous and only Calvé. I am still affected by it, and I wished to express to you at once my recognition—and so I do.

(Signed) Sarah Bernhardt."

THE GRAMOPHONE AND TYPEWRITER LTD.,

21 City Road, London, E.C.

Digitized by Google

When they last met the earl on the tower of the Château d'If they were so engrossed in the object of their visit to Marseilles that he had passed them unnoticed.

But now, looking steadily at him—for Fairholme was seated facing them, and was striving to maintain the semblance of an animated chat with Edith—there came to the Turks a memory, each instant becoming more definite, of an exciting scene in the Rue Barbette, and the opportune arrival of a stalwart young Englishman, backed up by a couple of gendarmes.

Hussein-ul-Mulk's swarthy countenance reddened with suspicious anger.

He drew Grosjean on one side and whispered something to him. The Frenchman started violently.

"They have recognised you, Bobby!" murmured the quick-witted Edith. "Oh, why didn't we remain with Mr. Brett!"

There is no knowing what might have happened had not Fate stepped in to decide in dramatic fashion the important issues at stake.

Whilst Grosjean and the Turk were still conferring in stealthy tones, and the English people endeavoured to keep up an appearance of complete unconcern, a tramp steamer swung round the corner of the mole that protects the harbour.

In tow, with sails trimly furled and six people standing on her small deck—a lady and gentleman and four sailors—was the *Belles Sœurs*, fishing-smack No. 107, from Marseilles.

Instantly a watcher, otherwise unperceived, ran off from the quay at top speed towards the Hotel de France.

Mr. Winter Makes an Arrest.

Grosjean, the Turks, Edith, Fairholme—each and every member of the two parties on the wharf and on the deck of the *Blue-Bell*—momentarily forgot the minor excitement of the situation in view of this unexpected apparition.

"There they are! Come quickly!" cried Grosjean.

He ran further along the quay followed by the Turks.

"Quick, Bobby! Oh, Jack, do something! Mr. Brett could not foresee this, though he seemed to have an inspiration that kept him in the hotel. What can we do? Dubois and the girl will know you at once! Jack, shouldn't you keep out of sight?—go below—go and fetch Mr. Brett Oh, dear, this is dreadful!"

Thus did Edith, for once yielding to feminine irresolution, appeal to her lover and brother, vainly seeking to discover the best line of action to follow in this disastrous circumstance, for she well knew that the diamonds must now be in the personal possession of Dubois.

It was a golden opportunity to recover the stolen gems. If once he eluded the grasp of his pursuers after landing they might—probably would—secure him, but not the diamonds.

Daubeney, now purple with perplexity, and Fairholme, swearing softly under his breath, sprang from the deck to the low wall of the quay. Almost unconsciously they joined Sir Hubert and Mr. Winter.

Edith followed them. She glanced at her brother. He was gazing curiously, vindictively, at the two figures on the deck of the *Belles Sœurs*.

There was a fierce gleam in his eyes, a set expression in his closed lips, a nervous twitching at the corners of his mouth, that betokened the over-powering emotions of the moment.

With a woman's intuition Edith realised that no power on earth, no consideration of expediency, would restrain him from laying violent hands on Dubois at the first possible opportunity.

She knew there must be a struggle, in which Grosjean and the Turks, perhaps the four sailors, would participate. They might use knives and fire-arms, whereas the Englishmen were unarmed.

So she ran back on board the yacht and cried to the Scottish engineer:

"Oh, Mr. Macpherson! Please come with some of your men! There may be a fight on the wharf, and Mr. Daubeney and the others will be outnumbered!"

Macpherson for once forgot his cautiousness. There was none of the characteristic slowness of the Scottish nation in his manner or language as he yelled down the fore-hatch: "Tumble up, there! Some dirty Eye-talians are goin' to hammer the boss. Bring along a monkey-wrench or the first thing to hand. Shar-r-p's the wo-r-rd!"

Forthwith there appeared from the hatch-way a miscellaneous mob of seamen, firemen, and stewards. Following Edith and Macpherson, they ran along the quay.

Already there was something unusual in progress. Loungers by the harbour, perceiving a disturbance, were running towards the scene of action.

A solitary Italian policeman, swaggering jauntily over the paved roadway, was suddenly startled out of his self-complacency.

"*Caramba!*" he shouted. Drawing his sabre, he broke into a run.

For matters had developed with melodramatic suddenness. Casting off the steamer's tow-rope, the *Belles Sœurs* swung alongside the wharf much more easily and quickly than did the friendly vessel by whose aid she had so soon reached Palermo.

Both steamer and smack had already been searched by the Customs' officers who boarded them in the quarantine station, and the reason that the schooner had not been earlier sighted from the shore was found in the mere chance that she was rendered invisible by close proximity to her bigger companion.

The instant that the fishing-boat was tied to the wharf Mlle. Beaucaire sprang ashore. Grosjean, breathless and excited, was there to greet her.

But the greeting between father and daughter was not very cordial. The innkeeper seemed to be dumfounded with surprise at her early arrival.

Dubois followed more leisurely.

He took no notice of Grosjean, and appeared to be looking about for a cab. Two of the sailors were handing up a couple of portmanteaux from the deck.

Hussein-ul-Mulk and the two other Turks, unable to restrain their excitement, crowded round the pink-and-white Frenchman, jabbering volubly, but Mademoiselle and her father moved some slight distance away.

At this juncture Mr. Winter strode resolutely forward, seized Dubois firmly by the shoulder, and said:

"Henri Dubois! In the name of the King of England I arrest you for the murder of——"

The detective's words were stopped by a blow.

A wild struggle promptly ensued. The man turned upon him like a tiger and the Turks joined in. Grosjean, too, ran back to take a hand in the fray. Fairholme, Sir Hubert, Daubeney, and Talbot flung themselves on the would-be rescuers, and the four French sailors of the *Belles Sœurs* leapt ashore to assist their passenger in this unlooked-for attack. Frantic yells and oaths came from the confused mob, and knives were drawn.

Talbot had but one desire in life—to get his fingers on Dubois' throat. He had almost reached him, for Winter clung to his prey with bull-dog tenacity, when an astounding thing happened.

The Frenchman's handsome moustaches fell off, and beneath the clever make-up on her face were visible the boldly handsome features of La Belle Chasseuse, now distorted by rage and fear.

"You fool!" yelled Talbot to Winter. "You have let him escape!"

Tearing himself from the midst of the fight he was just in time to see the female figure, which he now knew must be Dubois masquerading in his mistress' clothes, jumping into a cab and driving off towards the Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

"Come on, Fairholme!" he cried. "He cannot get away! Here comes an empty carriage!"

But now Macpherson and his allies had reached the scene. Using a "monkey-wrench or the first thing to hand," they placed the Turks, Grosjean, and the crew of the *Belles Sœurs* on the casualty list.

(*To be concluded shortly.*)

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[*In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

The Broken Promise.

Six months ago "Mary" and her lover were looking into a jeweller's shop. The girl took a fancy to a brooch she saw there, and the young man promptly replied, "Well, you shall have it some day." Since then nothing has been seen or heard of the promised brooch. Do I think "Mary" should remind the sweetheart of his promise, and was it an honourable thing for the man to promise the present and not keep his word?

* * * * *

Perhaps the young man really hoped at the time that he would be able to buy the brooch, and since that has had pecuniary difficulty. Many people, out of sheer generosity and good nature, indiscreetly promise things, and when the time comes to fulfil their promises, are absolutely unable to do so. They are not exactly dishonourable—that is too strong a word—but are very foolish people.

* * * * *

If you know that there was no pecuniary trouble at the bottom of your lover's conduct, he may have simply forgotten to buy the brooch, in which case a hint from you could well be put forward. But do not allow your desire for the brooch to lead you to offend him.

To Become a Singer.

So, "G. R." you are a young lady who wishes to become a professional singer, and would like to know how to go about it. Well, in the first instance, have you a voice? I know the life of a singer, with all its glitter and applause, is a very fascinating one, and it is delightful to be able to give one's life to the divine art.

* * * * *

But one cannot be made a singer, even with the very best training in the world. Go to a musical expert, and ask him to give you a candid opinion on your voice. Your organist or choir-master could, perhaps, do this. If the verdict of two or three people is favourable, then take lessons, elementary ones first, advanced ones later.

* * * * *

Do not trust too much to the good opinion of friends and relations. There is a tendency amongst them to either overwhelm one with praise or discourage one by ridicule. A sane judgment is seldom to be got from intimate friends. Get the opinion of a stranger, who has no interest in the matter, and abide by it.

* * * * *

Remember the path before one who seeks to win success in such an art as singing is one of the most difficult. You must give up hours and hours daily to practice, and your diet, exercise, and general habits would have to be largely regulated for you. But a good voice overcomes all those obstacles, if one possesses it, as is evident in the case of Miss Clara Butt, once as obscure perhaps as yourself, but now one of the greatest singers of the age.

A Domestic Complication.

Here is a little question of etiquette with which many of us may at some time or another find ourselves confronted. "G. H." has been invited to a friend's house—a young married man—to have tea, and to spend an evening. The wife is a young and delicate woman, who keeps one servant. At a certain time in the evening the servant is suddenly taken ill and has to go to bed. The wife finds that she is unable to prepare supper herself. How should the various parties act?

* * * * *

"G. H." should perceive the difficulty the household were placed in, and excuse himself. To appear to be expecting the hostess to put herself to a lot of trouble on his account would be tactless. He should invent an excuse—which might not perhaps be truthful, but still it would be one of those little fibs which are pardonable.

* * * * *

If the hostess really intended to provide supper, I think she should do so, assuming she was not absolutely incapable of it. If so, then the husband should apologise to "G. H." for the trouble, adding, "We had so hoped you would have supper with us"—a hint which "G. H." could quite well take in good part.

Business Matters.

"L." is courting a girl. She has not inquired anything as to his business pursuits or position. Is it his duty to make her acquainted with those things?

Certainly there should be complete confidence between sweethearts on such a subject. I always think a man who may one day marry a girl should lose no opportunity of telling her his business experiences. It is only right that she should know them, and be interested.

The Prosaic Letter Writer.

What is to be done with a man who cannot write a love-letter? This trouble comes from "Emma," whose suitor writes to her almost daily, but very rarely hints at a word of love. She thinks this means a coolness in his relations with her. When he meets her, however, he is as affectionate as possible.

* * * * *

Well, "Emma," it is far better that the young man should display his affection in practice than write letters describing it. How many love-letters are really genuine? I incline to think your lover must be a really straight-forward, honest fellow, who has no unnecessary gush about him. A loving word or two in writing is, I know, very delightful, but it does not, after all, prove the lover to be any the more genuine.

Visiting a Sweetheart's Home.

The trouble of "Diana U." is, "Should she invite the man of her choice to her home, when he has not invited her to his, which is in another town?"

* * * *

Yes, certainly, if your parents or friends are agreeable to meeting him. There is no rule that I know of which lays down who should first visit the other's home. It is largely decided by circumstances. Certainly it is generally more desirable that a girl's parents should know her sweetheart than the other way about. Many men postpone until the last possible moment the introduction of their sweethearts at home, especially when there are sisters in question. I know how unenviable is the position at first of a girl at her *fiancé's* home. It is not, however, usually the case with the man.

Cynthia

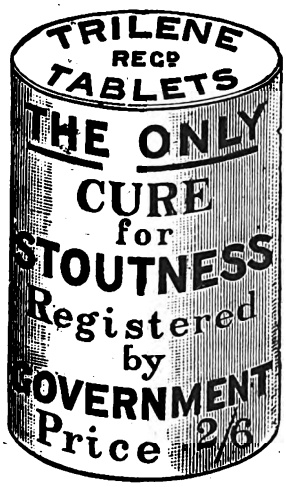
Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

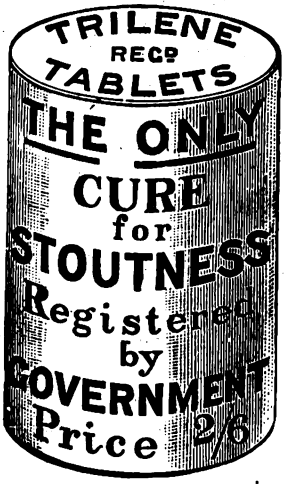
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION** 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risebolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."
"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Liatorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 2lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1¼ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9¼st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 28. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest valu I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

CADBURY'S COCOA

Points from the Press:

"We are glad to find that Messrs. Cadbury draw attention to the fact that there are strong grounds for objection to the addition to Cocoa of certain foreign substances. This resource is quite unnecessary, and, indeed, pernicious, especially having regard to the fact that Cocoa alone is an excellent food as well as a stimulant, having a salutary action upon the nerve centres." —*The LANCET.*

The MEDICAL MAGAZINE says: "The favourite Cocoa of the day. For Strength, Purity, and Nourishment, there is nothing superior to be found."

HEALTH says: "The perfect purity of Cadbury's Cocoa—a strong point with the makers constitutes its firm hold upon the public confidence and the secret of its universal popularity.

CADBURY'S is COCOA and the BEST COCOA only

"Worth a Guinea a Box."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Sick Headache, *Constipation,*

Wind and Pains in Stomach,

Impaired Digestion.

Disordered Liver, and

Female Ailments.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

CONTAINING 56 AND 168 PILLS RESPECTIVELY.

BIRD'S CUSTARD POWDER

BIRD'S CUSTARD is Pure, Nutritious, and easily digested. It is a delicious article of food for daily use. Exquisite for Luncheon, Dinner, or Supper. Eggs often disagree; BIRD'S CUSTARD never.

BIRD'S CUSTARD AND RHUBARB.

Wholesome and healthful, rich and creamy. BIRD'S CUSTARD is the one thing needed with all Stewed, Tinned, or Bottled Fruits. It enhances their flavour and imparts to them a grateful mellowness.

NO EGGS! NO RISK! NO TROUBLE!

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Splendid Serial Story Starts Inside.

Short Stories.

No. 740.] Week ending March 7, 1903. [Price One Penny.

Gradually the rumble of the train sounded nearer and nearer, and the blind girl made a motion as if to cross the metals. "Don't move!" he cried quickly; "you are quite safe!"

(A Dramatic Incident from our Powerful New Serial "HELD APART," which starts inside.)

Worth a Guinea a Box.

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

No other medicine in the world can claim so many regular users. Thousands of families always keep a box of BEECHAM'S PILLS in the house, so that, on the first sign of any irregularity of the system, a timely dose may be administered, and further trouble and suffering averted. Nine-tenths of the BEECHAM'S PILLS sold are purchased by those who HAVE USED THEM BEFORE and have found them indispensable as

A FAMILY MEDICINE.

Sold everywhere in Boxes price 1s. 1½d. (56 pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 pills).

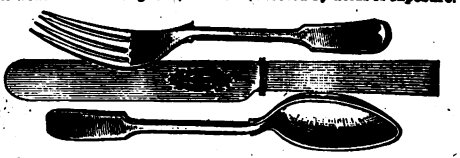
'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' *Cutlery*

...THE... **"ENTERPRISE"** PARCEL, 25/-

Of Household Cutlery and Plate.

Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white 'Ivorette' Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of "Columbian" Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.



51 PIECES FOR 25 SHILLINGS.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.

TERMS. Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if you are not perfectly satisfied.

No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Cutlery and Plate, etc., Post free.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box

DON'T COUGH *for* **KEATING'S LOZENGES EASILY CURE THE WORST COUGH.**

One gives relief. An increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1¾d. tins everywhere.

JUNO CYCLES

For LADIES & GENTLEMEN.

Free Wheels. Bowden, New Departure Coaster Hub and Rim Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, Valise, Wrench, &c., and carriage paid.

For **Cash** or **12** Monthly Payments of

£8 8s. 15/10 | £9 10s 17/6
£9 16 8 | £10 5s. 19/3

Cycle an Motor accessories of best quality at lower prices than any other house: Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6. Write for New Season Illustrated Cycle and Motor List, over 100 pages and 500 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S. S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate St. Without, London, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½% repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director*

SUPERFLUOUS HAIR.

Remarkable discovery that will interest every woman with superfluous hair. Perfectly safe treatment that permanently destroys the roots, fully described, FREE to all.

Hairy women need no longer despair. Out of the mass of failures has come a genuine success. Their unsightly blemish can be so thoroughly destroyed that they themselves will wonder if they ever really had disfiguring hair.

The Capillus Mfg. Company are in sole possession of **a marvellous home method** that removes superfluous hair for ever. It goes to the very root of the hair, and destroys its life, so that it will never grow again.

The Company want it understood that this method is different entirely from the many powders, lotions, and cosmetics sold that only remove temporarily and hurt a delicate skin, while this new method removes the hair for all time, and is **simple and harmless.**

It is a home treatment that any lady can easily use in her private apartments, and will permanently remove superfluous hair without pain.

By sending your name and address to the **Capillus Mfg. Company, 57 Century House, Regent Street, London, W.**, you will receive a full description of this simple and remarkable method, which will enable you to remove all superfluous hair at home at a very slight expense.

The description is mailed to you free in a perfectly plain and sealed envelope, and you should have no hesitancy in writing. You will be delighted to learn how easily and surely superfluous hair can be permanently and painlessly removed, and it will pay you to write to-day. Don't neglect to do so.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

Short Stories.

No. 740.] Week Ending March 7th, 1903. [One Penny.

NEW SERIAL. **STARTS TO-DAY.**

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

FIRST CHAPTER.

The Face at the Door.

"By Jove, what a lovely thing! Miss Davenal, you are a genius. Imagine your doing that all out of your own head!"

"Not quite all out of my own head, Sir Guy," was the laughing response; "I assure you it has taken up yards and yards of ribbon. I have never tried to do such a large piece before. I was afraid at first the design wasn't going to be bold enough."

The speaker stepped back to contemplate her unfinished task—a large, oblong panel of dead-leaf silk, stretched upon a light frame of laths and covered by the wandering green sprays and ruddy blossoms of the briar-rose, worked curiously in loosely-drawn ribbons of various shades and breadths. The frame itself stood near a hobbed firegrate in a little, plainly-furnished apartment, from whose wide, recessed, small-paned window, the fading beams of a March sun fell across an oil-clothed floor to illuminate the splendid panel which Moira Davenal was studying.

She herself was a figure befitting the unpretentiousness of the place. Tall—for a girl yet in the last of her teens—large and elastically moulded, her simple blouse and skirt were hidden by a big white apron with an old-fashioned "bib" and straps. Her features were fine and strongly marked, her expression shy yet resolute. Her hair, which was of a rare and true gold, inclining towards the warm tint of the ripe orange, was gathered in almost cumbersome masses low at her neck.

Her companion had been contemplating her no less intently than she had been regarding the panel of ribbon-work. He was a young man, with the smooth brown skin and proud, good-tempered profile of the well-bred Briton. His costume was the dark, smartly-cut tweed morning-dress, so dear to the heart of the country gentleman, and his riding-boots and hunting-crop showed that he had lately left the saddle.

"Nonsense!" he declared, "the result is perfect. I shall be positively ashamed to rob you of it."

Moira threaded her needle with a long strip of narrow green ribbon.

"Why should you feel like that?" she answered. "It has been done for you and you are—you are paying me for it, you know. Then I have enjoyed doing it very much indeed. That is even better than being paid. Besides, I am thinking of putting up over the door, 'Moira Davenal, Embroiderer in Ribbon to the Nobility and Gentry.' You are my first great client, Sir Guy. That might go over the door, too, 'By Appointment to Sir Guy Vanbrugh, The Close, Groudle, Cumberland.'"

Guy Vanbrugh looked out of the window. Beyond its trimly-curtained panes was a sleepy little harbour, a cobble-stoned quay, and the squat brown masts and cordage of a few coasters and fishing-luggers, shut in by a wave-worn breakwater. Over all was the grey sky, touched with the fitful sunshine of a quiet March day—a March that was apparently inclined to fulfil the proverb by going out like a lamb. At the gate of the garden which surrounded the house—half villa, half cottage—was fretting a glossy bay hunter, its reins looped to the latch of the wicket.

"You are laughing at me, Miss Davenal," Moira was told; "but there, I am quite defenceless. I only wish you would let me give you the panel for yourself and a piano to fasten it to."

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

Moira Davenal glanced at him quickly. "I have a piano of my own, Sir Guy," she said, "but I don't keep it in here. In Groudle pianos belong to the best room, and most of them have holland covers on from one year's end to another. And as for the panel, I must do myself a copy of this, if you don't—or rather, if Miss Tarleton doesn't mind. I believe you said you wanted it for your cousin."

Her companion flushed—a flush almost boyish in its intensity—and played awkwardly with his whip.

"Miss Davenal," he rejoined, "you are very cruel. I suppose you mean that people are talking about—about Irene Tarleton and I being more to each other one of these days than cousins. Well, it's a confounded untruth. Irene and I are the best of friends, always have been, and I won't say our fathers didn't lay plans over the wine and walnuts. But Irene doesn't care for me in that way; and though she hasn't an idea, the sly little minx, I know whom she does like."

Moira had begun to work on a spray of leaves in a corner of the panel and her face was hidden.

"I—I beg your pardon, Sir Guy," she murmured. "I suppose it did seem as if I were hinting at what isn't my business."

Guy Vanbrugh came a step or two nearer. "Irene is a brick, though," he said, "and no end fond of beautiful things. That was why, when I dropped in that day to see your father about the yacht, and noticed you busy with some of that wonderful ribbon-stuff, I thought I'd get you to do me a piano-screen for her. It's her birthday soon, and I'm going to give her one of those pianos that play themselves. Extraordinary things they are, and getting to be quite the rage."

He was talking nervously, and for no better reason than the sake of saying something. Suddenly he bent over her.

"Moira," he added, "you didn't think I was only amusing myself, did you? You couldn't think that badly of me, surely."

The golden head bowed over the panel was raised haughtily.

"Sir Guy!" began Moira Davenal, "I—I——"

Guy Vanbrugh checked her with a gesture.

"Don't, dear," he said, "you are not angry, and you're not surprised. Women always guess these things, even before a man knows himself. Have I a chance to win you for my wife? I'll give you all the time you want to be sure, and, to be honest, I can't hear that I've any particular rival, though every bachelor in Groudle, by all accounts, is mad for you. Moira, have I the least little bit of a chance?"

Moira twisted the ribbon in her fingers. "I—I don't know, Sir Guy," she faltered, "I never thought about you seriously. And they would all say I married you for your money!"

Guy Vanbrugh laughed, a deep, masculine laugh, with a gasp in it not unlike a sob.

"Then there is a chance for me," he said, biting his lip. "Moira, I——"

He stopped abruptly. The ribbon fell from Moira's grasp and she looked up into his face. Its mask of well-bred composure had been lifted and she saw how profoundly he was moved. Something seemed to sting her own heart, and she put out her hands in a spasm of sympathy and protest.

"Please," she begged, "don't look like that. I'm not worth it—no woman is."

Guy Vanbrugh took her soft palm in his. "Moira," he said, "here have I been learning to love you better than anything else in the world, and you have been telling yourself all the while that I was only amusing myself. Perhaps you were wise, but all the same you were wrong. Listen, I am going to London for a few days—I must, on business. I called in to ask you to explain to your father. When I come back you shall let me know if you have missed me just a trifle. Don't allow your kind heart to pity me over-much, I don't want to be pitied, Moira, I want to be——"

He started back. There was a heavy step in the square hallway of the cottage, and a burly, almost gigantic figure, moving with a slow, short stride, entered the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal," remarked Guy Vanbrugh easily, picking up the whip he had laid down, "I was just about leaving you a message. I must run up to London for a week-end. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph*?"

The new-comer rubbed his deep, clean-shaven chin with a finger and thumb.

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," he answered, "under the port bow. The keel-plates have parted and the water can pour in faster than any pumps those London men were using could get it out. But I'll have her afloat now before long."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Guy Vanbrugh. "I only wish I'd called you in at first, Davenal, it would have saved time and money."

The diver smiled—a broad, pleasant smile. He was a huge man, whose breadth of limb and chest disguised his height, and he had the placid grey eyes of a child.

"It's very kind of you to say that, Sir Guy," he responded, and I'm glad to be of use to you. But I wouldn't have gone down again, sir, for anyone but your father's son. I've made my little bit, and I'm getting on. I want to spend the evening of my life in idleness, and, if I may own it without cowardice, in safety."

He drew Moira into his arms as he passed her, and scanned her face with gentle attention.

"You're working too close, lass," he said, "yon roses are taking the roses out of your cheeks, I'm thinking."

"Oh, no, dad," cried Moira eagerly, "I'm sure it isn't that. Sir Guy told me not to tire myself over it, and I haven't. If I'd liked I could have finished it ever so long ago."

She blushed furiously—without any apparent reason—and glanced covertly at Sir Guy. He was viewing his hunter from the window.

"My horse is getting impatient," he observed. "Miss Davenal, I shall never forgive myself if you work too hard on my account. Good afternoon, Davenal. You have my authority to put the panel in the fire if your daughter devotes to it more than half an hour a day. I shall only be in town for the week-end, so you can let me know its fate when I return."

He touched Moira's fingers, their eyes met, and Moira cast hers down. Then he shook hands with John Davenal, and, leaving the cottage, sprang into the saddle. Moira drew back the curtain and gazed after him as he rode away.

"That's a fine young fellow," said John Davenal, sitting down heavily by the fire, "but I wish his yacht was safely afloat again and my last dive yonder made—I'm not so fit for it as I was."

Moira turned quickly. "Are you unwell, dad?" she asked anxiously.

The diver put his head into his big palms. "It's my ears, lass," he rejoined; "first it's one and then the other. To-day it's the right side, and I'm fair moidered with the pain."

"Poor dad!" exclaimed Moira tenderly, and dropping the curtain, she crossed the kitchen towards him.

She paused half-way. A loud knock had sounded on the cottage door. Without ceremony it was thrust wide, and a man's form appeared in the entrance. He was below the medium stature, yet conspicuously broad-shouldered and athletic. His hair and bristling moustache were of a fairness almost ashen, and showed oddly upon a countenance tanned and bloated, and jowled like that of a bull-dog. A reefer suit of worn blue serge, and a peaked cap of the naval type, suggested the sailor, but his trousers lacked the chara

Digitized by Google

teristic "flare" over the boot-top. And yet there was about him an unmistakable flavour of salt water.

Unsteadily yet familiarly he thrust into the small apartment. And as he reeled inwards he sang, in a loud, husky whisper, interrupted by hiccoughs, a scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

The singer stopped and stared round inquiringly. "I want to see Davenal," he said thickly, "John Davenal—honest John. Lives here, doesn't he? Let him know Hartigan wants a word with him—Dennis Hartigan, that was chief steward of the *Athabasca*. He'll remember me; good reason to. Say I want to see the girl—not Nancy, the—the other girl."

The diver rose to his feet, strode to the intruder's side, and grasped his elbow.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarked loudly, "who'd have expected you to turn up in Groudle? Glad to see you, though, glad to see you! Sit down and make yourself comfortable, I'll be with you in a moment."

He pushed the maritime-looking figure towards the fireplace and forced it into his own chair. Seeming merely to pilot its unsteady steps, he was, in reality, controlling it as if it had been a puppet.

"Moira," he added, "go and get me a drop of almond oil from the chemist's, there's a good lass. Tell him it's for me, and ask him to put a suspicion of laudanum in it."

The other caught at his coat-sleeve.

"Look here," he said, "you let me doctor you, John. Oh, I may be a bit muzzy, but I'm not drunk, and if you've got the ear-ache I can cure you in a twinkling. I've a famous pre—prescription—hang the word! Don't you worry about laudanum, let her bring me a spoonful of chloro—chlorodyne. No, dash it, that's not the stuff, it's chloro—chloroform. Fetch me a thimbleful of that and I'll have you better in a jiffy!"

Moira hesitated. The diver motioned to her.

"Humour him, Moira," he said, in a rapid aside, "bring both."

His visitor plucked him by the sleeve again.

"So that's Moira!" he exclaimed. "Come out of the daylight, John, and let me have a squint at her."

With a muttered anathema the diver yielded, and the bloated visage of Mr. Dennis Hartigan was thrust towards Moira Davenal's fair, disdainful face.

"Humph!" he growled at length; "I never was fond of your blooming blondes. Be off, my girl, and bring me what I've told you, or I'll send you back for it."

Moira shrugged her shoulders, took up a woollen tam-o-shanter from a corner table, put it on, ran a pin through it, and went out.

Left alone with his visitor, the diver clapped his hand on the nape of the other's neck. He bent as a reed bends to the wind.

"Now," said John Davenal, "what do you want? Not the girl—not Moira?"

Dennis Hartigan looked wise. "And if I do?" he demanded evasively. The diver set his jaw, and his pleasant countenance grew fierce and bull-like.

"You shan't have her!" was his passionate response. "Neither of you have sought her for more years than there are fingers on my hands. She's my child by nurture and affection, she loves me as if I were her father—she thinks I am her father."

"It's a clever child," commented the steward with a grin, "that *knows* its own father."

John Davenal brushed his coarse black hair off his forehead.

"Let us get to the point," he pursued. "Moira won't be away long. I'm going to make you an offer, Dennis Hartigan, and it is this: While you keep from Moira the fact that I am not her father, while you allow her to remain here peaceably with me, I will pay you fifty pounds a year. I'm not over rich—though I have lasted better at my profession than most—but I can manage that much. Let her go on calling me father; she is nothing to you, and she is everything to me."

Dennis Hartigan chuckled. "Fifty pounds a year," he said, "well, if it's worth it to you, it's worth it to me. Give me a tenner on account and I'm mum."

John Davenal sprang to a neighbouring shelf, took down a brass-bound travelling desk, and unlocked it hastily. Big man as he was, he was trembling with a feverish excitement.

The steward sat back in the wooden armchair, crossed his legs, and began to sing his drunken chorus—

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her sailor any more.
Say I——"

He halted abruptly, and with such a curious gurgle in his voice that John Davenal looked round from the gold pieces he himself had begun to count. The steward was staring at the further door of the kitchen. It had opened stealthily, and in the aperture between the door and jamb was a woman's face, pale, and with the limpid, expressionless eyes of the blind.

Her features were set in a gaze of profound attention, it seemed as if her very soul were listening.

SECOND CHAPTER.

The Ears of the Blind

As though paralysed by a kind of fright, the steward sat, his gaze fixed upon the face in the doorway. It was that of a young woman, but its look of tremulous simplicity was unmistakably girlish. Pale as it was at the moment, it had a fragile, appealing prettiness, increased by the loose brown hair that waved naturally over the low, white forehead. The slowly opening door revealed a slight form, diminutive even for the weaker sex.

Dennis Hartigan roused, and with an expletive and a burst of laughter smote a clenched first upon the table by him.

"Well, I'm—blessed!" he cried; "it's Kit, and I took her for a blooming ghost. I didn't remember, at the minute, that she was living with you. Come in, Kit, and speak to your long-lost brother. When I saw you last, you were in curls and pinafores, now I suppose you are 'Miss Kate Hartigan.' Not so much of the 'Kit,' eh?"

His voice had grown suddenly firm and strong, though it was still harsh and unpleasant. The shock of his drunken misapprehension had completely sobered him.

John Davenal shut his desk and went towards the door. As he passed the steward he dropped into the latter's palm a rouleau of sovereigns, and laid his own finger on his lip. The blind girl was still lingering at the threshold of the apartment. The diver went and drew her in. Beside his gigantic bulk she seemed more frail and diminutive than ever.

"It's all right, Kit," he said kindly, "your brother Dennis is home again. You had almost forgotten that you had a brother, I'll be bound."

Kate Hartigan entered, it seemed, reluctantly. "There's someone else, isn't there?" she murmured, "someone I heard that night on the breakwater all those years ago—someone who was singing."

Dennis Hartigan was thrusting the gold into his pocket. He arrested the motion abruptly, and shot a startled glance at the speaker.

"Dennis was humming a bit of a tune," responded John Davenal, puzzled; "but no one is here excepting we three."

Kate Hartigan's face changed, and she sprang, with the singular self-confidence of the blind, to the side of the sailor.

"Dennis!" she cried.

Digitized by Google

"And is it really you! Oh, my brother, my dear, dear brother!"

She threw her arms round the steward, and hung upon him, sobbing. John Davenal blew his nose violently. Dennis Hartigan coughed.

"That's all right, Kit," he said awkwardly; "I—I thought you'd be glad to see me."

"Glad!" exclaimed the blind girl, brokenly. "Oh, Dennis, why couldn't you have come before mother died? She wanted you so badly, as badly as I have wanted you since."

The other frowned irritably. "A man's got his living to make, my girl," he answered, "and in my trade you must take a job where you can find it. I've known men to be ten years working their way home from boat to boat. But wasn't I going to do something for your ear-ache, John?" he broke off, evasively.

The door from the garden swung inward as he uttered the question, and Moira appeared. Dennis Hartigan surveyed her with a new and critical interest, the passing of his temporary inebriation had left him a different man. Smart and well set-up though he was, it was not probable that he was under forty. His eyes were hard, bullying and cruel, his sun-burnt visage coarse and vaguely evil.

"Got that stuff, my lass?" he queried curtly, for Moira had not condescended to favour him with a single glance.

"No," she said, taking off her coquettish head-gear, "the man wouldn't sell it to me. I'm not twenty-one, and it's a poison."

Dennis Hartigan swore under his breath. "Easy seeing I'm not in London," he commented, "but I'll go myself and get some—hanged if I won't, and tell him what I think of him."

The diver would have protested, but his volunteer physician was determined.

"Kit can put her hat on," he said, with the air of one who utters an afterthought, "and take me to the shop. She used to know her way about this hole as a baby, so I suppose she does still. I'll have to be off soon, anyhow, and I expect she won't mind a stroll with her long-lost relation."

The blind girl darted out of the room and came back with a hat. Her face was glowing with pleasure and interest. John Davenal looked from her flushed, innocent countenance to the repellant one of her brother, and sighed as he threw the house-door wide for them.

Dennis Hartigan took his sister's arm, and they walked off together. Led unfalteringly by his sightless companion, the steward picked his way across the irregular cobblestones of the quay that skirted the harbour. His sister trod them with an elastic step, she was used to the clumsy species of paving. The sun was sinking in the fast-clouding West, a cold wind blew against them, lights began to twinkle along the shores of the bay, and in the windows of the little town.

"How strange," said the blind girl, "to be walking here with you, the last person in the world that really belongs to me! Mr. Davenal has been, oh, so good, and Moira is like my own flesh and blood. But I've always wanted my brother back, Dennis, I am very glad you have come home."

Kate Hartigan's cheeks were flushed, and her sensitive mouth trembled. But the heavy features of her lounging escort had set in a fierce scowl, and his brows were contracted and drawn down over the root of his thick nose.

"You didn't seem that pleased at first," he growled. "What did you mean by 'all those years ago,' and 'that night on the breakwater'?"

His sister winced at his tone. "There, I've vexed you!" she said; "don't be angry with me, Dennis, it was only your voice, in that scrap of a song you were singing. I have never really heard your voice before, to remember—I was a tiny thing when you went away—but when I heard it just now, both it and the song were quite familiar."

She guided him round the corner into a more central street and went along it.

"Years and years ago," she continued, "I could only have been about eight at the time, I was on the old breakwater one night. I liked to go all alone and sit down far on the landing-steps and listen to the tide flowing, and dream about where it came from, and what it had been doing during the day. And often I stopped out quite late—I think I used to forget all about time in my dreams."

"Yes, yes!" interrupted her brother, impatiently; "but you said something about one night."

Kate Hartigan assented. "One night," she pursued, "I was sitting there, under the bluff that overhangs the landing-steps, when I heard a voice—a man's voice, singing quite low, in a sort of whisper, and he was singing just what you were when I opened the kitchen door. I have always remembered the words—

"'*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her sailor any more.'

"And the rest was about the Union Jack and fighting with a black. Then he said, to someone who was with him, I suppose, 'This is far out enough, in with it.' And then there was a kind of grinding of feet on the stones above, and a splash just in front of me."

The steward had clenched his fists, and his yellow teeth showed viciously under his grizzled moustache.

"A rum thing, I daresay," he answered sulkily, "but the song was quite popular once, and any amount of people must know it. I always sing it when I get a trifle muzzy. Odd, perhaps, but I do."

"Muzzy?" repeated his sister, bewildered; "what is that?"

"Drunk," explained her brother harshly, "not that I was exactly drunk just now. But I had a drop and felt like tuning up. At least, I did till I saw your white face in the doorway. It was so like a ghost's, it fairly sobered me."

The blind girl sighed. "I'm sorry I startled you," she replied gently, "but I wish you hadn't been what you call muzzy, Dennis dear. It may have been that which made your voice sound so like the man's on the breakwater, as if he had been 'muzzy' too. Yours sounds quite different now."

Dennis Hartigan's jaw set and his hands clenched involuntarily.

"Maybe," he said drily. "Aren't we ever coming to this chemist?"

"It's at the next corner," answered his sister, and the steward quickened his pace. Another moment and they had entered a small shop, whose illuminated green and crimson window-flasks showed its tenant's profession. Dennis Hartigan strolled up to the counter; a little, bald-headed, snowy-bearded man confronted him.

"I want some chloroform," he said, "and as you don't seem inclined to trust a woman with it, I've come myself."

The chemist smiled and rubbed his withered palms together. "Ah," he observed, "so you are the gentleman whose messenger Miss Davenal was. You see the young lady is not of legal age to sign the poison register, and chloroform is, as you will know, a poison of a peculiarly dangerous sort."

His customer sneered. "I have bought it on the nod in more countries than one," he said; "however, where is this bally register? Sixpennyworth of the stuff will do me—less if you like."

He took up the offered volume and the pen and scrawled his signature in the prescribed space. The chemist served him with the drug; he ordered, as a supplementary item, a small quantity of cotton-wool, paid for his purchases, pocketed them, and stepped out of the shop with a gruff "Good evening."

This time it was his sister who took his arm. "You're not vexed with me really, Dennis, are you?" she said. Dennis Hartigan gnawed his moustaches.

Digitized by Google

"Why should I be?" he queried. "When you were a lass of eight I was alternately roasting and freezing on a Chinese cargo-boat. What has your man with a voice like mine to do with me? After all, I'll bet he was only drowning a sick dog or a batch of kittens."

"I know," said the blind girl humbly, "but you can't believe, Dennis, what a strange impression it left on my childish mind. For years after that I used to dream that I heard the voice singing over and over again:

"'*Tell her that she'll never see her sailor any more.*'

with a sort of stop before 'sailor,' just as you sang it to-night. And my dream always turned to you, because you were a sailor, or practically a sailor, and I was afraid I might never see you again. Then in my dream, I would hear someone say, 'Over with it!' and a splash would come, and I would wake up shuddering. But I never mentioned it to anyone, for fear they would laugh at me."

Her brother's grim countenance grew less perturbed. "That's a good, sensible sister," he said; "you take my advice and forget all about it. And now let's hurry back, or Davenal will fancy we've lost the road between us."

His guide quickened her pace, and they regained the house near the quay without either making further reference to the subject which had so singularly occupied their attention. On the way, Dennis Hartigan had paused to add a third item to his list of purchases—a common white clay tobacco-pipe.

As they entered the steward saw that Moira had lighted the lamp and that John Davenal was seated by the fire in his wooden arm-chair. Moira, leaning over the back, was placing a little chintz-covered cushion behind the diver's head. His large, soft, somewhat pained grey eyes were raised to contemplate her, and one of his huge brown palms caressed a little hand that had rested for a moment on his shoulder.

The watcher grinned. "I believe the old fool worships the ground she walks on," he muttered. "Might be his own flesh and blood—thinks she is, more or less. If—if he only knew!"

He stepped into the kitchen, with a sudden assumption of cheerfulness. "Here we are," he said, "now we shan't be long. It's as easy as lying, when you've once been shown."

He laid down upon the table the bottle of chloroform, the cotton wool, and the tobacco-pipe. Moira and the diver watched interestedly; the blind girl, who had gone through to take off her hat, returned to listen.

The steward plucked away a scrap of the cotton-wool, poured a few drops of the chloroform upon it, thrust it into the bowl of the pipe, and clapped his hand over the latter.

"Looks like magic, doesn't it?" he observed; "a Yankee sailor showed me the dodge. He picked it up from an old soldier who had been a hospital orderly in his time, and who cured him as I am going to cure you. Lend us the loan of your ear, John."

The diver inclined his head to bring the aperture of the organ in question into the light of the lamp. Dennis Hartigan bent down, inserted the stem of the pipe, put his mouth to the opening of the bowl, and breathed steadily, driving the chloroform vapour into the recesses of the ear. From time to time he watched his patient's face.

"A thousand will do me at present, my Lady."

The lines of the pain began to die out of John Davenal's features, and the involuntary smile that betokens relief from long-continued suffering, stole over them. He sighed lustily.

"That's better already," he exclaimed; "much better! Dennis, you're a famous doctor."

Dennis Hartigan withdrew his impromptu instrument and put it down.

"Not a bad notion, is it?" he said, "sort of sends the ear to sleep and gives it a chance to get good-tempered again."

He stood up and resettled his collar and tie. They had been disarranged by his stooping. As he did so his glance fell upon the dial of the clock on the mantel. The fingers were close upon the hour of five.

"By Jingo!" he ejaculated, "is that the time? And I've got to get back to Glasgow for the balance of my pay. I'll have to take myself off. Never mind, I'll be back again in a day or two. A look round among old parts and old pals won't do me any harm, and I'm not sure what I'm going to turn to next."

The blind girl stole to him and put her hands on his arm. "You'll stay a while when you come back, Dennis," she asked; "won't you—for my sake? Nobody else has as much right to you as I have, nobody could have—unless it was a wife or a sweetheart."

There was a ring of curiosity in her pleading tone, and again the keen "listening" look came into her face.

Her brother shot a quick glance at her. The glance passed towards the diver. John Davenal met it gravely, and without any audible observation. The steward's pause had been almost imperceptible.

Digitized by Google

"Well, luckily for both of us, Kit," he said, "I've got neither to think about at present, so perhaps I'll put in a few days at Groudle, but just now it must be 'quick march.' So long, Davenal; bye-bye, Kit."

The blind girl clasped his hands and offered her cheek for a kiss. The steward hesitated and something like a blush tinged his sunburnt, bloated visage. But he laughed awkwardly, brushing his sister's face with his moustache. Moira shrank behind the driver, as if fearful lest the same salute might be her fate.

But Dennis Hartigan contented himself with a brusque nod and a touch of her unwilling fingers, and, with a renewed "So long" to John Davenal, departed in the windy dusk.

His sister followed him to the gate and stood listening to his retreating footsteps. Her face was aglow with a new-sprung happiness and affection.

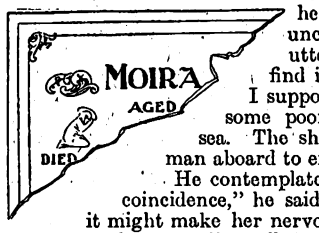
In the cottage John Davenal was putting on his slippers.

"Yon stuff's done me a power of good, Moira," he said. "I believe I could do with some tea. While you are making it I'll go and have a wash."

Passing through into the rear of the small house, he lit a candle and set a tap running over a stone sink. As he took off his coat something bulky in one of the deep pockets struck against his knee.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, "to think of my forgetting that."

He thrust a finger and thumb into the pocket and drew out an irregular piece of damp and rotten wood. To it was attached the torn and jagged fragment of a thin metal-plate engraved. Some words were still decipherable upon it. The plate had evidently been a square and the fragment which he had was a rough diagonal half.



John Davenal shook his head over it. "That's a queer, uncanny kind of thing," he uttered aloud, "for me to find in ten fathoms of salt water. I suppose it's part of the coffin of some poor soul who was buried at sea. The ship must have had a handy man aboard to engrave that."

He contemplated it doubtfully. "An odd coincidence," he said. "I'll not let her see it—it might make her nervous. Some folks would consider it a bad omen. But, all the same, I'll keep it—yes, I'll keep it."

THIRD CHAPTER.

Mistress and Maid.

"Preposterous, Davenal, perfectly preposterous. I have been more than generous to you all these years, to say nothing of the sums which, from time to time, on one pretext or another, you have obtained from me. You should have saved a considerable amount, and I cannot consent to any further exactions."

"I'm sorry for that, my lady," was the quiet response, and a pair of spare, slightly-yellowed hands fluttered about the haughty grey head of the woman who had previously spoken. She was lounging in a comfortable chair before her triple-mirrored toilet-table, languidly submitting to the manipulations of her maid. A portly, well-preserved personage of the dowager type, selfishness was stamped upon her as with a seal.

"What you can possibly want with the money," she exclaimed, plucking at the laced sleeve of her dressing jacket, "I am at a loss to tell. A thousand pounds—it is simply black——"

She checked herself. The maid went on with her operations. She was a compactly-built, hard-featured woman of forty, with heavy brows and pinched, secretive lips.

"Blackmail, you would say, my lady," she observed, in a self-possessed undertone—"I wouldn't use such words, my lady, they might be overheard, and—and misunderstood. You see my—a certain person is—who is a ship's steward, my lady, is leaving the sea soon and we had thought of taking a country public-house together. That was why I ventured to represent to your ladyship my long services and fidelity to your—your ladyship's interests."

Lady Tarleton twisted a worn wedding-ring upon her hand.

"You are distressingly clever, Davenal," she retorted, "but I'm tired of being bled. Had I been wise, I should never have allowed you to play the leech with me. Your veiled threats are futile—to injure me would only be to injure yourself."

"So you've often said, my lady," answered Hannah Davenal, "and yet you have, as you remarked, been more than generous. You could not forget that there is a difference between the rope and the broad arrow. Your portion would have been worse than mine."

Her mistress shuddered. Hannah Davenal laid down the silver-backed tortoise-shell comb she had been using.

"However, my lady," she said, "I will be generous too, if only for my own purposes. You are weaker in mind than I, and you are growing old. I will tell you a secret you may be glad to have learnt some day, whatever you may be now. It is this, you think yourself worse than you are. For nearly twenty years you have believed that there was blood on those white hands of yours. You have been wrong. Yet, for that very reason, your peril has been greater than you suspected."

Lady Tarleton stared at her maid. Surprise and alarm struggling in her face.

"For nearly twenty years," pursued Hannah Davenal, "I have had your and your daughter's future at my mercy. The bubble I helped you to blow I could have pricked—how completely you cannot guess—at any moment. And, when I think how you have grudged me the few pounds I have asked you for, I could find it in my heart to wish I had done it."

She looked at her mistress in the mirror—sternly, masterfully. Then she bent over her and whispered in her ear.

White as was the cambric that covered her withered shoulders, Lady Tarleton's cheeks grew whiter. Suddenly the scarlet flush of rising and desperate anger swept into them and she parted her lips to speak.

"It's a lie," she said hoarsely, "a clever lie! The thing was impossible, impossible!"

Hannah Davenal smiled. "I did it, my lady," she answered, "you can have proof. Go down to Groudle Tower and look."

Lady Tarleton studied her with a kind of helpless curiosity, mingled with impotent wrath. But a shadow had fallen upon her haughty countenance—a shadow of a great fear.

"And you did this—alone?" she said slowly. Her maid was opening the doors of a wardrobe.

"No, my lady," she replied, "I had help. My husband helped me."

Lady Tarleton knitted her brows.

"Your husband!" she rejoined, "what, you are married?"

"Yes, my lady," was the reply, "I was married twenty-two years ago. What gown will your ladyship wear?"

Her mistress gasped. "Twenty-two years!" she repeated. "And your husband—what of him?"

"He's a ship's steward, my lady," responded Hannah Davenal grimly, "and not a man to settle down kindly at home—at least, he wasn't when I married him. So, when I found out what he was by nature, I told him to stop at the sea till he really wanted a home and a wife. He took on then with the China trade. But he's working his way home now, and I'm feeling like settling down myself, my lady."

She broke off and turned to the wardrobe again. "The

Digitized by Google

grey zibelline, I suppose, my lady?" she said. "Your ladyship will be driving to-day, and it's very cold."

Lady Tarleton had leant on the back of her chair, and was gazing into the fire beside her. "You can certainly keep your own secrets, Davenal," she remarked, "and you shall have money to settle down with this absurd husband of yours. But, really, you mustn't expect me to believe that preposterous story about—about——"

"As I said before, my lady," observed the maid, "it can easily be proved."

Her mistress laughed scornfully. "By your husband's testimony?" she said. Hannah Davenal brought the rough cloth walking-dress.

"No, my lady," she returned; "by your own eyes."

Lady Tarleton fell to gazing into the fire once more. "Why do you tell me this now?" she asked. Her maid slipped the skirt over her head.

"It suited me to wait, my lady," she confessed. "I was very comfortable in your service, and I thought I might get a bigger price—you'll pardon me speaking so frankly, my lady—if I put off showing my hand till you had come definitely into your rights, my lady. But time is getting on, and, as I explained, my lady, my husband is leaving the sea, so I ventured to——"

She brought the bodice of the dress, and held it for her mistress to don. Lady Tarleton met her with a full, searching gaze.

"Pack up a few things," she directed, brusquely, "I will go down to Groudle and investigate these—these amazing assertions of yours. After all, why don't you own that the whole thing is a clever fabrication, got up to fleece me of this particular thousand you have set your heart on. Come, confess, and you shall have not a thousand, but fifteen hundred."

"A thousand will do me, *at present*, my lady," was the significant reply. Lady Tarleton drew a sharp breath.

"Davenal!" she exclaimed. "Understand me——"

She was interrupted. A third person—an arch and youthful brunette—had burst tempestuously into the room.

"Mamma," she cried, "don't you want to see Guy for a minute? He is in town on a flying visit, and has called. He can't come again—he's going North to see about fishing up that yacht of his, and meanwhile he has got to buy a new dog-cart, give evidence in a Chancery suit, and attend a public dinner."

"My dear Irene," said her mother coldly, "I wish you wouldn't run upstairs and then gasp out long sentences. I shall be charmed to see Guy as soon as Davenal has finished dressing me. But you could just as well have sent up, and not broken off your *tête-à-tête* with him on my account. Whom do you suppose he called to see—me? Would to Heaven he had found you in anything but that hideous cycling costume!"

Irene Tarleton coloured, laughed, and made her exit from the room no less hastily than she had entered it. She was a robust young girl, in the quite definitely short-skirted dress to which Lady Tarleton had referred so disparagingly. Her mother's reference to "gasping" was certainly a libel, for though she came as near as a self-respecting young lady may to running down the stately flight of stairs that gained the hall of the great town house, her breathing did not seem to be in the least degree affected as she re-entered a dainty drawing-room, to find herself in the presence of Sir Guy Vanbrugh.

"Of course mamma wants to see you," she said, "you must stop just a moment more, even though it does bore you horribly."

Guy Vanbrugh shrugged his shoulders. "It won't if you'll stay and talk to me," he answered, "but aren't you going out on your wheel?"

"Just got back," rejoined his cousin. "You know I always did believe in early rising. Mamma says I am positively mannish in my energy. But, never mind me, Guy, are you really never coming back to town for more than week-ends? I wonder you don't leave the *Sylph* where she is and build a new yacht!"

"And present Neptune with another ten thousand pounds' worth of old iron?" ejaculated the other; "not I!"

"Are you quite sure," demanded Irene Tarleton casually, running her fingers over the keyboard of a neighbouring piano, "that there's no other attraction up North?"

Sir Guy Vanbrugh started. "Irene," he exclaimed, "you—you—oh, nonsense, you can't have been hearing any gossip!"

Irene clapped her hands. "My dear Guy," she said, "you *have* given yourself away finely. I only meant to chaff you, and I have stumbled on a secret. Tell me who she is, Guy? I won't be jealous, I promise you."

Her cousin hesitated. "Not yet, Irene," he answered. "I—it may not come to anything. I may not prove lucky."

"Of course you will," retorted Irene. "Oh, won't mamma be wild? She doesn't dream that we're not billing and cooing this precise moment. I am glad, though, dear old Guy! It's quite a load off my mind. Not that there ever was any real risk of your falling in love with me."

"Or you with me," added her cousin, cheerfully. "What a blessing we are such good chums, Irene! Haven't you any confidences to intrust to me?"

Irene slipped away. "Not for worlds!" she said. "And here's mamma."

An involuntary, if scarcely audible groan escaped from Guy Vanbrugh's lips. Lady Tarleton was indeed sweeping into the drawing-room. He turned to her politely.

"I'm so sorry to have called at this unconscionably early hour, aunt," he began. "But I wanted a glimpse of Irene and—and you, and I'm only in town for a brief while on business. I go back to Groudle to-morrow."

"And is there any actual probability of recovering your poor *Sylph?*" said Lady Tarleton absent-mindedly. She was eyeing shrewdly the faces of the two young people.

"We are practically sure of it by now," responded her nephew; "I have a very clever diver at work, a man named Davenal, a native of the place. He promises to float her in the course of a few days.

"Davenal!" repeated Irene. "He must be a relation of our Davenal, mamma, she comes from Groudle."

"Possibly," answered her mother, suppressing a little yawn of indifference, "well, I hope he proves successful, my dear Guy; yachting, especially in the *Sylph*, was always my passion, and, after a London winter, Irene could do with some sea air."

Irene burst into a peal of merriment. "Don't I look delicate, Guy?" she said. "Am I not fading away before your very eyes?"

Lady Tarleton frowned. "You are incorrigible, Irene," she commented testily. Guy Vanbrugh looked hastily at his watch and made his adieux. He dreaded a duel of words between the audacious Irene and her diplomatic, but irritable mother.

Lady Tarleton, for the nonce, spared her daughter a lecture. "Irene," she said, when the door had closed behind her nephew, "I'm going down into Cumberland to-night, upon matters of urgency connected with the estate. I shall be back in forty-eight hours or thereabouts. Do, for Heaven's sake, refrain from indulging your passion for the unconventional in my absence."

"Dear me," observed Irene, ignoring the latter portion of her mother's remarks; "how sudden, mamma! Why not have gone down with Guy to-morrow?"

"Impossible!" declared her mother. "I want to be at Groudle to-night. Davenal accompanies me, she is packing now. Go and take that hideous frock off and you can drive with me to the station."

GUY VANBRUGH.

Digitized by Google

Irene made a reluctant mouth, but yielded.

It was noon when Lady Tarleton bade farewell to her daughter at the window of a first-class carriage. Hannah Davenal, with a luncheon-basket and a reserve of wraps, was in an adjoining third.

The sun was high over the glass span of the express departure-platform at Euston when the train drew out of the terminus, evening had long fallen before it steamed into Carlisle. The maid superintended the transference of her mistress and the latter's belongings to a coach on the small, coast-wise railway that runs from the old Northern city southwards. She had telegraphed from town, and a closed victoria met them at the local station which was their ultimate destination.

Hannah Davenal entered the vehicle with her mistress, but neither spoke. Lady Tarleton was absorbed in a gloomy reverie. The night had proved moonless and windy, and they seemed, as they were driven across the broken, upland country of West Cumberland, to be plunging into a black void of space.

At length the victoria stopped. It had penetrated into the square courtyard of a gaunt, baronial residence, with a huge and ruinous keep at one corner. They had reached Groudle Tower.

A stolid servant or two waited upon them, under the superintendence of an ancient housekeeper. Lady Tarleton supped in irritable solitude, and retired at once. Hannah Davenal imitated her example. The household at Groudle Tower gossiped for a while, and then also sought slumber.

One hour, two hours, chimed from the church in the distant valley, and then Lady Tarleton's door opened silently, and Hannah Davenal emerged. Lady Tarleton followed her. Both women were cloaked and muffled.

In the great hall below, Hannah Davenal turned sharply to the right. "This way, my lady," she whispered, "to the old justice-room."

Lady Tarleton bent her head. Her face was set, and her eyes sparkled under her hooded wrap.

The justice-room was a vast and wainscotted apartment, heavy with long disuse and the winter cold. Hannah Davenal struck a match and went towards a panelled cupboard with an upright, sliding front. She pushed up the latter, and showed a row of large keys, each with its wooden tab and dingy string.

"Most of them are useless now," she said, "but the key we want has always hung here. Eighteen years ago I took it down and used it, as we are going to use it now."

Lady Tarleton drew a sharp breath in the silence, but her maid either did not hear or did not heed the action.

"We can get out by one of these windows," she went on; "they are quite low, and open into the courtyard."

She blew out the match as she spoke, stepped across, and thrust up a heavy sash, then gave her hand to her mistress. Lady Tarleton climbed over the sill into the fresh and windy darkness. Hannah Davenal glided after her. The window closed gently, and the justice-room, vacant once more, was left to its wonted quiet.

A century-old clock in the hall, with a monster pendulum that sounded in the justice-room like a muffled minute-gun, ticked away half an hour. Then the window of the ancient apartment reopened, and Hannah Davenal, stepping in, turned to assist her mistress.

Lady Tarleton was white and thoughtful. But a quiet, almost surreptitious, smile hovered upon the lips of Hannah Davenal.

FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Call in the Dawn.

"Not so fast, darling, not so fast, the best thing round a neat waist is a sailor's arm, and if I'm not exactly what you would call a sailor, I'm the next thing to it. Here's your health and a handsome sweetheart to you."

Dennis Hartigan lifted a brimming pewter to his lips. He had taken it from the hands of a strapping country lass who had served him with it as he sat on a bench before a wayside public-house. His free arm forcibly incircled her, and his bloated, bold face stared up into her own. Over him, as he sat, hung a creaking sign, lettered "The Half Brick."

Past the little inn ran a lonely country road, turning sharply just before it reached the inn. The air of the afternoon had a touch of spring in it, and a streak of sunshine gilded the lattices and forecourt of the public-house. Further off, across a sloping hillside and sweep of ploughed land, it laid a shining wake upon the placid waters of the Irish sea.

"He'll have to be a better-looking fellow than you, if he's to have any luck with me," said the Phyllis of "The Half Brick," struggling to release herself; "let me go."

The steward chuckled loudly. "Not without a kiss, my lass," he replied. "Come, I was born and bred in these parts, and I'm a sort of a countryman of yours. You've a pair of pretty, pouting lips, let's see if they taste as good as they look."

The girl gave a little scream as he drew her face down to his. But a spare, black-gloved hand was laid on her shoulder, and she was twisted violently round. A tall, hard-featured, plainly-dressed woman was confronting her. It was Hannah Davenal, and the jaw of the steward dropped, leaving his mouth opened in a ludicrous gasp, like an inaudible exclamation.

Hannah Davenal swung the serving-maid aside.

"Hussy!" she said, and motioned to the discomfited Lothario.

"Pay for what you've had," she observed, quietly yet authoritatively, "and come along with me. This is the way you pass your time, is it? I suspected as much, not being a natural-born fool."

The steward threw down a couple of coppers on the ale bench, dragged his peaked cap over his eyes, and stalked off. The serving-maid put her hands on her hips and burst into shrill laughter; it echoed down the road after Dennis Hartigan and his companion. The latter's brows were knit, and a couple of small, even teeth showed where they rested on her lower lip.

"You're a beauty," she said at length; "you wrote me that you were in Glasgow, hanging about and waiting for some disputed pay. Now I find you in Groudle, flirting with a barmaid. What are you doing here?"

Dennis Hartigan began to fill a worn briar pipe.

"No harm in spending a day or two in the old place, is there, Nan," he asked, conciliatorily. "I ran over to see—to see Kit, and she took such a fancy to her long-lost brother that I promised to come to Groudle again before going south. And as for the kiss you interrupted, what's an odd kiss or so to a seafaring man?"

Hannah Davenal sneered. "Nothing," she said, "to him. But if he happens to have a wife like me, Dennis, he'd better not be too free with them before her."

Her husband grinned. "How did I know you were anywhere near?" he demanded. "I took you to be in London with that old cat Lady T." He struck a match and lit his pipe. "I've been expecting to hear from you, though," he added, "about money. I wrote you a week ago saying that I was hard up."

The lady's-maid stood still in the road. "Money, money, money!" she exclaimed; "it's all you ever write about. You'll get no more, in driblets. I am going to leave Lady T. and get a roof of my own over me. I mean that you shall share it and behave yourself with a show of decency towards me, your lawful wife. And you'll do it if you've sense enough to tell which side your bread's buttered on."

Dennis Hartigan bit at his pipe-stem. "Don't bully me, Nan, old girl, it won't do," he said slowly. "I know too much. You and I are in the same boat, and'll have to stop there. I say," he continued, interrupting himself, "the

Digitized by Google

kid's grown into a tidy bit of goods, isn't she. I don't like golden hair myself, but she'd be worth a lot in the ballet."

His wife clenched her powerful, nervous hands. "You fool!" she cried; "I'll be sworn you've been meddling. Why did you ever come back here? Can't you let well alone? Was it for nothing that I have shunned my brother's house like the plague all these years? Do you think I hadn't a reason for it? You great clown! Get out of Groudle and stay out of it. You couldn't have turned up here at a worse moment."

She had turned upon him with such a passion of scorn and resentment that her husband quailed.

"I've done no harm," he said; "I've not breathed a word but 'Good-day' and 'Good evening' to the girl. What the dickens are you carrying on about?"

Hannah Davenal calmed herself with an effort. "I've no time to waste on you," she retorted. "I've other fish to fry. If you want to see me again before getting out of Groudle you'll have to come up to the Tower to-night, Lady T.'s off to London in the morning. You remember the old place, the window of the justice-room. Be there at twelve, and I'll come down to you. For the present leave me to go about my own business."

Without further parley she strode into a narrow lane that led slopingly from the high road to the placid, steel-grey ocean and the lower levels of the little seaport.

Dennis Hartigan swore as he looked after the retreating, deliberate figure.

"Curse you for a cold, proud, covetous jade!" he said; "it's a lass with a bright eye and a trim ankle I want for a wife and not to be tied to your sour-faced bag of bones."

Unconscious of this bitter epitome of her personal appearance, the lady's-maid pursued her way with a steady, unvarying gait. When she stopped she had descended to the cobblestone quay, reached the door of the diver's cottage, and knocked imperiously.

John Davenal himself answered the summons. His broad, kindly face wrinkled at the sight of his visitor.

"Come in, Hannah, come in!" he said, stepping back. "I'm glad to see you. It's many a long day since you crossed my threshold."

His sister entered austerely, and glanced about her.

"It was better so," she answered; "are you alone?"

"Moira is out," said her brother, "with Kit. Won't you sit down?"

Hannah Davenal remained standing. "I'm not one to beat about the bush," she intimated abruptly; "and you're wondering what I've come for."

"I—I was," admitted the diver, falteringly; "but you'll sit down, Hannah, surely."

His visitor rejected the proposal with an impatient gesture.

"You're right," she said, studying his perturbed countenance, "I've come for Moira. She mustn't stay in Groudle any longer."

The diver reeled as if he had received a blow. Then he steadied himself.

"I don't want to be unbrotherly, Hannah," he responded, "nor to set the will of a husband against a wife. But—but Dennis—approached me on this matter a day or two ago, and I agreed with him that, on certain terms, Moira was to remain with me and continue, as at present, to believe herself my daughter."

Hannah Davenal ground her teeth. "The fool!" she said, "the fool! But what proof have you of this? Some absurd document or other?"

"No," confessed John Davenal, hesitatingly; "but his word, as man to man. And—and money was paid, Hannah, and the bargain bound."

His sister stamped her foot and muttered an imprecation on the absent Dennis.

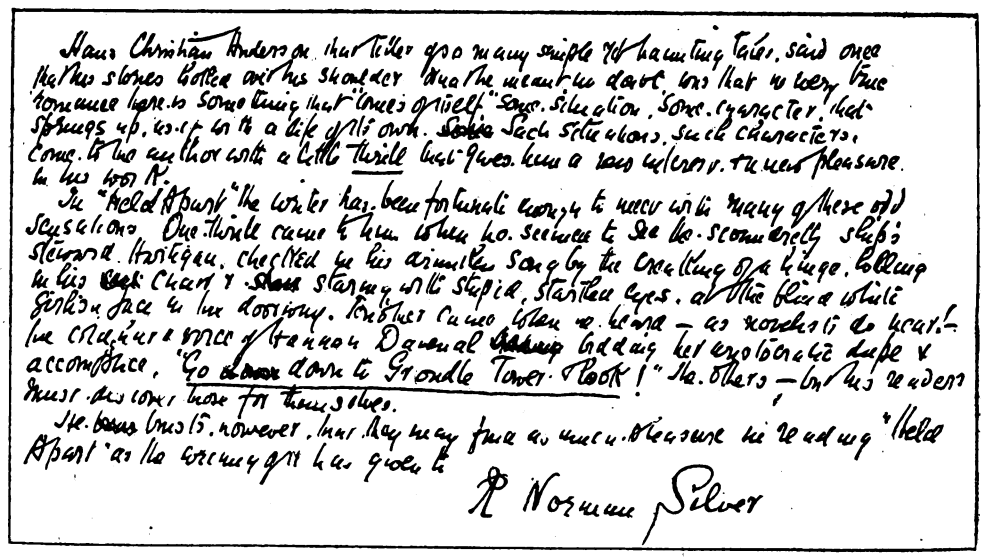
"That's no proof," she retorted; "and besides, he—he has no right to—to part mother and child."

John Davenal looked the speaker in the face. "For nigh on twenty years," he answered, "you have left her where she is, and scarcely cared to know whether she were well or ill."

His voice trembled ominously and he strove to steady it.

"In a year or two," he continued, "she will be of age and her own mistress. I have learnt to love her as my own daughter, and she loves me as if I were indeed her father. She is nothing to you now. What if I were to go to law? I can afford it. There's lawyers as could easily keep the case hanging about—at a price—for years. Where would you be then?"

Hannah Davenal's eyes flashed, but she smiled—an icy, dangerous smile.



A facsimile of Mr. R Norman Silver's handwriting. A competition in connection with it will be found in the Editorial Chat on page 298.

Digitized by Google

"Do," she said, "and you will lose Moira more completely than you can dream of; yes, and by the doings of your boasted law. Do you not see that a mystery hangs about her birth, and that it has been allowed to hang for other purposes than you could fathom. However, I will bring that fool of a husband of mine to-morrow and we can settle the matter, once for all. In the meantime mark my words: If you love Moira you will school yourself to part from her, lest a worse thing happen to her—and you. Let sleeping dogs lie, John Davenal, you cannot tell what kind of teeth may be in their jaws."

She turned on her heel and departed without another salutation than her grim warning. As she stalked through the doorway of the cottage she glanced back and saw that the diver had dropped into his chair. His gigantic shoulders were heaving like those of a sobbing woman.

His sister raised her eyebrows, as if acknowledging to a passing surprise. Then she stepped out into the garden, gained the quay, and retraced the route she had come. It led her to the far-off frowning mass of Groudle Tower, that from its wooded eminence commanded the bay.

She reached it in time to dress her mistress for dinner. Lady Tarleton, to lend some colour to her hasty flight northwards, had telegraphed for her country lawyer, and he had hastened over from Carlisle to join in an unnecessary discussion of leases and to dine solemnly with his client and the vicar of the parish.

"We go back to town by the first good train to-morrow," said Lady Tarleton to her maid, as the latter prepared her for bed some hours later.

"Yes, my lady," answered Hannah Davenal. Her mistress touched her arm arrestingly.

"You have considered my offer?" she added, in a low tone.

"I am doing so, my lady," was the reply.

"Five thousand pounds," murmured Lady Tarleton, "for the name and whereabouts of the child."

"I will think of it, my lady," said the maid, slipping on her mistress' sleeping-socks of silk and wool.

"Take your time, of course," remarked Lady Tarleton, coldly.

Her attendant assisted her into bed—a large and canopied four-poster—and she lay down with a sigh.

"You are certainly distressingly clever, Davenal," she said; "but—but don't try to be too clever."

"No, my lady," responded Hannah Davenal imperturbably, and went away.

From her pillow Lady Davenal watched the blazing fire in the wide grate of the apartment. At last her eyes closed and the wrinkles in her lined brow relaxed. The wind got up and howled about the old mansion, the fire died into gloom and then into blackness. The wind fell again, and all was still in and about Groudle Tower, save for the deep-toned strokes of the distant and musical chime that, from the spire of Groudle Church, marked the flight of the hours.

The chill grey March morning began to dawn, a kitchen-maid or two stirred in the recesses of the great house and crept downstairs to their work. The day had begun.

Then, suddenly, at Lady Tarleton's door arose a loud, persistent knocking. There was a rustle of cambric and laces, and she started up.

"What is it?" she said. "Who is there?"

A man's voice answered. "It's me—it's me, my lady," she was told. "The butler, my lady. Can your ladyship see me a moment? Something—something dreadful has happened."

His mistress lit a candle, caught up a dressing-gown, flung it on, and opened the door. Outside, in the dim, wan light of the March morning, stood a manservant, slippered and collarless, and white with a strange excitement.

"It's—it's Davenal, my lady," he said; "your ladyship's maid, my lady. One of the under-maids looked in to call her and—and found her—found her dead, my lady. With a pillow over her face, my lady, and a queer scent in the room like a drug; I should say chloroform, my lady."

(Another long instalment next week.)

Your Editor Chats.

On various pages in this issue you will find all the new features promised for this week. First and foremost in point of interest is the long instalment of Mr. R. Norman Silver's new serial story, "Held Apart," which starts on the front page. As I have told you previously, this is one of the finest romances ever written, and I consider myself peculiarly fortunate in having been able to secure it for *Short Stories*. After you have read this first instalment, I shall be glad to have your opinions as to the merits of the story.

A facsimile of Mr. Silver's handwriting appears on page 297, where the author describes some of the odd sensations which have come over him while writing the story, and how some of the characters struck him. As you will see, the writing is extraordinarily microscopic in character, and consequently not easy to read. A pencil-case will be given to each of the ten readers who send in, on the back of a postcard, a fair copy of what the author has written. Pencil-cases will be awarded to the senders of the first ten correct postcards dealt with. Postcards must be addressed to "The Silver Editor," *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and should arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, March 10th.

The first article of the series, Confessions of a Self-Made Girl, begins on page 304. These confessions record the way in which Maud Cardew, a girl brought up in a very out-of-the-way part of Cornwall, but who was fired with the ambition to make for herself a name and fortune, succeeded in the task she had set herself. That it was not all plain and easy sailing will readily appear on perusal of the articles, which should serve as a lesson to young girls who get the idea into their heads that country life is too slow for them, not giving any scope for their aspirations and ambitions. Such girls often imagine that they have only to come to London to find a fortune ready to be picked up on the very pavements. For one success there are unfortunately scores of failures, and girls must remember that they cannot all be Maud Cardews.

The Love Problem dealt with this week is, "Should a Girl Inform her Lover of a Previous Engagement?" On this question, there must, of necessity, be two opinions, but I think you will agree with me that the one advanced in the story will need a very strong argument to be brought forward by people who hold different views, before it can be condemned as fallacious.

Since last week I have received a large number of letters on the subject of Lady Peggy Carstairs' tirade against middle-class people. The majority are unanimous in condemning Lady Peggy, and do not at all approve of the sentiments she expressed. I have written to her on the subject, and hope to be able to publish her reply next week.

Your Editor.

The announcement regarding the new competition is unavoidably held over.

Digitized by Google

A Good Purchase.

The Romance of a Dictionary.

"Ruth," asked Mrs. Culberson of her daughter, "what was the package that came home for you to-day?"

"A dictionary," Ruth replied.

Mrs. Culberson's dismay could not have been more complete had she been informed that her daughter had brought home a boa-constrictor.

"And what did you get that for, Ruthie?" she asked.

"Because I wanted it," returned Ruth.

"It must have been pretty expensive," hazarded her mother.

"Yes," sighed Ruth. "It cost tenpence halfpenny."

Mrs. Culberson appeared relieved, but not entirely satisfied.

"It seems to me, Ruthie," she went on querulously, "that a girl who works for two pounds a week, which is the only income two people have to depend upon, ought not to be spending her money on a dictionary. If you had tenpence halfpenny to spare for books, why didn't you buy three or four of those paper-backed novels that would be of some interest to me, instead of a dictionary?"

The Culbersons lived in a boarding-house where dictionaries were a rare commodity. Indeed, Ruth's was the only one about the house except Mr. Winter's, which was an exceedingly small pocket edition that contained only the words in most common use.

But somehow, as soon as it became known that there was a large dictionary in Mrs. Culberson's room on the second floor, and that everybody had been given free access thereto, the desire for knowledge was given a wonderful impetus.

But the person who found occasion to refer to the big book most frequently was Mr. Winter. Mr. Winter was a grocer. Of course in his business he daily met with many terms that required elucidation. Hitherto he had found the pocket dictionary perfectly satisfactory, but after the advent of the unabridged dictionary the much-worn, green-backed little book suddenly lost its usefulness, and never an evening passed that Mr. Winter did not rap at Mrs. Culberson's door and politely request to "come in and look at the dictionary a minute."

His prolonged visits annoyed Mrs. Culberson at first. His presence prevented her scolding Ruth, and as he himself seemed deeply immersed in scholastic lore, thus forbidding opening a conversation with him, the poor old lady's evenings became seasons of exquisite torment.

"I don't know what makes him come up here so often," she said pettishly one night after he had closed the dictionary and gone away. "He's an awful bore."

"It's your own fault he comes," said Ruth. "You invited him."

"Of course I invited him," retorted Mrs. Culberson. "I invited all of them. Doesn't he annoy you?"

"No," she said softly. "I don't know that he does."

As the spring days took on the heat of summer Mrs. Culberson became more fretful, Ruth grew younger and prettier, and Mr. Winter studied still later each evening, in blissful oblivion of the added heat of the gas jet.

Mrs. Culberson had long since ceased sitting up waiting for him to go, but bade him good night, and went to bed in the next room.

One evening in early June ten o'clock passed, and Mr. Winter had as yet made no movement towards going away. Ruth watched him closely, as she always did when he seemed engrossed with the words before him, and she noticed that he had not turned a page for more than an hour.

He looked up at length, and their eyes met. Ruth felt her face flushing again, and with the realisation of her weakness the flush grew deeper.

"It's a pretty knotty problem that I have been puzzling over to-night," he said with a sigh.

"Couldn't you find what you were looking for?" she asked softly.

"I hardly know. I found the word I wanted. Whether it will ever mean to me what I would like it to mean I do not know. Here it is. I have been looking at it a good deal lately."

He turned the big dictionary round till she could read the line over which his finger rested. There was one word underlined with a pencil, and she knew it was the one he wished her to see. It was spelt l-o-v-e.

"Is that ever to be for me?" he asked.

The blush had deepened into scarlet then. For a moment a look of exceeding happiness transfigured her face, but a moment later the old troubled expression drove it away. She turned the leaves of the dictionary till she came to the word "mother."

"That's all right," he said, and nodded towards the door.

Away near the end of the book her next answer was found.

"Ruth," called out Mrs. Culberson, a quarter of an hour later, "what made Mr. Winter stay so late this evening?"

"He was looking at the dictionary, mother."

"Did he find what he wanted?" asked Mrs. Culberson.

"Yes, mother," said Ruth, "I believe he did."

Clarissa Harding.

Gramophones for Twenty-five Readers.

It is quite the exception to find people who don't like music; there are many who are fond of it, but yet either cannot make it themselves or if they can are not able to afford to buy a piano or other musical instrument. To such, a Gramophone would be an inestimable boon. The only thing you have to do to get the sound is to put in the record of the song or piece you want to hear and then set the machine in motion.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by making a four-lined verse on the subject of cats, the lines to begin with the letters C A T S in the order given.

For example:

Can you find a greater nuisance,
And one that causes men to swear,
Than the beasts that spoil the evenings
Singing in the moonlight air?

A Gramophone will be given to each of the twenty-five readers who submit the best verses.

Post-cards only must be used and they should be addressed to THE CATS' EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and posted so as to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, March 10th.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

LADY HONORIA. Sister of the Duke of Eastacres.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF. A celebrated Russian beauty.

BARON ROLLA. An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

PAUL DE SONNAZ. A young French nobleman, and friend of Lady Peggy.

Honoria Becomes a Most Efficient Ally.

THE words ran like an electric shock through every individual in that gay and laughing crowd. The women of Florence, with the quick emotionalism of your true Italian, turned pale beneath the warm olive of their skin, and uttered shuddering little cries. The English, more reticent, kept a steady face. The Americans, more sceptical, crowded round Claverton with eager questions.

He waived them all aside and went to Vera.

"Did the insect sting you, Princess?" he asked; "think well before you answer. Did it sting you?"

For a second the Princess hesitated. Then, with a little laugh, in mockery, it seemed, of the frightened, upturned faces of her guests, she put her hand to her throat.

"Yes," she said, touching the little spot that marred the whiteness of the skin. "It stung me there. Well," as Claverton fell back with a gesture of despair; "am I doomed?" She laughed again and linked her arm in Hervé's.

"I don't believe you, wise man," she said. "You have spent so long in the twilight of your books, that your eyes are dazed when you come into the light of life. I am too full of health, of joy"—she pressed closer to the artist's side; "to be doomed to death because an insect stung me! To your study, Mr. Claverton, we want no death's head here."

"No," as Alphonse, reading the look on Claverton's face, strove to induce her to leave the ballroom; "I tell you I will not go. I do not believe his croaking; but even if there is truth in it—which I deny—I shall be no better for acting the coward. If, as he says, I have only three days more to live, I will live them to the uttermost. Come, let us dance."

With an imperious gesture she motioned to the musicians and presently the strains of a dreamy valse, with a wistful, sad refrain, echoed through the palace.

The guests, urged by the appeal in the Princess' voice, did their best to seem gay. But it was an impossible task. One after the other the couples stopped, one after the other the women hurried to say farewell.

The words of Claverton in our ears, how could we dance? The proud, beautiful woman, with her reckless defiance, her superb audacity, filled one with a sense almost of terror. One seemed to see the shadow of death in those dark eyes and in the waxen pallor of her skin.

"A horrible fate," murmured Claverton, "yes, but who shall say it is not just? A hundred acts of wanton cruelty have not brought her pain, or punishment, have not given her pause for sorrow or for pity. It is just she should suffer and die The cruelties of your woman of fashion transcend the tortures of Caligula. To gratify your vanity you wear the plumes torn from the breast of a living bird, stained with its blood. You cause the seal to die a lingering death so that its coat shall keep the colour you desire; about your persons you string living things, heedless, careless of the agony they endure.

"For fashion's sake you women slay and torture hundreds, nay, thousands, of living creatures every year; it is just that one of you should suffer for your sins."

Leaving me horrified at his brutality, Claverton turned away. As he went from the palace he gave the servants his address.

"I shall be wanted," he said grimly. "Send when the Princess asks for me, but not before."

The ballroom was quickly cleared. The people hastened from the place until of all the guests who had danced and laughed, how short a time ago, there were left but those who were staying at the Palace.

Belinda, with the desire for action that characterised her, frightened at Claverton's warning, and distressed for Vera, urged David to fetch a doctor.

"He'll make her take something, in case the bite is really poisonous," she said.

Had the girl been in her usual health and spirits she would undoubtedly have summoned a medical man on her own responsibility. As it was, her appeal to David had not much result.

"We had better get advice, I think?" she said to Hervé.

Vera caught the words and frowned upon the speaker.

"Nonsense," she said sharply. "I won't hear of it. I'll not to be frightened by the croaking of an old woman like Claverton. I——" She paused and involuntarily raised her hand to her throat.

A spasm of pain contracted her face. A dull red flush stained the whiteness of her skin, her lips twitched, her whole frame seemed convulsed. With a startled sort of cry she threw up her arms.

"Alphonse! Alphonse!"—the look of torture deepened in her eyes, and her lips grow purple. The scarlet and the gold of her rich dress mocked the grey terror in her face. She could not breathe and she beat the air with her hands.

Her lover, clasping her tightly in his arms, strove to calm her. With a supreme effort of will she rallied.

Digitized by Google

"I am not ill, I do not suffer," she said, in a loud, harsh voice; "but, but—send for Claverton!" she gasped.

David hastened to obey her. Alphonse, summoning her women, assisted to take the Princess to her room.

Claverton was at the Palace within a quarter of an hour. He had brought with him an English and an Italian doctor. They both declared themselves nonplussed by the Princess' condition, and, half suspicious, turned to Francis for his explanation.

"The Princess was wearing an insect of a rare species," he said gravely; "found as a rule only in tropical countries. I gather from her maid that the creature, with one or two others, was sold to her by a beetle-catcher some few days ago.

"The insect, from whose sting the Princess is now suffering, lives upon poisonous substances. In other words it feeds upon decayed organic matter. Its exquisite tints are due in great part to its food; its beauty is the result of the corruption it absorbs. That corruption is conveyed in its sting; the Princess is doomed as surely as if she had a knife plunged in her heart."

Some consultation followed between the doctors and the great explorer. Specialists of European repute were sent for, and the members of the Princess' family were summoned.

Amongst the latter was Vera's mother, a fair-haired, little Parisian, with a doll-like face and a petulant, pretty mouth. It was absurd to think that the stately Vera was her daughter.

She arrived on the evening of the day following the ball. Vera refused to see her; despite her awful suffering the Princess' will was as strong as ever. Only the sister of mercy—in Italy the nurses all belong to a religious institution—did she permit to be with her, and at times Belinda.

The little Frenchwoman—Vera's mother—bewailed her daughter's lack of feeling, and determined to insist on entering the bedroom. She begged me to accompany her and I yielded to her persuasion; I wished afterwards I had not done so.

Vera heard the whispered altercation at the door, and, with a flash of her old spirit, called contemptuously that we might enter.

Her face was thin, but as yet the poison working in her veins had left its loveliness untouched.

"Call Belinda," she said peremptorily to the nurse; "and the young Englishman also, and M. Hervé."

In obedience to her word they came, treading softly, silently, as though already in the presence of death.

Vera raised herself, and, with an eloquent gesture, pointed to the sunlit street beneath her window, gay with the bright dresses of the populace, echoing to the sound of music, of voice and of violin.

"It's a fair world, a bright world," she said. "I did not always think so, but now," she smiled at Hervé, "now that I am leaving, I find out all its sweetness. To-morrow I shall not be here. *Don't*," she cried harshly, as her mother commenced to weep in a fretful, childish way. "It makes me sick to hear you.

"What have you ever cared for me, that it should grieve you to lose me? Your self and your aggrandisement you studied, not your child.

"Look," she laughed in her old mocking fashion, "look how my mother weeps, how daintily she cries for fear her tears should discompose her rouge! I tell you," she grasped the little woman's wrist—"I tell you it is you and mothers like you who make women such as I.

"As a baby you turned from me, giving me to the care of hired women. As a child you took no heed of me. As a girl you *sold* me—sold me to the highest bidder—a man steeped to the very lips in sin, who had not one redeeming quality of mind or soul. How much did he pay you, mother?" she gripped the woman tighter. "What did you get besides the glory of the marriage?"

"I did well for you, Vera," cried Madame D'Astrea, much distressed. "Your father left me all but portionless, with nothing in fact but that bleak place in Poland. Had not Zouloff taken a fancy to you, your life must have been passed on the estate, with nothing but peasants and poverty for your companions. I could not have had you with me in Paris—the expense would have been too great."

Vera laughed once more, mirthless and jarring; it disturbed my nerves to a horrible extent.

"As I say, mother, you sold me. And I—I—have had to pay the price. My youth, my innocence, my girlhood were placed at the disposition of the man who bought me. Too late I found out all that marriage with a man like Zouloff meant.

"Too late I learnt all that love might have meant for me. And you, *you* I say"—she struck at her mother wildly—"you have done this. Take her away," she cried. "I could kill her."

Weeping and wailing the little Frenchwoman departed. Vera, her face tense with pain and agitation, motioned Belinda to her side.

"Take care," she said, "that you aren't sold as I was. You love him," she motioned to David. "Why do you wait—why do you give this woman"—she pointed to me—"time and opportunity to sell you? Oh, don't tell me of promises, of duty to your father, respect to *her*," she laughed rudely in my face. "I tell you that the greatest, the most wonderful thing in the world, is Love.

"I have known riches and luxury; I have had adulation and flattery all my life, and now that I am dying I regret none of them—only love. Love that I put aside and turned away, because like you"—she touched Belinda—"I thought of promises and what my mother and the world would say.

"I stayed with my husband and his riches when I should have left them both. You hear me?" She glanced from David to Belinda.

"Put aside all foolish talk of honour and of truth to those who don't know what truth means." Once more she jeered at me. "You have a clever and a dangerous woman against you, and a crafty and unscrupulous man. Marry her, David, marry her, I say, in defiance of everyone."

She gave her hand to the young man as she spoke and with infinite gentleness he bowed his head and raised the hand to his lips. Belinda, more emotional, kissed her, weeping bitterly.

The Princess held her tightly.

"I might have done you harm," she said. "I'm glad I didn't." Then with a gesture of dismissal she turned from them to Alphonse.

As I reached the door of her room I glanced back; Alphonse was kneeling by the Princess' side, his arms about her, his face close to her own. Her hands were clasped round his neck, her head rested on his shoulder. She kissed him many times, then from her lips there broke a passionate cry—a cry that wrung the souls of those that heard it.

"I love you so! I love you so!" she said. "Alphonse, *I cannot* die!"

And then the door shut behind me, and with a grey mist before my eyes and a pain at my heart, I passed from the room.

That night, when Florence was hushed in silence, and the breeze from the hills was blowing fresh and sweet over her palaces and hovels, when the moon's quiet light fell on the marbles of the Santa Trinita, on the bronzed and wrinkled face of a peasant woman sleeping in the open, shining alike on the beauty, the misery, the joy, and the wretchedness of the fair city that night, Vera, Princess Zouloff died.

Some of you that read this, like Francis Claverton, may say she had but her deserts, and that her vanity and cruelty met with its just return. Others may blame, as she did herself, the little Frenchwoman, her mother, who had married her to Michael Zouloff.

For myself, I blame Vera. She had made a brilliant match with a title and a following second only to Royalty. If she was bad-tempered and ungrateful enough to quarrel with the good the gods had sent her, so much the worse for her.

As for the cruelty of wearing live things and all the evil that Francis declared came from the practice, I consider it ridiculous nonsense. Vera should have found out whether

Digitized by Google

the creature was harmful or not before she wore it. The beetle-catcher who sold her the insect ought, in my opinion, to have been imprisoned, and so I told Claverton.

In conformity with the wishes of the Zouloff family, Vera was buried in Russia, on the steppes of the Ural Mountains, where lie the eternal snows. The *cortège* started two days after her death. Alphonse was to accompany Madame D'Astrea, who, now that her daughter was dead, looked quite kindly on him.

The evening before the melancholy procession set forth, I surprised Honoria in a whispered colloquy with David. In the terrible state of confusion, worry and trouble that the last few days had brought about, I had overlooked Honoria. I realised that it was time to bring her to book.

"What were you saying to David?" I asked firmly. "Don't prevaricate, Honoria, and for goodness' sake keep still." She was twisting her fingers in a fashion painful to witness.

"Nothing much, at least—— Oh, Lady Peggy," the poor fool looked piteous, "*must* I tell you?"

"If not, you go back to Mark," I answered. "Tell me at once, Honoria, or I send within an hour for your husband. You know what he will say—and do."

"I know, I know," she wailed. "But Belinda, how can I do anything to hurt her? Let me ask her permission, Lady Peggy. When I explain to her that I must either do as you wish or go back to Mark, she will let me tell you. I know she will. Let me go to her. I——"

I cut short her maunderings and with no gentle hand pushed her from the door.

"Once and for all, Honoria," I cried, shaking her in my anger, "will you obey me or go back to Mark? Yes or no—once and for all."

She wrung her hands and the tears streamed from her eyes, but at last in a voice choked with sobs she gave the answer I required.

"Yes, Lady Peggy," she cried, "I'll do as you say. Oh! I wish—I wish that I were dead."

"Quite so," I resumed, "and now what did David say to you?"

"Belinda sent me to tell him that she would meet him to-morrow morning early—quite early—before six o'clock, by the little church on the hill-side—just beyond Florence."

"And what did David answer?"

"He said he would be there. Oh, Lady Peggy, won't you let Belinda come?"

I smiled at the idiocy of the remark.

"Of course I shall," I answered. "Don't you understand, Honoria, that I'm very fond of Belinda, and that I wouldn't for the world do anything to thwart or hurt her? At the same time even you must see that it is not suitable for a young girl to do just as she likes without consulting her elders. In this instance, however, I shall not interfere. David Carr is quite a nice person, I have no objection whatever to his meeting Belinda at the hour named."

She gazed at me with a relieved expression in her cow-like eyes, though why I should insult a well-behaved, domestic cow by a comparison with Honoria, I do not know. At all events her suspicions were lulled; there was no chance of her telling Belinda of our interview, fear of Mark would keep her silent as to that and other things.

Next morning I left the palace early, just as the dawn was breaking over the distant hills. There were as yet but few astir, a *contadina* on her way to market gave me a cheery greeting as I passed, some beggar children, picturesque in their rags and brown-skinned beauty, surrounded me for coin. Other than these none noticed me. I reached the chapel on the hill a little after five and sank down, tired with my walk, upon the soft green turf.

I had not long to wait; David first and Belinda shortly after ascended the path and turned into the grove of lemon trees in whose shade I was waiting.

Belinda, in a gown of pale grey cloth, with her serious face and steadfast eyes, looked like a sister from a convent. Her hands were full of narcissi and sweet-smelling meadow flowers that she had plucked on the way.

Her posies dropped unheeded on the ground a moment later, for with the eager impetuosity of youth David had taken her hands in his and drawn her close, until her face, hidden upon the rough tweed of his coat, flamed crimson to the tip of her small ear.

"Let me look at you, my darling," cried the engineer, "at your beautiful blue eyes, the colour of the eternal sky. Let me kiss your hands dearest, the whitest in the world. Your mouth is the rose of the world to me, my darling. There's not another so sweet, so fresh."

He took her in his arms, and she, glowing with love, upturned her face ripe for his kisses. And there on the hill-side, with the trees above them and the green turf at their feet, there in the early dawning, they two pledged their love afresh.

As I watched them, a cold wave of doubt, touched perhaps with regret, swept over me.

I recalled suddenly, and without volition, a morning such as this, when, as a young girl, I had waited in a wood. It sloped down to the seashore, you could sit in the shade of the pines and listen to the lapping of the waves at your feet.

My hands were full of woodland treasures, wild hyacinth, primrose, and golden ivy, and then as my eyes turned from the sunlit sea to the shadow of the trees someone had come to me. His name? What does it matter. He was the younger son of a younger son. To marry him would have been madness.

My mother only did her duty when she sent him away, a course of action in which, young as I was, I fully acquiesced, and yet for all my wisdom, all that the years had taught, the sight of those young lovers standing beneath the shadow of the trees, the glad sky overhead, the green turf at their feet, gave me a grey, dull feeling of regret.

But in my heart I knew I did not regret the life that I had chosen, and the grey feeling was but momentary.

I stepped softly to where the two were standing. They were talking, or rather David was speaking while Belinda listened.

"I'm bound to finish the contract," said David; "but if I've any luck it will be through by January. The twelve-month of probation will be over then, Belinda."

"Yes," she answered softly. "I can marry you then."

"Why wait till then?" he urged. "Why not take poor Vera's advice and marry me *now?* I asked you once before in Cairo, and you would not listen. You would have done better had you consented, Belinda. Don't refuse me again.

"Listen, I am prepared to make a compromise. Stay with Lady Carstairs, if you wish, till January, but in the meantime to guard against any possible chance of our separation, marry me—secretly. I will not claim you, dearest, until you send for me.

"Consider how great a risk we have run these last nine months. A little more, and Lady Carstairs' plot would have succeeded. I should have thought you vain and fickle, you would have regarded me as faithless. Ah, my love, don't delay, who knows what ill-chance may come between us. What can I do in Russia to guard you here in Italy? Belinda, for our love's sake, don't refuse me!"

She sighed, and nestled closer to his heart.

"I must," she said. "At all costs I will keep my word. Don't think it is easy for me to refuse you. I never wanted you so much as now, David. Of late I am changed. I feel dispirited, dull, I am always tired, and my nerves seem numb.

"Sometimes I am too tired to do battle, and give in to Lady Peggy for the sake of peace and quiet. I am a little, just a little, afraid of Lady Peggy lately, David. I wish, oh, how I wish I could say 'Good-bye' to this life and live quietly and happily with you."

"You own you fear the woman, and yet you won't give me the right to protect you against her?"

Belinda shook her head. "Let me keep my word if I can," she said, "and stay with her for a year. I've written to father and told him I'm not well, and begged him to come to

Digitized by Google

me at Christmas. He writes to say that he won't come until the New Year, when my probation ends. He hopes I shall then be ready to marry such a man as he desires for my husband.

"He mentioned Farringdon," she added. "Poor Farringdon, he's a nice boy. No, David, it's no use," as he once more urged his point. "I won't marry you till January—then I shall be free."

"But something may happen, dearest. You may be in trouble or distress."

"Then I will send for you," she answered softly. "I promise you that."

"I mistrust letters, Belinda. Remember Lady Peggy overlooks your correspondence." He pondered for a little, then turned to her with a sudden thought. "See, darling," he said, "there is a medal, a little thing of bronze that a sailor gave me at Sebastopol. If you want me, Belinda, and can't write or wire send me this. I'll come to you at once, no matter where you are."

She took the token, and seemed comforted at its possession.

"If I don't get the medal before, I shall come to you in January at Rome."

She nodded, and lifted her face like a child for his kiss. A few minutes later they separated.

Next day David set out for Russia in company with Alphonse and Mme. D'Astrea—and the dead Princess.

Belinda and I left that same evening *en route* for Monte Carlo. We stopped for the night at a village not many miles distant from Florence. We put up at the inn, a large and old-fashioned hostelry that dates back to the Middle Ages.

Belinda went straight to bed, and fell into a deep sleep. I had administered the usual dose of opium, and feeling sure she would not easily awake, directed my attention to the discovery of David's token. As I might have guessed, the foolish, sentimental idiot had hung it round her neck suspended by a ribbon. She had drilled a hole in the bronze, and thus enabled me to take it with the greatest ease.

It was a quaint trifle, with the head of some particular Russian saint on one side and the date on the other. I left the ends of the ribbon loose, so that the girl might easily suppose that she had lost it.

Then quite satisfied with my night's work I retired to rest. I had stopped up all secret avenues of communication between David and Belinda. I had command of the girl's correspondence, and Honoria, on pain of Mark's displeasure, would not dare to write or wire to him without my knowledge. Moreover I had proof that she would on occasion play the spy on Belinda herself.

I placed the coin with other valuables in my jewel-case, which I locked up in my dressing bag, putting the keys under my pillow. I decided to drop it in a convenient river the next day to prevent its turning up again, but judged it quite safe for the present.

I fell into a peaceful and refreshing sleep, which I suppose must have lasted quite an hour. Something, I can't say what, awoke me with a sudden start. Involuntarily I put my hand beneath the pillow, feeling for my keys. They were there just as I had put them.

Unaccountably disturbed, I slipped on a dressing-gown and hurried into the room which Belinda and Honoria shared. They were both asleep. Belinda, fair and peaceful, her face white in the moonshine; Honoria, her plain face plainer than ever in the silver beams, with its usual expression of dense stupidity, in a deep, heavy slumber.

I went back to my room annoyed at my own fears. The events of the past few days hurried through my mind; I was moved by one of those strange impulses that influence at times to look again at the bronze medal I had taken from Belinda.

I took out my keys, unlocked the dressing-bag, lifted out the jewel case, turned the key in the somewhat intricate lock, ran over my jewels with a smile at my folly, felt for the tissue paper packet that contained the medal.

The paper was there, as I had left it—*but the medal was gone!*

(Another exciting instalment will appear next Tuesday.)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

The Story of a Proposal.

"It's dreadful to be poor," said I, leaning forward.

"Terrible," she assented, with great cheerfulness.

"Are you engaged to —— for the next dance? H'm!"

"N—no. I don't think so."

"May I have it?"

"I don't—oh, yes, if you wish."

"Ah, you don't know what it means to me. I've been looking forward to this for weeks."

"I thought you didn't care much for dancing."

"This isn't exactly dancing, is it?"

We both smiled faintly, and a silence followed.

"Your sister May is to be married in the summer?" I said, merely for the sake of saying something.

"Yes; isn't it jolly?"

"Henderson's a lucky beggar. He seems to get everything he desires—a sweet girl and a fortune to help to make her happy."

"But I think the nicest part of it all is that Jack Henderson was quite poor when he fell in love with May and got engaged to her."

"It was very brave of May."

"It was only natural and—right. And, of course, father and mother believed in Jack."

The last remark somehow chilled me. "It's a fortune in itself, being able to inspire people with confidence in one's abilities. I can't do it," I said, a trifle bitterly.

I felt that she was looking at me, but I did not dare to raise my eyes.

"Perhaps you haven't tried. If you haven't confidence in yourself, you can't inspire it in other people, can you?" she said, softly.

"Oh, I'm not quite so limp as all that. I don't despair of ultimate success, but I fear it will come too late."

"Don't—don't ever be afraid of that."

"Why?" I demanded.

"Oh, because—because——" She stopped, and a flush rose on her cheek.

"Suppose," said I, "that a man has a great desire, and no immediate means of attaining it?"

"Then the man must have patience."

"Yes; and when with patience the means of attaining the desire are won, he finds someone else has taken his desire away, and——"

"And he is justly punished."

"Indeed! For what, pray?"

"For letting his desire be taken away."

"But, good heavens! You talk as if a wo—a desire could be purchased on credit."

"Father says the world would stop if there were no credit," she observed, gravely.

"Not to poor men does that apply."

"I thought credit was meant for people who had money in their heads and hands, though none in their pockets."

"Do you know what you are saying?" I asked, breathlessly.

"I'm awfully silly, am I not?" she returned with a laugh that changed to a sigh. "Isn't it time we were going?"

"Do you know what you were saying?" I whispered.

"What was it?" she said, reflectively. "Oh, don't—don't look at me like that!"

"But answer me."

"Oh, please let me go."

"Not till you answer—oh, my dear."

"Jim!"

"Answer my question, and take your freedom."

There was a long silence, then, "Answer!" I said again.

"Never," she whispered with a little sob.

And so I kissed her.

Charles Jeurdain.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES. **FIRST INSTALMENT.**

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

My Heart's Desire.

EVERYBODY knows what a self-made man is—well, I am the same thing in the feminine gender. The definition occurred to me this afternoon, when I was sipping tea in my boudoir, and rather took my fancy. I was just wondering casually if any little portion of the world would be interested to hear how a woman climbs? Gradually the idea took possession of me, and having an hour to spare, I hunted up an old box in which I knew I had locked away the diaries I used to keep as a girl.

I soon found them and became quickly absorbed in them; and this persuades me the more that my later years must have an interest for some, seeing they are full of incident, whereas in the earlier ones all was monotony. So I take up my pen hopefully, to make my confessions.

First about those diaries—such funny old books they are—I can scarcely believe I, myself, am really the individual who wrote them.

I was a simple, country girl, in those days, living in an unsophisticated little village, where missionary meetings were great events, and our clergyman the important man of the world. The missionary meetings were occasionally varied with grand amateur concerts (I remember) in the school-room, when local talent aired itself much to its own delectation, if no one else's.

Wonderful concerts were they! I once recollect the village school-mistress having hiccoughs so badly in the middle of "Good-bye, Sweetheart," that she was obliged to leave off; and the village carpenter, swelling to such an extent with pride over his own unique performance, that a button shot off his waistcoat into the middle of the room.

No one was ever in tune, except by accident, but we didn't mind that, and no doubt in any case the piano was most at fault.

But these are such old memories, I don't know why I rake them up now, unless because it is New Year's Eve, and a time conducive to retrospect. I see I always wrote on New Year's Eve without fail, so this is a most suitable evening upon which to take up my pen again.

In the last entry of all there is a strain of intense longing after some life, and some aim altogether new.

I wonder if I knew what I wanted at the time? If I had any definite aim? Or if I only had a vague idea that the height of bliss was to wear beautiful clothes, have countless admirers, and drive in carriages.

Judging by my diaries, I was a clever young person on the whole, so maybe it is not very surprising that I won my ambition.

"Won it?" you ask, and I see you look up with interest, for those who succeed are always so much more interesting than those who fail. I don't think it should be so.

To me, looking back from my vantage ground of success, there is something sublime in failure. I don't know how to describe it, but on this New Year's Eve I feel I would like to write a letter to everyone who had aimed at something big and failed, and tell them failure is a grander thing than success. I suppose they would all sneer at me, and doubtless in their place I should do the same. It is so easy for those who have won to talk.

Eight years ago to-night I sat in a little, low, cottage room, lighted my precious bit of stolen candle, and wrote in a round, girlish hand, that "I could not bear the village life much longer, for the monotony and littleness of it were eating into my soul, which panted ever for great things."

I smile as I read that sentence. I must have been a very high-flown, sentimental young woman in those days.

Well, I didn't have to bear it much longer, for the very next week the beginning of the new order commenced, and this evening I sit down in the midst of wealth and luxury to take up the broken thread.

There are rings on my fingers such as I had not dreamt of then, and my room is strewn with priceless knick-knacks, almost any of which would buy up my wardrobe of those old days two or three times over. Oh, yes! And I drive in carriages, and wear diamonds, and, as for lovers, they are the bane of my life!

But I like to see the old books lying here looking so dingy and out of place. They have a fascination for me that I cannot shake off, and is something deeper than just the measure of my success.

For, after all, what is success? Sometimes, in what I call my queer moods, I look round me and say: "Are you satisfied, Maud Cardew? Has it been worth while?" And there is no answer. Only I don't want to be the village girl again, not by any means. I want to go on now to the top, and when I get there I will confess whether the game was worth the candle.

Digitized by Google

But to go back to the beginning, one of the most interesting entries in my diaries is the one after I first met the Honourable Bobbie Lestrange and his friend, Di Northcote. Some day perhaps I will show it to Bobbie, but just at present he is so tiresomely persistent in his attentions, that I am almost afraid to speak a civil word to him.

I have told him fourteen times that I will not marry him, and still he goes on asking, and says he intends to until I take him for the sake of peace and quietness.

It was Robert Alexander Caryl Lestrange, third son of the Earl of Mynton, and generally known in all quarters as the Honourable Bobbie, who gave me the first helping hand eight years ago, through his friend Di Northcote.

This is how it happened—it is more like a story than real life.

I must tell you I lived by the sea in those days, and my favourite occupation was to sit in an old ruined castle on the cliff, and stare at the waves, weaving fantastical dreams. Then one day, I think it was my eighteenth birthday, I became suddenly possessed with a wild desire to make my dreams realities.

I reviewed my past with a new feeling of disgust at its seeming littleness, and took a solemn oath to myself that the future should be different.

Then I stood a long time staring at the big waves lashing themselves into fury at the foot of the giant cliffs, lost in eager thought.

"What shall I do?" I asked myself, gazing fascinated at those rolling waves.

"Something big," came the answer readily. "Something tremendous! Overpowering!" And my heart swelled. Everything there, except the human beings, seemed on such a grand scale; I could not brook the thought of being left behind and remaining a mere countrified nonentity.

I felt I did not belong to the rest. The little joys and pleasures of that uneventful, country life in no way appealed to me; instead, they fretted and galled me; come what might, and in whatever way, I must at least do something *big!*

But what?

I threw back my head, feeling the fresh, eager blood course through my veins, fired by the sudden passion of doing and being.

If only I could find an outlet? I was not afraid. All my life I had scarcely known what fear was; if courage could achieve I ought to conquer the world.

I stretched out my arms to the horizon, drawing deep breaths of desire, and felt myself rapidly becoming consumed by an ambition as wide and deep and measureless, as the pulsing Atlantic below me.

"I will achieve! I must!" I cried, and stopped short suddenly, arrested by the sound of voices close at hand. They came from the other side of the Old Keep wall, and I could hear every word distinctly without being seen.

"Rum old pile!" said someone, in rather boyish tones. "Must have had great times here a thousand years ago. Useful to be able to pop your man over the battlements right into the sea when he got obnoxious."

"This drawbridge must have been a marvel of engineering," said another, rather deeper voice. "How in the world did they ever get the thing fixed with that yawning chasm on each side?"

The younger man appeared first, and when he saw me he started so violently I thought he would have fallen.

"Yawning chasm!" laughed the first speaker mockingly. "Do be careful, Di. You'll turn into a poet as well as a philosopher if you don't mind. You must be more particular what you eat. Let's climb round that corner into the Old Keep."

I held my breath and stood motionless. I do not think any one excepting myself ever attempted to round that wild corner, and there was no other approach, I was caught like a bird in a trap. The younger man appeared first, and when he saw me he started so violently I thought he would have fallen.

"By Jove!" he muttered, and gazed at me in a fascinated way.

"What's up?" called the other man. "You nearly went over, you silly young idiot!"

Then the second man appeared, and, though he was not so startled, he looked very hard at me.

He was a good deal the elder I learnt afterwards, a man of immense capabilities, of which he was too much of an æsthetic to make use.

His companion had not long left college, where he had sown a somewhat over-plentiful crop of wild oats, and was now travelling incognito to repair a damaged fortune, and none too brilliant reputation. The elder man spoke first.

"I hope we are not trespassing?" he said, with a charming smile. "We little expected to find a lady in a rocky eerie with such an impossible approach."

Both were still looking rather hard at me, and I felt the blood rush to my cheeks, while I looked at the ground in some confusion.

"Oh, no, you are not trespassing!" I managed to say. "Anyone has a right here, but I think I am the only one who ever comes."

"You must be a wonderful climber," he said, in the same pleasant voice, and the younger man murmured something indistinctly about angels having wings.

Digitized by Google

"I am used to it," I answered. "I have lived here all my life, and I climbed about on the cliffs almost as soon as I could run."

"It is a beautiful spot, but very wild," he said. "I expect you get shipwrecks here occasionally."

"Yes, I have seen several."

"How jolly exciting!" exclaimed the younger man. "Did you ever go out in the life-boat? You look a perfect Grace Darling."

The way in which he said the last sentence made me feel hot suddenly, and I looked up prepared to be angry, but something about him was so winsomely boyish, I only coloured and smiled. This seemed to please him.

"Will you tell us about them?" he asked, with a little persuasive air, and seated himself on a boulder, while his companion leant against the old wall.

"Most of them went to pieces as soon as they struck," I told him, "and all hands were lost, but once a young fisherman saved six Italians on that island," and I pointed to a perpendicular cliff standing four hundred feet out of the sea.

"By Jove! Did he though?" exclaimed the younger, who was, of course, the Honourable Bobbie, while his companion, Di Northcote, added with conviction—

"He must have been a plucky chap! Did he go over the face of the cliff?"

"Yes," I answered, warming to my subject, "it was a splendid deed. Do you see that little ledge near the bottom? They climbed on to that and clung to it with their hands and feet. Charlie Hall then went down to them with a rope."

"Why didn't they weight the rope and let it down that way?" asked Bobbie. "It must have been a ticklish job."

"There is a rock overhangs the ledge," I explained. "You can't see it from here, but it would have prevented them reaching the rope. Charlie swung himself to them by pushing out from the cliff with his foot."

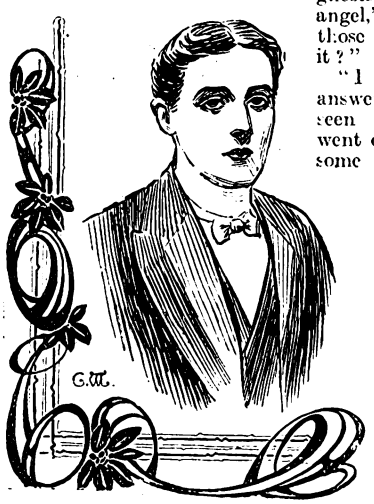
"Great Cæsar!" exclaimed the Hon. Bobbie, and dug his hands deep into his pockets, while the other man grew yet more interested.

"They drew their knives at him," I went on, "because they didn't understand that he was going to save them, and he had great difficulty in explaining."

"What did they think he wanted to do?" said Bobbie flippantly. "Pick out the fattest for his Sunday's dinner?"

I smiled at Bobbie then, for I liked the twinkle in his blue eyes, whereas I felt a little in awe of his friend, and avoided his gaze. He gave one a curious sensation of being read through and through, while all the time he appeared only lackadaisical and callous.

"Tell us some more about the coast," said Bobbie, in his coaxing way. "It's over-run with fairies, and demons, and ghosts, with an occasional angel," wickedly, "and all those sorts of things, isn't it?"



"I didn't know it," I answered, "I have never seen any." However, I went on to tell them about some of the legends and tales relating to the neighbourhood, and I have sometimes marvelled since how I, the unsophisticated country girl, could thus suddenly converse with these two strangers to their evident enjoyment.

I think it was chiefly Mr. Northcote's doing, for he asked me so many questions, and seemed so interested, it was very delightful to talk to him.

Bobbie did not say much, and I don't think he listened very particularly; he just sat and gazed at me in a way that I should have found exceedingly embarrassing, had I not been so engrossed in the conversation.

In the end a sudden idea struck me. I clasped my hands behind my back in a favourite attitude, and leant against a piece of wall.

"It is your turn to tell me something now," I said, looking from one to the other, "I want to know about your world."

They exchanged glances, and Bobbie looked amused.

"Which part of it?" he said. "It wouldn't all do for the *Church Times*, you know."

I turned to Mr. Northcote inquiringly.

"Have you come from London?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Have you ever been there?"

"I have not been more than twelve miles from here in my life," I told him.

He looked surprised, and Bobbie gave a low, expressive whistle.

"Begin at the beginning, Di," he said, mischievously, "and work gradually towards the high-minded, superior condition of present day Society. Otherwise it might be too much for Miss—Miss——" and he looked at me inquiringly.

"My name is Cardew," I said, "Maud Cardew, I want to hear about London. Tell me what you like!"

There was a moment's pause, then Bobbie remarked, with that irresistible twinkle in his eyes, "Fire away, Di! Begin with the Gaiety girls!"

"What are the Gaiety girls?" I asked, as Mr. Northcote only smiled.

"Nobody very particular," he answered. "At least, not outside their own circle. What would you like best to hear about?"

"I want to hear about everything," I said.

"It would take such a long time," put in Bobbie, "that we shall really have to consider remaining a day or two, eh, Di? Jolly, snug little place this, you know, and we might get a bit of good sailing. Perhaps Miss Cardew will tell us where to stay?" and he turned to me again.

"I am quite agreeable," said his friend, and they waited for me to speak.

"You can stay at the farm if you like," I told them. "There is plenty of room, and my father likes a chat with strangers."

They both agreed readily, going home with me soon after.

It was on the evening before they left that Bobbie and I strolled to the Old Keep, while Mr. Northcote was out riding. We had been a good deal together during the two days they stayed with us, though seldom alone. I couldn't help thinking this last was Mr. Northcote's doing.

Without seeming to follow Bobbie, he always appeared to have a watchful eye over his proceedings; and once or twice, when he was inclined to be very affectionate, I heard him mutter in an aside—"Don't be a fool, Bob!" and it made me hot and resentful. Yet I think I liked him from the first, although then and ever since he has riled me more than anyone I have ever known.

I was glad to have Bobbie to myself that evening, because I could get what I liked out of him, whereas his friend was very reticent. We sat down when we had climbed the steep path, and watched the sunset reddening the sails of the fishing-boats, and shedding a golden glory like a halo over the world.

"It's a bit of all right, isn't it?" said Bobbie, who had a peculiar mode of his own of expressing sentimentality.

"It's grand!" I answered, and felt the old restless craving stealing over me.

"It makes you look hungry," he said, "is that how you always show your appreciation?"

"It makes me hungry," I answered, clenching my hands.

He seemed interested.

"Hungry for what?" he asked.

"Anything—everything!" I cried. "I am sick to death of my existence here. I must be and do something better

Digitized by Google

than this before I die. I want to know about the world beyond. What is there the other side of the sunset? What is there behind these dreary hills? Tell me more about it. You know so much and care so little, while I am just starving."

I leant towards him eagerly, and he seemed to catch a like fire from my earnestness.

"Yes, it must be rather deadly," he said, and glanced round. "You'd have rather a good time in London, too," he added.

"Why?" I asked, and felt myself compelling him to reply, with some only half-conscious power. I say half-conscious, because I did not know what it was then. I have learnt since, and, what is still more important, how to use it.

He looked at me a moment, then he said, "Did anyone ever tell you that you were beautiful?"

"Am I beautiful?" I asked, feeling as if the whole world hung on his answer.

"Yes," he replied. "I don't know that I ever saw anyone more beautiful."

I drew a deep breath, and looked away from him for a little while in silence. What I had suspected then was true. It opened endless vistas to me.

"Do beautiful women *always* have a good time in London?" I demanded next.

"It depends upon many things," watching me curiously.

"Tell me what you mean by a good time?"

"Oh, carriages and horses. And flowers and heaps of admirers."

"Yes, yes; what else?"

He smiled at my eagerness. "If you look at me like that I shall have to kiss you," he said.

I felt myself crimson, and drew back.

"You wouldn't be angry, would you?" he asked.

"Yes, I think I should," I replied, not quite sure myself.

"But why? It's so harmless."

"Tell me some more," I urged, to change the subject. "Tell me what else beautiful women do in London?"

"Well, they make a big hole in a chap's pocket very often," he continued whimsically; "and they play the dickens with men's hearts when they get the chance."

"What else?"

"They spend small fortunes on costumes. They go to all the theatres, and like the most extravagant supper parties imaginable."

"How I should love it!" I exclaimed, and drew a deep breath, adding—"And what do the men do?"

"Pay the piper as a rule," drily.

"Supposing the beautiful woman is poor?" I asked, fixing him with my eyes.

"Oh, then——" he began, and paused. "Well, then——" he shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, hang it all!" he finished callously, "it doesn't really make much difference. It's much the same thing in the end, only one's called respectable and the other isn't; but it's no end of a fine line."

I looked at him wonderingly, at a loss to understand, which he quickly perceived.

"You look as if you were going to ask me what I mean," he said; "but I shouldn't if I were you. It's a jolly old world in spite of everything; and I'm not tired of having it at my feet by a long way."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Why is the world at your feet?"

He coloured slightly, and looked conscious.

"Oh, nothing!" he answered, with seeming carelessness. "I had a bit of money a little time back, that's all—except that I wish I'd got it now."

"Is it the same with Mr. Northcote?"

"Not quite."

"I shouldn't think he cares."

"Cares about what?"

"Having the world at his feet."

"Not he. He thinks he's a jolly lucky beggar not to have a position to keep up."

I wondered a little what he meant, but was too engrossed with my own thoughts to pay much heed.

At last I got up and stood with my head thrown back in the old way, and my eyes on the sea. "I want to have the world at my feet," I said, "I *must* succeed. Tell me what to do."

"If some of the world could see you now," he said, with admiration depicted upon every line of his face, "I daresay it would crawl there."

I stamped my foot impatiently.

"But it can't see me," I exclaimed, "so what is the use of talking like that. Tell me what to do."

"Marrying a nobleman or an American millionaire is a good start," he said.

"Which is the better?"

"Well, the nobleman, I suppose; because then the other noblemen's wives can't sit on you just as they like."

"Then I will marry a nobleman," I said, and faced him suddenly.

He looked staggered a moment, then lay on his back and laughed aloud. "By gad! you've got a cheek!" he said, and seemed to enjoy it immensely. Then he sat up. "Never mind about all that stuff to-night," he remarked. "It's my last evening. Come and sit down and be affectionate and nice."

"I don't want to," I answered. "I would rather talk about London and success. I mean to be a great lady."

"How are you going to do it?" he asked.

"I don't know," I replied. "I will go to London and see."

He grew more serious. "I don't think I would," he remarked.

"Why not?" facing him squarely.

"You ought to have someone to look after you if you do," evasively.

"Why?"

"It doesn't do for beautiful girls to be friendless in London."

"I can take care of myself, and I am not afraid."

He watched me a few moments thoughtfully.

"By Jove!" he said at last. "I believe you'll do it. If I'm not much mistaken you've got the grit, and that's the chief thing."

"I'll tell Di," he said later. "He knows everybody; and might be able to help you."

At first I felt abashed before Di Northcote's look, when Bobbie told him of my intention. It was so evident that he believed there was something behind, and I was playing a part.

"If I were you," he said at last, "I would stay where I am."

I told him that I had fully made up my mind to go.

"What can you do?" he asked. "I'll help you if I can?"

I told him "nothing."

"My dear girl," he began.

"Yes, I know," I interrupted. "What matters is, will you try to help me or not? I shall go in either case."

He looked searchingly at me a moment.

"I see you have made up your mind," he said. "There's little enough I can do, but I don't mind trying to give you a hand."

A few days later I stood again in the Old Keep, and looked to the sea.

"I'm going to conquer the world!" I said, addressing the waves and seagulls and massive cliffs. "Maud—Duchess of Ayr—I salute you!"

(Next Tuesday Maud Cardew writes of her arrival in London, and an adventure she had in the fog.)

Digitized by Google

ALICE THURSTON'S PRISONER;
Who Afterwards Became Her Husband.

Alice Thurston was the sole support of her aged grandmother. Being an intelligent girl, she managed to earn a modest living.

Of course there were times when she was unable to settle all financial affairs that accompany all households, and this raw March morning their landlord informed them he would call at ten o'clock and expect confidently to receive the rent money which was long overdue.

Precisely at a quarter to ten Mr. Brown rose from his desk and brushed the brown hair just tinged with grey from his square, yet not unkindly brow. He went forth into the chilly air fully determined to get his due from Mrs. Howard,

It was a quaint house, with neat lawn and scrupulously clean porch and steps that were much worn from frequent scrubbing.

None of these circumstances, however, did Mr. Brown notice as he pulled the glittering brass door knob and walked into Mrs. Howard's sitting-room.

A cheerful fire was burning in the grate, and at a table, with writing material before her, sat a young lady whom the landlord recognised at once as the granddaughter of Mrs. Howard.

She was quite a pretty girl, though you would never have thought of classing her among the beauties. With curling black hair and dark, long-lashed eyes, she was not disagreeable to look upon. There was something very attractive in the dignity of her manner.

Miss Thurston rose with a polite bow, which was only dimly reciprocated by Mr. Brown.

"I have called to see your grandmother, Miss Thurston."

"I am well aware of the fact, Mr. Brown, but being conscious of her extreme nervous condition, have sent her from the room, preferring to deal with you myself."

The calm audacity of this girl fairly startled Mr. Brown.

"The money I hope, is ready?"

"No, I am sorry to say, we are unable to meet your demand."

"Pardon me, miss, I must speak plainly, an officer will be here this afternoon to put a valuation on the furniture and—"

"You shall do nothing of the kind," interrupted Alice, her cheeks reddening and her eyes flashing furiously.

Mr. Brown walked towards the door, as if to go, but, before he realised what he was doing, Alice had quietly locked the door and taken the key out and returned to her seat by the table.

"What do you mean, miss?" exclaimed the astonished prisoner.

"You will now be obliged to reconsider the question," said Alice.

"Obliged?"

"Yes, you will hardly jump out of the window; there is no other attainable egress, unless you choose to ascend the chimney, and I don't think you wish to soil that lovely suit of yours.

"You are a very rich man, Mr. Brown, and own rows of houses, railway shares, stocks and bonds and mortgages and other enterprises too numerous to mention.

"My grandmother is very a poor woman and I support her with what work I can get. Now, would you cause us so much suffering by being so cruel? You are not a bad man, Mr. Brown, you have many noble qualities and I like you for them."

She paused a moment and looked intently and gravely at the landlord.

It was not unpleasant to be told by a pretty girl that she liked him on any terms, yet he had indulged in some plain speaking.

"I have been told," she continued, "of many acts of kindness you have performed. You must show some sympathy in this case. You are extremely cross this morning, perhaps it is the weather, for I do not think you are always thus.

"Hush, I accept no excuse. You are inclined to be irritable and overbearing. If I were your mother and you a little tainly put you in a corner until be good."

boy I should cer- smiled, although he was at the you promised to moment really feeling very angry.

Mr. Brown

Alice went on with the utmost composure.

"Under the circumstances I can only detain you as my prisoner until you promise not to bother us until I am able to pay, which will not be very long. Then, and only then, will you get your money. Do you promise? Yes or no?"

"I refuse," said the landlord tartly.

"Please yourself, Mr. Brown, I can wait."

Miss Thurston deposited the key in the pocket of her dress, and sat down and proceeded to write.

Had she been a man there is no telling what he would have done; as it was, she wore an invisible armour of power in the very fact that she was a woman, and she knew it.

"Miss Thurston," said he, very sternly, "unlock that door, or I shall call for help."

"All right, do so if you wish."

"Miss Alice."

"Mr. Brown."

"Do you know it is twelve o'clock?"

"Yes, I think I heard it strike."

"I should like to get some lunch."

"I am sorry that luxury is beyond your power to-day."

How provoking she was. Mr. Brown eyed the pocket of her blue dress greedily and walked up and down the room in dismay.

"I have an appointment for one o'clock."

"What a pity you cannot keep it."

He took another turn across the room. Alice raised her eyes to his, and with a saucy smile said:

"Well, are you ready to promise?"

"Unfortunately, yes. What else can I do?"

"You promise?"

"I do, because I can't help myself."

"You have made me very happy, Mr. Brown," said Alice, as she drew the key from her pocket and unlocked the door. "I know you think me very unwomanly and perhaps bold, but if you only knew to what extremities we have been forced by poverty, I am sure you would not censure me so severely. Good morning, Mr. Brown."

With many curious and complicated thoughts and emotions struggling through his brain did Mr. Brown go forth, in which dark, flashing eyes and blue dresses played a very prominent part.

The very next day he called to assure Miss Alice he had no intention of breaking the promise she had exacted from him and he called again in a few days to tell her she need entertain no doubt as to his integrity and the next week he dropped in with no particular errand as an excuse.

Could it be possible that Mr. Carl Brown, the confirmed bachelor, had at last been captured by Alice Thurston, his pretty young tenant?

Until this interview he had always scorned women, but a great change had come since, and he succumbed to her charms.

Before Alice Thurston engaged herself to her wealthy suitor she extracted from him the promise that he would provide her grandmother with every comfort in her declining years and she was fond of telling how she gained a husband by making a prisoner of him in the first instance.

M. S. Bell.

Digitized by Google

LOVE PROBLEM NO. 7.

The New Love and the Old.

Should a Girl Inform Her Lover of a Previous Engagement?

EVERY window in the Assembly Rooms at Davyhulme blazed forth light and welcome.

Noting the general air of festivity, one turned instinctively to look for the customary red strip of carpet and the canvas awning at the entrance gates, and found them both. And then, perhaps, if the passer-by were a philosopher or a woman, he or she might stay to look on for a few moments.

Cab after cab rolled up to the rooms. The porter whisked the door open, and mysterious figures, hooded and cloaked most tantalisingly, stepped daintily to the ground, ran nimbly over the red strip, and disappeared in a twinkling. The porter slammed the door and the cab rattled forward into the darkness to make way for the next arrival.

To Jack Shrewsbury, who presently arrived with his *fiancée* and her mother, this was the proudest evening of his life.

In the first place he had only been engaged to Dora Slade for three days, and, as everyone knows, the first delirium of the love fever lasts for at least a week. After that time, the love continues, but the fever abates somewhat.

This was their first appearance in public since the engagement. As they hurried across the red strip he felt convinced that the eyes of all the crowd were fixed upon her in overpowering admiration. Every young man who is worth his salt passes through this stage, and indeed it must be admitted that some do so more than once.

As Jack, having taken off his hat and overcoat, and stroked his hair three times—once over each ear, and once over his forehead—was waiting for the ladies, a friend of his, named Beesley, came towards him, accompanied by a stranger.

"Good evening!" said Beesley. "May I introduce two particular friends of mine to each other? Mr. Ridgeway—Mr. Shrewsbury."

They shook hands, muttering the usual commonplaces.

Beesley beamed upon them both, as one conscious of a good action.

"You two chaps ought to be good friends," he added, "for you're both mad—on books."

After this he hurried away, probably to seek some saner companionship, and the two new acquaintances fell to comparing notes on the subject of their madness.

Ridgeway, who had formerly lived in Davyhulme, had been stationed in London at the headquarters of his firm, for two years. He had now returned to take up the sub-managership at the office where he had started his business life. By a strange coincidence the literary tastes of the two men were almost the same, and their friendship throve on this common basis.

Then Ridgeway's sisters came to claim him, and he made an appointment to call on his new friend the following evening. Shortly afterwards, Dora Slade and her mother appeared, and Jack hurried to meet them, with a guilty sense of having absolutely forgotten Dora for more than ten minutes.

They danced the first waltz together, more as a matter of duty than anything else, for Jack was but an indifferen dancer. Then Dora was whisked away for a bewildering succession of lancers, quadrilles and barn dances, while Jack sat beside her mother and realised that for one who despises dancing and yet becomes engaged to the best dancer in the district, the course of true love will certainly not run smoothly.

To add to this discomfort, just after Dora had been claimed for a waltz by his new friend, Ridgeway, he became an unwilling listener to a conversation between the mother of the latter and Dora's mother. Mrs. Ridgeway, who had returned to Davyhulme with her son, greeted Mrs. Slade as an old friend, and took a seat beside her.

"Dora is here, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes!"

After saying this, Mrs. Slade glanced nervously over her shoulder, and then turned partly round, intending to introduce Jack to Mrs. Ridgeway. But the latter plucked eagerly at her old friend's sleeve.

"Wouldn't it be nice," she said, "if my son and Dora would only make up their lover's quarrel?"

Mrs. Slade interposed hurriedly, in a vain endeavour to prevent further confidences. "Allow me to——"

"And really, my dear," continued Mrs. Ridgeway, gazing across the room towards a quiet corner, "it almost appears as though my wish—or rather *our* wish—will be gratified. Do you see them sitting together in the recess of the window? My boy is whispering, and your girl is blushing, and those are both good signs. But, whatever is the matter, my dear, are you not well?"

"It's a little oppressive—the room is so hot," said Mrs. Slade faintly. "But I wanted to introduce to you——"

She turned round. Jack Shrewsbury had disappeared.

* * * * *

Dora and her former lover were gliding round the room to the dream-like music of a waltz. Round and round they swept and circled, in and out amongst the crowd.

Dora was enjoying this dance better than any other during the evening, for Ridgeway waltzed to perfection. As for him, the dreamy rhythm of their movement, and the fact that his arm incircled one he had formerly cared for so much, produced a kind of glorious intoxication in his heart.

He surpassed himself in his dancing, and his enthusiasm reacted on his partner, until suddenly she caught a glimpse through the crowd of Jack, sitting patiently beside her mother. She felt somehow that she was not behaving altogether fairly to him. Not that she could have given any reason for the sudden compunction, it was an intuition, that was all.

Digitized by Google

"Do you mind if we forego the rest of this dance?" she murmured.

"Certainly! I am sorry—you are not unwell, I hope?"

"No, a little tired," she answered, and turned towards the end of the room, where she remembered to have seen Jack and her mother.

"Don't go back yet," he pleaded. "There is such a cosy corner in this bay window, and I want to ask you something!"

The strength of his enthusiasm overpowered her, as enthusiasm generally does in these cases. And perhaps she had a premonition of what he wished to say, and thought it better to have it settled at once.

"Do you remember the time when I left Davyhulme, two years ago?" he said.

It is curious how girls try to avoid a proposal of marriage, even in cases where they have looked forward to it for months.

"You—yes, you obtained a better position in your office," said Dora.

"No, I don't mean that—I mean——"

"You went to the headquarters of your firm."

"I don't allude to business matters at all, but to a certain engagement which formerly existed between you and me!"

"My mother and yours are watching us," murmured Dora, and felt to her dismay that she was blushing shamefully.

"I don't care if all the world watches us," he growled, "so long as I am with you. But you are not listening!"

"I beg your pardon," said Dora, in sudden distress, "but I saw a friend going out of the room."

"A friend?"

"Yes, and I want to tell you——"

"In one moment," he whispered impetuously. "But rude or not, I cannot wait any longer. You know what I mean. I've thought about our quarrel many a time since going to London, and would have written to you from there, only I thought—I didn't like—I thought there might be someone else—since we parted——"

"There is someone else," said Dora, and rose to her feet as the music ceased. "Will you take me back to my mother, please?"

* * * * *

Whatever Jack's daily remuneration may have worked out to, he certainly did not earn it on the day after the dance.

His head ached badly after a sleepless night, his heart ached still more; he thought of everything but his work, and was glad when five o'clock came at last, and when he was alone in his lodgings.

At one moment he fell a prey to violent despair, and then suddenly he would seize a heavy ruler and bring it down with terrific force on the head of an imaginary Ridgeway.

He did not know how long the latter had been away from Davyhulme, so instead of two years he took it for granted that Dora's former engagement had been terminated quite recently. Probably she only accepted Jack out of pique.

The idea once suggested, he forthwith transformed it in his own mind into a stubborn fact, as all jealous lovers would have done under similar circumstances. And then upon this sandy ground he built up a most imposing indictment against Dora, although he would certainly have punched the head of any man who had dared to suggest even one of the items to him.

After all, Dora was not to blame. It was that fellow Ridgeway—Ridgeway, who would arrive at any moment in pursuance of the invitation he had given to him last night.

A wild idea of springing out upon his rival with sword and buckler—or possibly poker and tongs—he banished regretfully, as being somewhat old-fashioned. Then he scribbled a hurried note apologising for his absence, but he tore it up as soon as he had written it.

It was already seven o'clock, and Ridgeway might arrive at any moment. He decided to go out for a three hours' walk without leaving any explanation for the expected visitor.

It was not that he feared to meet him, rather the reverse, but he had a feeling that his first explanation was due from Dora, and he preferred it to come from her. So he thought, as he pulled the street door to the latch and hurried along the dark, badly-lighted road.

Dora and her mother lived scarcely three minutes' walk distant, in the next street in fact, but, anxiously as he longed for her explanation, he was not going to beg for it.

As for leaving them whilst they were in a measure under his charge at the Assembly Rooms last night, his friend Beesley had pledged himself to offer his services to escort them to the cab, whilst apologising for Jack's absence. So his conscience was quite clear on that count.

Probably he would receive a letter in the morning, or she might call at his lodgings that evening, with her mother to play propriety of course. They might arrive while Ridgeway was there! The mere possibility of this brought him to a sudden standstill, and next moment somebody bumped against him in the darkness.

"Confound—I beg your pardon."

"Why don't—oh, quite right."

"Mr. Ridgeway!"

"Mr. Shrewsbury! I am on my way to your rooms."

Jack's anger boiled over in an instant. "I'm afraid I can't have the pleasure of entertaining you," he said abruptly, "certainly not until I know what you were saying to Miss Slade last night."

"What!"

"You were sitting together in the recess of one of the bay windows," continued Jack, speaking with a kind of explosive calmness, "and you were very confidential together."

"Far more confidential that I shall ever be with you," retorted Ridgeway. "By what right do you make such an impertinent request?"

"The best of all rights," said Jack. "I am, or was, engaged to the girl we are discussing."

"If you speak only of the past I can make the same claim. I was engaged to Miss Slade myself two years ago."

"Two years ago?"

"Good evening," said Mrs. Slade suddenly, affecting wisely not to have noticed any signs of disagreement. "We were just coming to see you, Jack, but as we've met you so opportunely, will you come with us and be our visitor instead of host?"

Jack bowed awkwardly, and glanced at Dora, who was with her mother.

"Dora has something special to say to you," continued the good lady, "so you two had better walk together, and perhaps Mr. Ridgeway will also favour us for an hour or two?"

"Very pleased," said Ridgeway, who saw a prospect of general explanations, and he led the way with Mrs. Slade, leaving the lovers to follow.

Then Jack remembered the long indictment he had drawn up against Dora, and prepared to launch it at her forthwith.

"If you had only told me," he murmured reproachfully.

"Next time I'm engaged I will," said Dora penitently. "At least I don't mean that exactly. But I do think it was shameful the way you went off and lost all your trust in me in a moment.

"A simple question would have cleared everything at once, and I think if you had really cared for me you would have waited and asked me. Lots of girls wouldn't have had anything more to do with you; come into supper at once, now, and perhaps I'll forgive you."

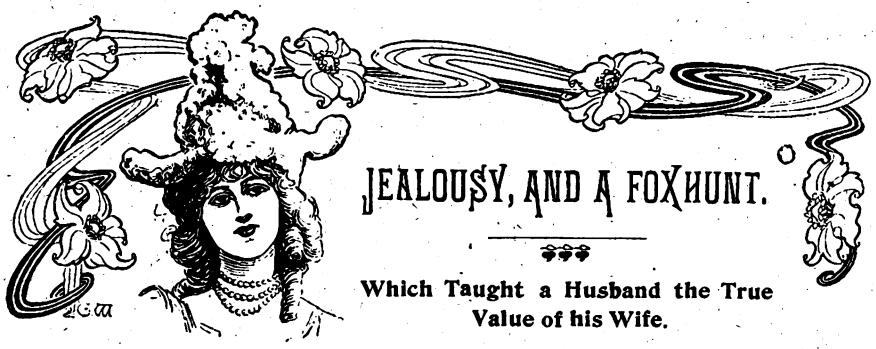
"I'm very sorry," he said, as they passed into the house. Somehow, whenever Dora was wrong it was always poor Jack who had to beg pardon. But that is quite the customary thing, as all engaged couples know. **Wal Frank.**

Result of the "Clergy Tartan" Competition.

The Gramophone prizes have been sent to:

J. Greenaway, junr., Baldwyns Hill, Loughton, Essex; H. W. Gallop, 144 Wantz Road, Maldon, Essex; F. Parker, Smedley's Hydro, Matlock Bridge; W. J. Humphrey, Oakwood, Outram Road, Addiscombe, Croydon; G. Bonnor, School House, Lesbury, Northumberland; Miss M. Grant, 8 Mary's Place, Edinburgh; A. S. Brothers, 14 Rye Hill Park, Peckham Rye, S.E.; W. W. Howells, 4 The Exchange, Cardiff; F. V. Smith, 99 Hill Street, Garnethill, Glasgow; A. Jackson, Billiard Room, Victoria Hotel, Manchester.

Digitized by Google



JEALOUSY, AND A FOXHUNT.

Which Taught a Husband the True Value of his Wife.

It was the last week in November—that month, of all others, the very name of which is suggestive of fogs and gloom, but which, nevertheless, occasionally belies its sinister reputation. It was also early morning, and the golden sunlight—marred not by so much as a single fleeting cloudlet—was over all.

It swept with lavish abandon across the broad expanse of softly undulating Sussex countryside, and up and over the aggressive tree-clad hill, near the summit of which stands Wynstay Towers.

Assisted by the gentlest of zephyrs it played a flickering game of hide-and-seek amid the myriad leaves of the ivy-mantle, which threatened soon to entirely envelop that historic pile, and—incidentally—flooded with a warm and shimmering glow the daintily-appointed breakfast-room, wherein were seated Sir Frank and Lady Boyda Wynstay.

Being there it set to work to heighten the effect of the brilliant polish on the gentleman's riding-boots, and to light a hundred thousand little glittering fires amid the massing coils of the lady's fair hair.

All this did the sunshine on this lovely November morn; but, alas, at the threshold of the hearts of these two humans was its triumphant progress stayed. No loophole of entry was there; all within was darkness and gloom.

Sir Frank Wynstay and little Lady Boyda, only daughter of Lord Balberris, of the Hall, Fairlight, had been married just six months, and this was their first quarrel.

On both sides it was the poorest attempt at breakfasting that could be imagined.

The man, shrouded in smoke from his Turkish cigarette, was apparently deeply engrossed in his morning paper. At the expense of his rapidly tiring arms he held it high, and fully opened, that it might serve to shield him from his wife's gaze.

She, in turn, had twisted her chair aside, and was seemingly buried in her correspondence. But, truth to tell, the elaborately scrawled page at which she gazed so steadfastly carried not an atom of meaning to her harassed brain, which was full to bursting of the quarrel of the night before.

That unspeakable woman! How she loathed her!

The sweet grey eyes steeled perceptibly at the recollection of that miserable dinner-party at the Hall. The veiled insolence of her rival—the little lady had been quick to fasten on that word, and still hugged it fiercely—and her husband's open admiration of the newcomer came back to her now with exasperating vividness.

"Ah, my dear Lady Boyda," came again the cool, contemptuous voice of her whom they called Vera Cloytharp, "so delighted to have met you at last. I knew your husband well some years back; in fact, we were the greatest of friends." And the poor young wife saw once again that mocking smile and the slight shrug of those regal shoulders, as the speaker had turned away with a little suggestive sigh.

And Frank—she writhed in her seat as the memory re-asserted itself—Frank had seemed only too anxious to renew this flaunted friendship of former years.

She had listened to their conversation—when they did not speak too low for her to hear—to the covert allusions to what must have been something more than an ordinary flirtation had watched the reciprocal play of their eyes; had even counted the smiles that had passed between them; and the monster, alert and green-eyed, had crept into her heart and made his home there.

Then that long, miserable drive home, during which Frank had seen fit to upbraid her for her "strange behaviour towards one of his oldest and best friends."

How the repetition of the term had stung her beyond endurance, and how she had retorted that she "should not have thought Vera Cloytharp so very old either, but that when a woman took to making up, why——"

And her husband's reply, made with considerable heat, rang again in her ears.

"I happen to know, Boyda, that Vera Cloytharp's complexion is quite her own, and one of the most perfect I have ever seen."

And was it for this that she had exchanged her peaceful life at The Hall, the doting affection of her father, and the undisguised adoration of every living soul about the place? Had she turned her back for ever upon this ideal existence only to discover how wayward even the most ardent of lovers can become—after marriage? Truly, it seemed so, and the hot tears welled up in threatening quantities behind the long silken lashes. Sir Frank, who had been darting furtive glances at his wife from behind the paper he was not reading, rose to his feet at last.

"I'm just going round to Platt's," he said airily, "to look at some beagles he has for sale; but perhaps I had better tell them to get the horses ready before I go. The 'meet' is at eleven, you know."

"Sorry, I can't come with you," she replied in a tone that was a veritable triumph of unconcern, "but, unfortunately, I have a prior engagement."

Sir Frank's face fell, nor could he control himself sufficiently to keep the ring of disappointment out of his next words.

"But, Boyda, think; it's the first of the season—the 'Dad' will be there, and—everybody."

"Then, no doubt you will enjoy yourself," she replied coldly. "I'm very sorry, but it can't be helped." And, gathering up her correspondence with one hand, and her skirt with the other, she swept out of the room without so much as a glance in his direction. In less than a minute, she knew, she would have been crying her heart out on his sleeve.

Some two hours later she caught a distant view of his broad back as he rode slowly down the hill. Once he turned his head, but, although a thrill of intense satisfaction shot through her being, she drew back quickly that he might not see her.

"Poor boy!" she mused; "he seemed dreadfully upset at my refusal. And, after all, why shouldn't I? Heavens! now I think of it, that hateful woman is certain to be there! I can't! I will! I must!" She gave a vicious tug at the bell-rope. "Henrietta, my habit! and tell Sadler to bring 'Gil Blas' round to the front door. Quick! I'm going to the meet."

The distinguished company which had foregathered outside the "White Hart Inn," was already on the move when 'Gil Blas,' with his fair burden, slackened down alongside the animal ridden by Lord Balberris.

"Why, Boyda!" exclaimed that much astonished and still more pleased nobleman. "Frank has been telling us that you were unable to come."

"Oh," she replied, with a light laugh, "I decided that I positively couldn't miss to-day's sport, so, at the last minute, I altered my plans. Quite simple, you see. But how's Daddy? and—oh, *have* you discovered the equal of 'Gil Blas' yet?"

Lord Balberris laughed.

Digitized by Google

"In reply to your first question," he said, "Daddy is as cheerful as he is ever likely to be now that a certain scoundrel of the name of Wynstay has stolen the sunshine out of his life."

A lump, big and distressing, rose in the little lady's throat, and the heavily-fringed eyelids fluttered convulsively.

"Poor Daddy!" she said, patting the glossy neck of the splendid animal beneath her; "but about the horse—tell me?"

Lady Boyda's prime object was to divert her father's attention from her tell-tale face, and in this she was immediately successful.

Lord Balberris was an excellent judge of a horse; indeed, it were well within the truth to assert that, in comparison with his very extensive knowledge of things equine, any other acquirements which he may have possessed paled into absolute insignificance. Under these circumstances Boyda's question acted as a stimulant, and the old man launched forth into a glowing eulogy of a mare in his possession, bearing the suggestive cognomen of "Maelstrom."

"There's not an animal within a fifty-mile radius that could hold a candle to her!" he declared proudly, "and I rather think that she could give points and a beating to old Gil Blas here, good horse as he is. A wonderful animal, my dear, wonderful!"

"And where am I to look for this paragon, Daddy?" inquired his daughter, trying to look interested.

"Here, Boyda, here! Miss Cloytharp has her. Splendid girl that. Bet Wynstay a pair of gloves that she would be the first in at the death; and, Gad! I believe she'll do it. By the way, they must have gone forward. I don't see them."

"They? Who?" The sweet mouth hardened visibly.

"Why, your devoted spouse and the lady of whom I spoke. Ah, Jove, here they are!"

"Good morning, Lady Boyda; this is a pleasant surprise." The black arched brows of the speaker were raised ever so slightly, and the stressed adjective rang discordantly in Lady Boyda's ears. Nevertheless she smiled radiantly, and replied with a laughing commonplace.

Sir Frank stared at his wife in wide-eyed astonishment. Poor deluded man, having lived with one woman for just six months, to imagine that he knew anything about her, or the sex in general. To add to his mystification his wife sent him a swift, bright smile and a nod, both of which she took elaborate care should not be lost upon the superb woman at his side.

"There she is, Boyda," interposed Lord Balberris, pointing. "That's Maelstrom. Isn't she a beauty? Stay for ever, and warranted to jump anything round here, bar the Devil's Leap."

"The Devil's Leap?" echoed Vera Cloytharp loudly. "That sounds interesting. Tell me about it, Sir Frank."

Thus enjoined, Wynstay began:

"The Devil's Leap is a natural fissure, about seventy feet deep, in the rocky soil of a field near Shornden Wood. Its position is a source of some danger to those having no knowledge of the neighbourhood, as the gorse has been allowed to grow around the opening almost hiding it from view."

"And its name," persisted his fair interrogator, "how did it come by it, do you suppose?"

"Ah," replied Wynstay, "I'm afraid I can't tell you that. Possibly," laughing, "it may really have been the scene of some daring exploit by the gentleman in question. Anyhow, certainly no human being, having his full complement of sense, would attempt to cross it, except by means of an improvised bridge."

And so the talk went on, Lady Boyda meanwhile continuing in the blithest of spirits, until Coghurst Wood—the first to be "drawn"—was reached, and the hunt began.

"The Hall" party stood together on a piece of rising ground commanding an extensive view and waited developments. Suddenly the familiar "view halloa" came ringing up to them.

"There he goes!" shouted Sir Frank excitedly. "He's heading Hastings way. Come along!"

The last two words were scarcely out of his mouth when the pack broke cover and went tearing across the open in pursuit of a dark something, which was plainly visible some distance ahead.

"This way!" cried Sir Frank again. "We may be able to head him off!" and in a moment the whole party had whipped up their horses and were following his impetuous lead.

The pace set, however, was, in hunting parlance, a "cracker," and soon the majority of those who had started were left far behind. Vera Cloytharp, riding hard, had drawn up to Sir Frank, and the two went on neck and neck, with Lady Boyda's white, set face not three yards behind.

From out of the chaos of the little lady's whirling brain a single idea had sorted itself. Vera Cloytharp positively should not win her wretched bet. She, Lady Boyda, would prevent her! Yes, even if in the doing the great heart of Gil Blas were broken!

The pace was almost phenomenal, and soon Sir Frank's mount began to hold out signals of distress. He kept his place, however, and presently the two leaders rose simultaneously at a grass bank topped by a wooden fence.

Both cleared well, but Sir Frank's mount, failing to sustain the shock of alighting, collapsed and rolled over. A swift glance in his direction sufficed to assure Lady Boyda that her husband was quite unhurt, and then she brought her hunting-crop down smartly on Gil Blas' steaming flank. The duel had begun!

At the sound of the fall Vera Cloytharp gave a quick look back, and, seeming to divine the other's intention, began to thrash her mount unmercifully. For some seconds there was no perceptible widening or narrowing of the gap between them, but at the end of a minute Lady Boyda saw, with a thrill of elation, that Gil Blas was slowly but surely drawing up to the leader.

Then, suddenly, she experienced a second thrill; but this time it was one of apprehension. Ahead of them, not three furlongs distant, a patch of gorse made a line of sombre green across their path, and Lady Boyda knew—none better—that behind those innocent-looking bushes yawned the Devil's Leap.

For a few brief seconds, as a kaleidoscope picture of the maddening events of the previous evening passed over her mental vision the little lady battled with an insidious prompting. Then it was down under, and she cried out shrilly:

"Bear to the left, in front there! The left, the left!"

But her only answer was a furious backward glance, and Vera Cloytharp's whip fell like a flail. A few more seconds, while the hoofs thundered, and their breath came fast, and then they were almost level. The patch of gorse was not twenty yards away.

"You fool!" screamed Lady Boyda. "Can't you understand? It's the Devil's Leap. Pull that rein. Pull it, I say!" and the little lady made a frantic snatch at Maelstrom's bridle. Seemingly blind with passion, Vera Cloytharp raised her crop and struck her would-be saviour a violent blow in the face.

It was then, in that supreme moment, that the true nobility of Lady Boyda's nature asserted itself. At any cost, she resolved, this mad creature should be stopped. At the sound of the swish which had accompanied the blow Gil Blas had swerved aside; but now, feeling an unusually fierce tug at the right side of his mouth, he swung obediently round, and charged headlong into the flying form of Maelstrom.

There was a thud and a sickening crunch as the animals came together, and then both went down, their riders rolling on the turf amid a whirl of flying hoofs.

With the instinct of self-preservation Vera Cloytharp rolled clear, and scrambled to her feet, dazed but otherwise unhurt. A few yards away a small white face, with a dark and growing stain of crimson upon it, was turned upward to the calm sky.

"My darling! My love! My wife! Speak to me, oh, speak!"

It was the agonised voice of Sir Frank Wynstay, who, having caught and remounted his steed, had followed them, and now pressed passionate kisses on a mouth that was bloodless, unresponsive, and cold.

Afterwards—a matter of hours—it became again as of old; but the time between sufficed to teach Sir Frank Wynstay many things. And among them was this—that in the possession of the heart of her whom he called wife, he was "lord of a mine of wealth untold."

William Scotcher.

Digitized by Google

She Felt it More.

Agatha: "Charley is tickled with his new moustache, isn't he?" Marie: "Yes, but" (with a sly blush) "not half so much as I am."

The March of Science.

Ardent Lover: "If you could see my heart, Belinda, you would know how fondly—" Up-to-date Girl (producing camera): "I intended to see it, James. Sit still, please."

His One Failing.

She: "But he has such a delightful way of saying things—quiet a poetic temperament." He (a rival): "Yes, he has soarings after the infinite, and divings after the unfathomable, but he never pays cash!"

A Gentle Hint.

She: "You say you love the very ground I walk on." He: "I swear it." She: "Will you prove it?" He: "Willingly." She: "Well, if you love the ground I walk on, you might run a lawn-mower over it."

Some Satisfaction.

She: "It is of no use, Mr. de Tone; in my present state of mind I would not accept the best man living." He (very coolly): "No; I see you won't; but, at any rate, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that he has offered himself."

Knew She Wanted Something.

Wife: "Come in, dear. Your supper's ready, your slippers are just where you can find them easily, and your pipe and tobacco are on the writing-desk, handy for you." "All right, Molly," groaned the tired, suspicious husband. "You can get that new bonnet to-morrow."

A Fair Deceiver.

Lord Percival Howard: "I am delighted to hear, Miss Bacon, that Chicago prides itself upon its high-toned society—so well-bred and well-read, don't you know?" Miss Bacon (lovely as an eastern dream): "Why, certainly, you just bet your boots we're a cultured crowd out there."

Didn't Want Him in the Family.

Her Father: "You say young Hankisson wants to marry you?" "He does, papa." "Does he know I haven't a penny to give you?" "Yes; he says he wants me for myself alone." "H'm! Has he known you long?" "Oh, yes! Years and years." "Then he's a bigger fool than I want in my family."

Preferred Papa's Cigars.

Miss Mary (innocently): "Here are two kinds of cigars—one papa calls 'his friends' cigars,' the other he calls 'his own cigars,' but I don't know which are the best." Captain Corkscrew (who does know which are the best, carefully selecting one from "papa's" own box): "As it would be almost presumptuous for me to call myself one of your dear papa's friends, Miss Mary, I think that I had better try one of what he so appropriately calls his own cigars."

Cool Wasn't the Word for It.

She: "Tell me, when you were in the Army were you cool in the hour of danger?" He: "Cool? Why I shivered!"

The New Trick.

He: "Nice dog—very. Have you taught it any new tricks since I was here last?" She (sweetly): "Yes; it will fetch your hat if you whistle."

No Making Up Required.

"Come, dear, kiss my cheek and make it up," she said forgivingly. "I'll kiss it," he answered, "but I don't think it wants any more making up!" And he was right.

The Light Went Out.

"I love you dearly, Jack," she said. "You are the light of my life." "I'm sorry," said her father, as he appeared in the doorway, "but I will have to put your light out."

All Policemen are Cousins.

Mrs. Nuwed: "Henry, that new cook of ours is some relation to the one we just discharged." Mr. Nuwed: "Great Cæsar! How do you know?" Mrs. Nuwed: "Well, the policeman on this beat is *her* cousin too."

To Insure Constancy.

Sweet Girl: "I am loved by two men, and I cannot make up my mind which to marry. What would you advise?" Old Lady: "Get both to insure their lives in your favour, and then wait until one of them dies. That will insure the constancy of the other."

He Puts It Down Now.

"George," she said, as she looked up from her paper, "you were always telling me before marriage how much you loved me!" "Yes." "And now you never mention it." "No." "Is it because—because—" "It's because I put it down in the cash book now instead of telling you."

Cure for a Broken Heart.

He: "I understand you have been attending an ambulance class. Can you tell me what is the best thing to do for a broken heart?" She: "Oh, yes. Bind up the broken portion with a gold band, bathe with orange blossom water, and apply plenty of raw rice. Guaranteed to be well in a month."

Ethel Wouldn't Have the Piano.

"I presume, Mr. Brown," said the young man who was about to marry into the family, "that Ethel will take her piano with her when we commence keeping house?" "Indeed she will not," answered his prospective father-in-law; "that piano belongs to her mother." "Thank you, Mr. Brown, thank you!" exclaimed the young man, grasping him by the hand; and the light of great joy shone in his eyes.

Not Very Complimentary!

Sympathetic Plain Friend (to inconsolable young widow): "The last time I met your dear husband he stopped and spoke to me with such a sunny greeting that I was the happier for it all day long." Young Widow (still oblivious to everything except her loss): "Yes, that was just like dear David. There was no woman so humble, or homely or unattractive, or dull, but that he could find something pleasant to say to her, and would take pains to say it."

Quite Unique!

The Salesman: "These goods are imported only in single dress patterns, madam; you purchase this six-yard piece and you may rest assured that no other lady in the land will have a dress like yours. In fact, we could not duplicate it if we wanted to." The Prospective Customer: "It certainly is pretty; but suppose there is not enough in this pattern for a dress for me?" The Salesman (reassuringly): "Oh, don't trouble yourself about that, madam; we will have no trouble in matching it for you."

SERIAL STORY.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Mr. Winter Makes an Arrest.

Mr. Winter's indignation on finding that he had arrested a woman was painful. In his astonishment he released his grasp and turned to look at the disappearing vehicle containing the criminal he so ardently longed to lay hands upon.

La Belle Chasseuse, with the vicious instinct of her class, felt that Talbot's pursuit of her lover must be stopped at all costs.

She suddenly produced a revolver and levelled it at him. Fairholme and Edith alone noted her action. At the same instant they rushed towards her, but the girl reached her first.

With a frenzied prayer that she might be in time—for she had been told of this woman's prowess with a pistol—Edith caught hold of her wrist and pulled it violently.

Her grip not only disconcerted Mademoiselle's deadly aim, but also caused her to press the trigger. There was a loud report, a scream, and Edith collapsed on the ground with a severe bullet wound in her left shoulder. Even her cloth jacket was set on fire by the close proximity of the weapon.

It is to be feared that Fairholme flung La Belle Chasseuse from off the quay into the harbour with unnecessary violence. Indeed, the Italian onlookers, not unaccustomed to sanguinary broils, subsequently agreed that this was the finest incident in the spectacle, for the lady was pitched many feet through the air before she struck the water, whence she was rescued with some difficulty.

Careless how or where Mademoiselle ended her flight, the earl dropped on his knees beside Edith and quietly pressed out the flames of the burning cloth with his hands. He burnt himself badly in the act, but of this he was insensible.

Then he bent closer and looked desperately, almost hopelessly, into her face.

"Speak to me, darling!" he moaned in such a low, broken-hearted voice that even Sir Hubert, himself almost mad with grief, realised how the other suffered.

Edith heard him. She opened her eyes, and smiled bravely.

"I don't think it is serious," she murmured. "I was hit high up—somewhere in the shoulder. Don't fret, there's a dear."

Then she fainted.

Not knowing why Fairholme did not join him Talbot raced towards the carriage he had seen approaching.

It was a smart vehicle, with a sleek, well-groomed horse, and he guessed that it must be a private conveyance. Gazing anxiously around, he could not see another carriage anywhere in the vicinity.

There was nothing for it but the method of the brutal Saxon. Explanations would in any event need precious time and might be wasted.

So Talbot jumped into the victoria, hauled the coachman off the box, threw him into the roadway, seized the reins, and climbed into the vacant seat.

Brett, hurrying with the pilot from the Hotel de France, saw a veiled and curious-looking female vehemently urging the driver of a carriage to proceed up the main street of Palermo as fast as his horse could travel.

Even in the turmoil of thought caused by the pilot's intelligence he noted something peculiar in the lady's manner.

Half a minute later he encountered Talbot, driving an empty vehicle and furiously compelling with reins and whip a lazy animal to exert himself.

Brett shouted to him. He might as well have addressed a whirlwind.

"I saw them all together on the yacht when I came away, signor," explained the pilot. "That is, all except the old signor, who was walking with some Turks, a Frenchman, and another who looked like an Englishman."

"The old signor was walking with the Turks?" cried Brett.

"Without doubt. He conversed with them. I thought it strange that he took no notice of those on board the yacht, but just then the steamer——"

"Now," said Brett to himself, "Winter has arrested somebody. Talbot is on the right track!"

Yielding to impulse he stopped suddenly and called a cab.

"Here!" he said to the pilot, "ask the driver if he saw two carriages pass up the Corso just now at a very fast pace? Very well! Tell him to follow them if possible. Jump in with me. I may need your services as interpreter. We must overtake one or both of those carriages!"

The Fight.

Not often have the good people of Palermo seen three cabs pass through the Corso Vittorio Emanuele in such fashion. The sight made loiterers curious, drove policemen frantic, and caused the drivers of other vehicles to pull to one side and piously bless themselves.

Dubois had evidently offered his coachman a lavish bribe for a quick transit through the city, and the Italian was determined to earn it.

But although he had a good start, and his horse was accustomed to negotiating the main thoroughfare at a rapid pace, nevertheless the half-starved animal was not able to maintain a high rate of speed for more than a few minutes.

By the time they reached the Corso Catafini, which carries the chief artery of Palermo out into the country—crossing the railway and passing the magnificent convent of San Francisco de Sale—the horse was labouring heavily notwithstanding the frantic efforts of the cabman.

It was at this point, when mounting the bridge, Dubois knew for certain he was followed.

Three hundred yards behind, he saw Talbot whipping an

Digitized by Google

equally unwilling, but better-conditioned steed than that which carried his own fortunes. At the distance he could not recognise the Englishman, but instinct told him that this impassioned driver was an enemy.

Brett, of course, was not visible, being far in the rear.

"My friend," said Dubois, standing up in the small carriage and leaning against the driver's seat, "I offered you twenty francs if you crossed the city quickly. I will make it forty for another mile at the same pace. See, I place the money in your pocket."

"It will kill my horse, signorina."

"Possibly. I will buy you another."

The cabman thought that this was a lady of strange manner. There was an odd timbre in her voice, a note of domination, not often associated with the fair sex.

But she had given earnest of her words by a couple of gold pieces, so he murmured a prayer to his favourite saint that the horse might not die until the right moment.

Thus they swirled on, pursued and pursuers, until the villa residences on the outskirts of the town were less in evidence, and fields devoted to the pepper-wort, alternated with groves of olives and limes, formed the prevalent features of the landscape.

Now it became evident that the leading horse could barely stagger another fifty yards, notwithstanding the inhuman efforts of the cabman to make the most of the poor brute's failing energies.

At last the poor brute stumbled and fell, nearly pulling the driver off his perch. It was sad, but he had more than earned his price, for Palermo lay far behind.

"My horse is done for, signorina," cried the cabman. "It is marvellous that he—*Corpo di Baccho!* It is a man!"

Dubois felt that his feminine trappings were no longer a disguise, only a hindrance. He had torn off jacket, skirt, hat, and wig. The frightened cabman saw his fare—changed now into an athletic young man, attired in shirt and trousers, the latter rolled up to his knees—spring from the vehicle and vault over a ditch by the roadside.

Some portion of the discarded clothing lay on the seat of the carriage, but Dubois had thrown the skirt over his arm.

"Here! Come back!" yelled the Italian. "What about payment for my dead horse?"

But Dubois paid little heed to him. He was fumbling with the pocket of the skirt as he ran. Not until he had withdrawn a revolver from its folds—whereupon he at once threw away the garment—did the maddening remembrance come to him that he unloaded the weapon prior to the Customs' examination, and had forgotten to re-insert the cartridges.

They were in the pocket of his serge coat, the coat which Mademoiselle wore. She, like a prudent young woman, had been careful to reload the revolver she carried, and which she transferred to her new attire when, at the last moment, Dubois suggested the exchange of clothing as a final safeguard in the most unexpected event of police interfering with their landing.

Henri Dubois could not afford to expend his breath in useless oaths. But his eyes scintillated with fiery gleams. He, the man who took no chances, who foresaw every pitfall and smiled at the devices of outraged law, to compromise his own safety so foolishly!

For an instant he was tempted to fling the weapon away, but he controlled the impulse.

"As it is," he thought," this fellow who is pursuing me may not be armed, and I can terrorise him if he comes to close quarters."

Moreover, this superlative scoundrel could feel tightly fastened around his waist a belt containing diamonds worth over a million sterling. Such a waistband was worth fighting for, whilst his pocket-book contained ample funds for all immediate necessities.

If the worst came to the worst he carried a trustworthy clasp knife, and he was an adept in the savate—the system of scientific defence by using hands and feet which finds favour with Parisian "sports."

(*Continued overleaf.*)

HEADACHE

"From my earliest days I suffered from sick headaches, biliousness, and debility," says Mrs. Charnock, Foster Street, Widnes, in course of conversation with a *Widnes Weekly News* reporter. "The attacks came on at regular intervals and lasted three or four days. They were marked by nausea, violent retching, racking pains in the head, dizziness, and utter prostration. I was completely helpless while they lasted, and could not attend to any of my domestic duties. My complexion became pallid, and the neighbours thought I was suffering from consumption. I was frequently under medical advice, but temporary relief only resulted. About three months ago, when my illness was at its worst stage—so that I could not even attend to my baby—I heard of Bile Beans for Biliousness, and I decided to undergo a course. By a little perseverance with the Beans I guarded against any new attack, and never since have I been troubled with my old complaint."

Bile Beans for Biliousness cure Headache, Influenza, Constipation, Piles, Liver Troubles, Bad Breath, Rheumatism, Colds, Liver Chills, Indigestion, Flatulence, Dizziness, Buzzing in the Head, Debility, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Mfg. Co., Red Cross St., London, E.C., on receipt of price. 1/1½ & 2/9 per box.

BILE BEANS for BILIOUSNESS

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia.

Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

C. E. POPPLESTON, Esq., B.A., Mus. Doc., writing from Exeter College, Oxford, says:

"I have suffered continually from severe Headache. A medical friend advised me to try Kaputine. I did so, and in a few minutes my Headache had left me. It is a splendid remedy."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,

of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from

KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield

for 12 stamps.

Digitized by Google

On the whole, Henri Dubois made for a neighbouring wood in a state of boiling rage at his momentary lapse concerning the revolver, but conscious that he had many a time extricated himself from a worse fix.

A hundred yards in his rear ran Jack Talbot. The Englishman, notwithstanding his recent imprisonment, was in better condition than Dubois. He was a good golf player and cricketer, and although in physique and weight he did not differ much from the Frenchman, his muscles were more firmly knit, and his all-round training in athletic exercise gave him considerable advantage.

Thus they neared the wood, neither man running at his top speed, for both wished to conserve their energies for the approaching struggle. Talbot could have come up with his quarry sooner, were it not for the paramount consideration that he should not be spent with the race at the supreme moment, whilst Dubois only intended to seek the shelter of the trees before he faced his opponent.

The Frenchman did not want witnesses.

Neither was aware that Brett and the Italian pilot had by this time reached the place where the two leading carriages were halted in the roadway. Without wasting a moment the barrister leapt the intervening ditch and followed the runners across the field, whilst behind him, eagerly anxious to see the end of this mysterious chase, came the sailor.

On the edge of the wood Dubois halted and turned full upon his pursuer.

Instantly he recognised Talbot, and for the first time in his career a spasm of fear struck cold upon the Frenchman's heart, for in the young Englishman he recognised the only man who had cause to hate him with an implacable animosity.

But the unscrupulous adventurer quickly recovered his nerve.

"So it is you who follow me so closely," he cried. "Go back, my friend. This time I will not tie you on a bed. You are becoming dangerous. Go back, I tell you!"

And with these words he levelled the revolver at Talbot's breast, for the latter was now within fifty yards of him.

But Jack was animated with the mad elation of a successful chase, and governed by the fierce resolve that his betrayer should not escape him. For an instant he stopped. It was only to pick up a huge stone. Then he ran on again, and, careless whether Dubois fired or not, he flung the missile at him.

The Frenchman barely succeeded in dodging, as it passed unpleasantly close to his head. He instantly understood that here was a man who would not be deterred by idle threats. To attempt to keep him at arm's length by pointing an empty pistol at him would merely court disaster.

So now, with an imprecation of genuine rage, he flung the weapon at Talbot, who, in his turn, was so surprised at the action that he did not get out of the way in time. It struck him fair in the chest and staggered him for a moment, whereupon Dubois ran off again into the interior of the wood.

But Talbot's pause was only a matter of seconds. He did not trouble to pick up another stone. He felt with a species of mad joy that his enemy was unarmed—that he could throttle him with his hands, and wreak upon him that personal and physical vengeance which is dearer to outraged humanity than any wounds inflicted by other means.

Dubois reached a small glade among the trees before he comprehended that his ruthless adversary was still close upon his heels. He stopped for the last time, resolved now to have done with this irritating business, once and for all.

Talbot too halted, about ten yards from him. He felt that he had the Frenchman at his mercy, and there were a few things he wished to say to him before they closed in mortal combat.

"This time, Henri Dubois," he panted, "I am not drugged and strapped helplessly to a bed. You know why I am here. I have followed you to avenge the stigma you inflicted upon my reputation, and at the same time to recover the diamonds which you obtained by subterfuge and murder."

The Frenchman was now quite collected in his manner.

"I murdered no one," he answered. "I could not help the blundering of other people. If I am regretfully compelled to kill you to-day, it is your own fault. I am only acting in self-defence."

"Self defence!" came the quick retort. "Such men as you are a pest upon society. Like any wild beast you will strive to save your miserable life! But, thank Heaven, you must depend upon your claws. Lying and trickery will avail you no further!"

"How can we fight?" demanded the Frenchman calmly.

"Any way you like, you villain. As man to man, if you are able. If not, as dog to dog, for I am going to try to kill you!"

"But you are probably armed, whereas I am defenceless? My revolver, as you saw, was not loaded."

"We are equal in that respect, if in no other," retorted Talbot.

An evil smile lit up the Frenchman's pallid face. He pulled out his knife with a flourish and hissed—

"Then die yourself, you fool!"

He advanced upon Jack with a murderous look in his face. Talbot awaited him, and he, too, smiled.

"You are a liar and a coward to the end!" he cried. "But if you had twenty knives, Henri Dubois, I would kill you!"

At that instant a cold, clear voice rang out among the trees, close behind the two men.

"Halt!" it cried.

Both men involuntarily paused and turned their eyes to learn whence came this strange interruption. Brett quietly came a few paces nearer.

He held a revolver, pointed significantly at Dubois' breast.

"Drop that knife," he said, with an icy determination in tone and manner that sent a cold shiver through his hearers' spine. "Drop it, or, by Heaven, I will shoot you this instant!"

Dubois felt that the game was up. He flung down the knife and tried even then to laugh.

"Of course," he sneered, "as I am cornered on all sides I give in."

Brett still advanced until he reached the spot where the knife lay. He picked it up, and at the same instant lowered the revolver. Then he observed, with the easy indifference of one who remarks upon the weather—

"Now you can fight, monsieur. My young friend here is determined to thrash you, and you richly deserve it. So I will not interfere. But just one word before you begin. Two can play at the game of bluff. This is your own pistol, and is, as you know, unloaded."

Dubois' cry of rage at the trick which had been played upon him was smothered by his effort to close with Talbot, who immediately flung himself upon him with an impetuosity not to be denied.

Luckily for the Englishman he had clutched Dubois before the latter could attempt any of the expedients of the savate. Nevertheless the Frenchman sought to defend himself with the frenzy of desperation.

The fight, while it lasted, was fast and furious.

The two men rolled over and over each other on the ground—one striving to choke the life out of his opponent, the other seeking to rend with teeth and nails.

This combat of catamounts could not last long.

From the writhing convulsive bodies, locked together in a deadly struggle, suddenly there came a sharp snap. The Frenchman's right arm was broken near the wrist.

Then Talbot proceeded to wreak his vengeance upon him. Unquestionably he would have strangled the man had not Brett interfered, for with his left hand he clutched Dubois' throat, whilst with the right he endeavoured to demolish his features. But the barrister, assisted by the Italian pilot—whose after-life was cheered by his ability to relate the details of this Homeric fight—pulled the young man from off his insensible foe.

Talbot regained his feet. Panting with exertion, he glared down at the prostrate form, but Brett, being practical-minded,

(*Continued on page 318.*)

Digitized by Google

Influenza a Cause of Deafness.

Attempts have been made by medical authorities from time to time to associate some particular forms of deafness with Influenza, one aurist in fact going so far as to say that abscesses in the ears are especially likely to occur with this disease. The editor of the "Journal for the Deaf," however, takes up the matter in a statistical form, and points out that, without reference to any special form of ear disease, an average of 28 out of every 1,000 deaf people he has examined attributed the beginning of defective hearing to this cause. The majority of these suffered from dry catarrh of the ear and throat deafness, although some few were affected by running ears. The editor also illustrates the subject by publishing several cases of deafness produced by Influenza which were cured by the Drouet Method of Treatment by external applications. As many of the cured cases were previously pronounced incurable, deaf people will be interested in knowing that a copy of the "Journal for the Deaf" can be obtained free by post by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The "Journal" also contains a Special Report Form, by means of which anyone can obtain free advice. The editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination during the consultation hours, week-day mornings 10 to 12, afternoons 2 to 4. For personal consultations a fee of 5s. is charged.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED); absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free. Supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **MRS. CONYERS**, Horchard Bishop, Devon.

A PILE OF COLD!

SEE FOR YOURSELF THE ENORMOUS SAVINGS that will result from Dealing Direct with **H. SAMUEL,** Write now for his

BIG FREE TREASURE GUIDE.

200 Pages. 3,000 Engravings. Startling Bargains in Watches, Clocks, Rings, Chains, Cutlery, Plate, &c. This Grand Money-saver is sent you FREE FOR A POST-CARD.

VALUABLE FREE PRIZES TO ALL BUYERS! Read particulars in Guide.

WRITE NOW!

H. SAMUEL, Dept. 29, MARKET ST. **MANCHESTER**

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the Best Coventry made Cycles, and by contracting for thousands annually, I BUY CHEAPLY and SELL CHEAPLY.

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc. The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade COVENTRY CYCLE for £6-0-0.

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. EDWARD O'BRIEN, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, COVENTRY.

GIVEN AWAY with this week's **HOME NOTES** (No. 477).

Paper Pattern OF THIS **BLOUSE**

Of all Bookstalls & Newsagents. PRICE 1d.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietor, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

ZOX for Neuralgic Troubles.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

"In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

knelt by the Frenchman's side, tore open his shirt, and unfastened the precious belt. "At last!" he murmured.

Peering into one of the pockets, which by the way of its bulging he thought would contain the "Imperial diamond," he looked up at Talbot with the words:

"Now, Jack, we are even with him."

It was the first time he had addressed Talbot by his familiar and Christian name. The very sound brought back the other man to a conscious state of his surroundings, and in the same instant a great weakness came over him, for the terrible exertions of the past few minutes had utterly exhausted him.

"I cannot even thank you, for I am done up. But I owe it all to you, old man. If it had not been for you we should never have found him."

Brett's grave face wrinkled in a kindly smile.

"I think," he said, "we are even on that score. If you had not followed this rascal he might have escaped us at the finish, and my pride would never have recovered from the shock. However, go and sit down for a minute or two and you will soon pull yourself together again. I wish to goodness we had some brandy. A drop would do you good, and our prostrate friend here would be none the worse for a reviver."

The Italian pilot caught the word "brandy." Being a sailor he was equal to all emergencies. He produced a small flask with a magnificent air.

"Behold!" he declared. "It is the best. It is contraband!"

Brett forced his companion to swallow some of the liquor; then he gently raised Dubois' head and manged to pour a few drops into his mouth.

The Frenchman regained consciousness. Awakening with a start to the realities of existence, he endeavoured to rise, but sank back with a groan, for he had striven to support himself on his broken arm.

"Be good enough to remain quite still, M. Dubois," said Brett soothingly. "You have reached the end of your rope, and we do not even need to tie you."

With the aid of some handkerchiefs and a couple of saplings cut by the Italian he managed roughly to bind up the fractured limb. Then he assisted Dubois to his feet.

"Come," he said, "we are regretfully compelled to bring you back to town, but we will endeavour to make the journey as comfortable as possible for you. In any event, the horses will certainly not travel so fast."

In the roadway they found the carriages where they had left them, whilst three wondering drivers were exchanging opinions as to the mad behaviour of the foreigners.

Brett and the Frenchman entered one vehicle, Talbot and the Italian pilot the other.

"But, gentlemen," moaned the disconsolate cabman, who had headed the procession from Palermo, "who will pay me for my dead horse?"

"I know not," replied Brett. "In any event you had better occupy the vacant seat and drive those two gentlemen to the city, where you can secure the means of bringing back your carriage."

In this guise the party returned to Palermo, evoking much wonderment all the way through the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, whence no fewer than six outraged policemen followed them to the Hotel de France to obtain their names and addresses.

Piecing the Puzzle.

Palermo was in a perfect ferment. Not since the last revolution had people seen such a pitched battle in the streets, for Macpherson and his myrmidons had used no gentle means to pacify Grosjean and the Turks, whilst the crew of the *Belles Sœurs* would not be in a fit state to go to sea for many days.

An excited mob of people surrounded the hotel when Brett and Talbot arrived with their wounded prisoner. Fortunately the Chief of Police came in person to ascertain the cause of all this turmoil, for the first alarmist report that reached his ears made out that a species of international warfare had broken out in the harbour.

He told his subordinates to clear away the crowd, and explanations by Brett and Winter soon demonstrated the wisdom of an official intimation to the Press that the row on the pier was merely the outcome of a quarrel between some intoxicated sailors.

The Chief of the Police politely offered to place detectives at the disposal of the Englishmen for the proper custody of their captive.

Brett thanked him, but declined the proffered assistance, having decided to warn Winter not to interfere.

"The only prisoner of interest," he explained, "received such severe injuries during a struggle which he brought upon himself that he will be quite unable to be moved for several days. His right arm is broken, and his face has been reduced to a pulp. But there is a stout Frenchman named Beaucaire and three Turks who accompanied him, whom I recommend to your safe custody. We bring no charge against them, but it would be as well to keep them under lock and key until we have left Palermo."

"Do you mean the innkeeper Grosjean and the Turks who accompanied him from Messina by train to-day?"

"Yes,"

"You need not trouble about them. They have all been carried to the hospital."

"What!" exclaimed Brett. "How did they come to be injured?"

"I cannot tell you exactly, but they, together with some sailors from the fishing-smack, were knocked senseless by the crew of the steam yacht when the young lady was shot."

"What young lady?" demanded Brett and Talbot together. For this conversation had taken place in the entrance of the hotel, whilst Dubois was being carried to a bedroom by the servants.

"Did you not know?" inquired the official gravely. "The young lady was of your company who stayed here with you—the niece of milord, the elderly gentleman."

"Edith! Shot, did you say!" cried her brother, leaning against the barrister for support.

"Yes, but not seriously, I hope. She has been brought here. The doctors are now with her in her room."

"Who shot her?" demanded Brett savagely.

"The person who was flung into the harbour by the other milord. It is stated that she is a woman, but really at this moment I have not heard all the facts. For she was carried to the hospital with the others."

(To be concluded shortly.)

EVERY
AMATEUR GARDENER
SHOULD PROCURE

Small Gardens
And How to Make the Most of Them.
By VIOLET BIDDLE.
Crown 8vo, Cloth, Price 1s., post free 1s. 2d.

This handbook teems with information, hints and wrinkles invaluable to amateur gardeners desirous of laying out their gardens and raising their plants to the best advantage.

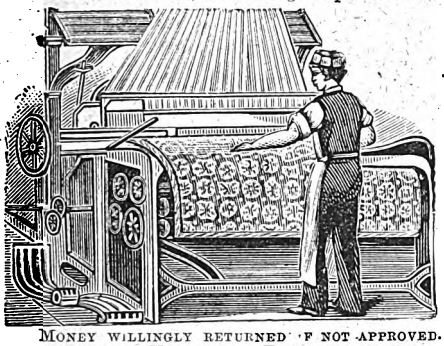
ORDER FORM.
To the Book Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.
Please send me a copy of "Small Gardens," for which I inclose the sum of One shilling and twopence.
Name.....
Address.....

Digitized by Google

10,000 RUGS GIVEN AWAY

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

This Phenomenal Offer is made to the readers of *Short Stories* (7/3/1903) only. On receipt of Postal Order for **5/-**, or **62** stamps, we will forward, DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS,** suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an Advertisement for our goods, *below the Actual Cost of production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our Looms, thus saving the purchasers all middle profits.



With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very Handsome Rug to match, or we will send Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9/6.

Money willingly returned if not approved. Thousands of Unsolicited Testimonials received.

GALAXY ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, ETC., POST FREE,

if mentioning *Short Stories* (7/3/1903) while writing.
Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SONS. (Dept. 5 H.T.) Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,
WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

CHILDREN'S COUGHS

RAPIDLY CURED BY

VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE.

An Eminent London Authoress Strongly Recommends It.

Ministers, doctors, and analysts, besides an army of less important persons, have written strongly recommending Veno's Lightning Cough Cure. The great reputation of this remedy is now too well-known to require much further proof of its vast superiority in all chest, throat, and lung diseases in children or adults. No more reliable authority on health subjects can be quoted than

Mrs. ADA S. BALLIN, 18 Somerset Street, Portman Square, London, W., Editoress of *Womanhood*. She writes:—"Veno's Lightning Cough Cure is an exceedingly successful remedy; it is very pleasant to take, and the relief it gives is very rapid. The preparation is perfectly safe for children."

GEO. KNOX, 256 Second Avenue, Pittsburg, writes:—"Veno's Lightning Cough Cure excels in children's coughs and bronchitis, and is especially good for children."

VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE is a new scientific remedy prepared in one of the most modern laboratories in the world from ingredients which are not generally known in Great Britain. It is most effective in both acute and chronic cases of coughs, colds, whooping cough, asthma, bronchitis, catarrh, influenza and weak lungs.

Ask for Veno's Lightning Cough Cure. Price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle. Sold at all Chemists, or post free from

THE VENO DRUG CO., HULME, MANCHESTER.

MERLIN CYCLES

MARVELLOUS VALUE A HIGH GRADE £10 10 0 Cycle for £5 19 6. Free Wheel and Back-pedal Brake.

Brand New Guaranteed Pneumatic-tyred Cycles for £3 19 6

Merlin Cycles are always good, no matter what price you pay.

MERLIN CYCLE Co., Martineau St, Birmingham

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Co onies, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

To CURE Drunkards

Mrs. Geo. Fuller, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

FREE TO YOU

To advertise S.L.S Records, we are giving away our noted Phonographs for a limited time. Write, giving full address and nearest railway station; enclose stamp.

Symonds' London Stores, 128, City Road, London.

Order E. & T. PINK'S JAM

Undoubtedly the Best.

PURE.

No Artificial Colouring or Chemical Preservative.

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas AND 15 Guineas Or from a Guinea per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.

TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.

& 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

To Make Up a Theatre Party.

EDITH will soon be twenty-one, and instead of celebrating her birthday by the usual party, proposes to get up an expedition to a West-End theatre. She writes: "What should I do as to the payment of the tickets, and the part of the house? We are not well off, so shall not have carriages or even cabs. There would be about six or eight of us."

* * * * *

Well, EDITH, I think you had better put the matter in the hands of your brother, or, if you have a male cousin, in his. I suppose you want to be all young people, or some older relative might have arranged the matter.

* * * * *

If you do not know any man who would fix it for you, decide how much each of you will spend on the affair—if you co-operate over it, as you should—and book the seats. The upper circle, which is at most West-End theatres four or five shillings, would be a nice part to go to, though, of course, the pit is almost as good.

* * * * *

As to getting to the theatre without cabs, you had better split up in couples, or threes, and if you cannot all get into the same 'bus or train, just arrange where you wish to meet, and travel separately. Upper circle seats can be booked reserved, but not those in the pit.

* * * * *

I hope your little scheme will be a success. I should recommend for you one of the musical comedies which you no doubt know of, or some other piece of an amusing character. You will not want to shed tears over a drama on your twenty-first birthday.

❦❦❦

Wants to be Popular.

S. W. is a young man who works in an establishment where there are a great many girls. For a long time he has tried being as nice as possible, but as yet has not got on to friendly terms with any of them. "How," he asks "can a young man make himself popular with girls without compromising himself with any particular one?"

* * * * *

By being uniformly agreeable to them all. If you are working in the same establishment, remember that your chief concern with them is business. You can be as agreeable and charming as possible, in business, but beware of making your relations too social. That is where entanglements begin, and one does not know where they may end.

* * * * *

One thing is worth bearing in mind. If a man has not it in him to be popular with a large number of women, it would be better for him not to try. Your own character will reveal itself to others, good or bad, no matter what devices you may employ to disguise it, and women, above all, hate anyone who pretends to be something that he is not.

Is It the Same Girl?

ABOUT six months ago PERPLEXED was introduced to a girl, and received her permission to renew the acquaintance when next they met. They parted, and six months later PERPLEXED saw a young lady who appeared to be very much like the other girl—perhaps it was she. She did not, however, notice him. Would it be ill-mannered for PERPLEXED to speak to this girl, and ask if she is the same as he met six months ago?

* * * * *

I think it cannot be the same girl. You say you have met her several times, but on no occasion has she recognised you. Well, girls are not usually so blind to men's faces as all that. They either recognise a man whom they have met, and give a glance to that effect, or they cut him dead. The girl you speak of has evidently no intention of doing that.

* * * * *

There would be no harm, however, if you really have reason to think she is the same girl, in your politely saluting her—in a gentlemanly manner, which is never mistaken for rudeness—and asking her if she is Miss ———. If she is not, apologise, and take a hurried departure.

* * * * *

If you do this, take care that you do not appear to be casually stopping a girl. As the first girl was agreeable to your resuming the acquaintanceship, there would be no liberty in your saluting her, should you be right in your speculation.

❦❦❦

Boy and Girl Friends.

S. D. has no brothers, but has a boy friend who walks with her very often. He is seventeen, she sixteen, and neither has ever mentioned anything about love affairs. The boy, in fact, says they are "all rot," and says he will never marry. At the same time, he treats S. D. just as a friend. Do I think this is wrong?

* * * * *

No, if your parents have no objection. As you have no brother you have practically no means of getting to know anything about the opposite sex unless you have such friends as you mention. A girl who is ignorant of men often forms altogether wrong impressions, and does foolish things.

* * * * *

Cultivate your boy friend as much as is permissible. But don't believe him when he says love affairs are "all rot." Most boys think that, only some recover from it sooner than others. Personally, though, I have rather more admiration for the boy who recovers later. It shows he is giving his attention to things which are better for him when young.

❦❦❦

Cross Words.

"I was at the theatre with my girl the other night," writes FORSAKEN, "and was not in a very good humour, I made some remarks which I have since regretted, as when next morning I apologised for them, she accepted the apology, but said she did not wish to continue the relationship. I am so miserable, and should like your advice."

* * * * *

It was quite right of you to write your apology, but I should have lost no time in seeing her, and practically making it up. Evidently your remarks showed you to her in an unpleasant light, which she had not before suspected. She thought the matter over, and decided that you were not so attractive as she at first imagined. Try to meet her again. If she has ever really cared for you, her attitude will soon get back to its original state, as I have never known true love affairs upset by a chance word or so.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Try also

FRY'S MALTED COCOA.

A combination of Fry's Pure Cocoa and Allen & Hanbury's Extract of Malt

Strongly recommended by the "LANCET" and "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL."

Digitized by Google

"G.P." ASK FOR "Government" Tea

Eighteenpence Everywhere.

RICH, RIPE, REFRESHING.

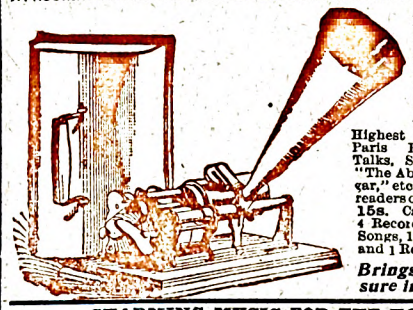
You May Know It by Its Red Tape and Seal.

WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE TO G.P. GOVERNMENT TEA CO., 16 AMERICA SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S CRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.

A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

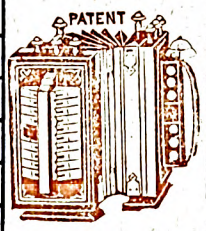


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. No Home should be without one. *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, „ 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, „ 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, „ 16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount

Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.

Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!

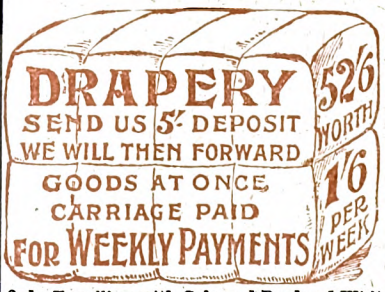
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.

A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

5/- SENT TO-DAY WILL BRING 52/6 WORTH OF DRAPERY

TO YOUR ADDRESS.



THE BUNDLE CONTAINS:—1 Pair Full Size Blankets, 1 Pair Best Quality Twill Sheets, 1 Large Size Quilt (Red and White or Blue and White), 1 Full Size Coloured Striped Bed-Tick, 1 Bolster-Tick, also 2 Pillows to match, 4yds. of Oxford Shirting, 3yds. Good Flannel, (White, Scarlet, or Health), 6yds. Good Quality Flannelette, 2 Calico Pillow Cases, 1 Calico Bolster Case, 3yds. Towelling, with Coloured Border, 1 White Table-cloth. TERMS:—All you have to do is to send 5/- Deposit. We will then forward at once, Carriage Paid to nearest Station, our 52/6 Bundle of Drapery. You then pay 3/- Fortnightly, or 6/- Monthly, for the balance until paid for. However, should you wish to pay cash, the price is only 45/-

MAXEY & Co., Meadow Street, SHEFFIELD

Send for Cutlery, Jewellery, and Drapery Catalogue Illustrated.

Respectable Men wanted to get Orders on Commission. Write for Terms.

BRITANNIA CLEANS HER HELMET WITH "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

AND EVERY BRITISH HOUSEWIFE SHOULD POLISH ALL METALS WITH IT, TOO.

Most foreign polishes set up acid, are *sticky* in use, and require much labour in cleaning. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy.

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is entirely made in England, and by using it you support British Trade.

Manufacturers: THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co. Ltd., LIVERPOOL.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL JUST STARTED.

Short Stories.

No. 741.] Week ending March 14, 1903. [Price One Penny.

John Davenal put a hand to his throat. He seemed to be struggling for breath. "Dead!" he faltered. "Hannah dead! Hannah—murdered!" Then he fainted.

Digitized by Google

(A Dramatic Incident from our New Serial Story, "HELD APART." See Inside.)

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR HEADACHE AND Neuralgia.

Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains, and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

"Health," the well-known Medical Journal, Edited by Dr. Andrew Wilson, F.R.S.E., says of Kaputine:

"There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ this remedy, and popular experience of its use fully warrants the recommendations with which it is offered."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,

of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from

KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield

for 12 stamps.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Cutlery

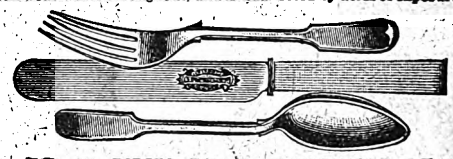
... THE ...

"ENTERPRISE" PARCEL, 25/-

Of Household Cutlery and Plate.

Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white 'Ivorette' Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of "Columbian" Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.



51 PIECES FOR 25 SHILLINGS.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.

TERMS. Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if you are not perfectly satisfied.

No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Cutlery and Plate, etc., Post free.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels, New Departure Hubs, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s.	15/10	£9 10s	17/6
£9	16/8	£10 5s.	19/3

Juno Motor Cycle £32 or 60/- mo. Cycle and Motor accessories at lower prices than any other house; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/3; Motor Horn, 5/6. Write for New Season List, over 100 pages, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C., or Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

Beauty.

Icilma is the only absolutely safe Natural preparation for the Complexion. All who wish to keep a good complexion or who have any skin trouble, however slight, should send postcard, with address, for Hygiene of the Skin, containing advantageous offer to new clients, to ICILMA, Dept. 4, 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well.

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

(The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 5 penny stamps, or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-: Co onias, 3/-.

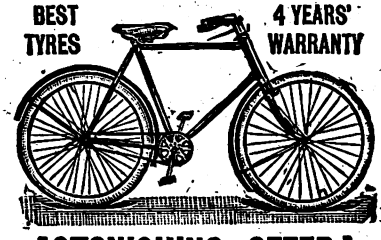
Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

HALF PRICE

Greatest Cycle Bargain ever Offered

BEST TYRES

4 YEARS' WARRANTY



ASTONISHING OFFER!

To introduce Royal Duke Cycles, we will supply 2,000 now, for only half list price—£7 7s. each—with 4 years' warranty. Free wheel, choice of noted tyres, Crabbe brake, triple enamelling and many other important features.

PAY ONE SHILLING WEEKLY

On easy payments, you can send 1 shilling weekly, or any larger amount that suits your convenience. No guarantor, no unreasonable enquiries. Pay while enjoying the use of your machine. Ladies', gents', boys' and girls' models. Every penny of your money returned if not as represented. We point with pride to thousands of voluntary testimonials. Write for full particulars of Royal Duke Cycles, mentioning name of this publication. Enclose stamp. Address:

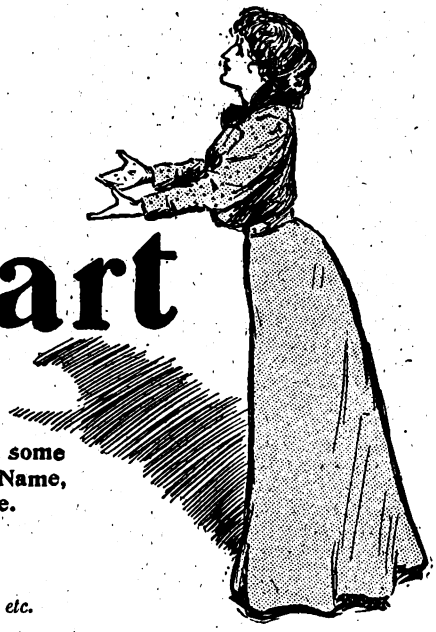
SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, City Road, London, E.C. Also at 14, Peter Street, Manchester.

Short Stories.

No. 741.] Week Ending March 14th, 1903. [One Penny.

NEW SERIAL. **START TO-DAY.**

Held Apart



The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Moira Davenal is sitting in the little cottage on Groudle Quay busy with her ribbon work. Sir Guy Vanbrugh is talking to her.

"Moira, have I the least little bit of a chance?"

"I—I don't know, Sir Guy," she falters. "I never thought about you seriously; and they would all say I married you for your money!"

"Then there is a chance for me," he says, biting his lip. "Moira, I love you so much. Won't you——"

He pauses. There is a heavy step in the hallway of the cottage, and a burly figure enters the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal. I'm off to London for the week-end and was just leaving a message for you with your daughter. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph?*"

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," says John Davenal, who is a diver engaged in raising Sir Guy's yacht. "She'll soon be afloat."

After Sir Guy has gone a sailor appears at the door singing in drunken tones the scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

"I want to see Davenal—John Davenal," he says thickly.

The diver rises to his feet.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarks loudly. "Glad to see you. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

While Moira goes out on an errand a conversation takes place between the two men, from which it appears that Moira is really Hartigan's daughter. Davenal agrees to pay him £50 a year so that he may keep her.

The sailor—really a ship's steward—sits back in his chair and begins to sing again the drunken chorus.

He halts abruptly, for the door slowly opens, and a blind woman comes in.

Dennis Hartigan recognises her as his sister Kate. She tells her brother that she heard the song he was singing—sung in just the same way—once when she was sitting on a breakwater at Groudle. She also adds that the man who was singing said, evidently to someone with him: "This is out far enough. In with it"; after which there was a splash.

Hannah Davenal (Hartigan's wife and the diver's sister) is maid to Lady Tarleton. She is possessed of a secret with which she continually blackmails her mistress.

"For nearly twenty years," says Hannah Davenal, "I have had your and your daughter's future at my mercy. The bubble I helped you to blow I could have pricked—how completely you cannot guess—at any moment."

Then she bends over her mistress and whispers in her ear.

Lady Tarleton pales. "It's a lie!" she says hoarsely—"a clever lie! The thing was impossible, impossible!"

Hannah Davenal smiles. "I did it, my lady," she answers. "You can have proof. Go down to Groudle Tower and look. My husband helped me."

That afternoon Lady Tarleton and Hannah Davenal go down to Groudle Tower, and together they make a mysterious journey at midnight.

The following day, at the Half Brick Inn at Groudle, Hannah encounters her husband, whom she advises to leave Groudle.

"You have considered my offer?" says Lady Tarleton to her maid, as the latter prepares her for bed.

"I am doing so, my lady," is the reply.

"Five thousand pounds," murmurs Lady Tarleton, "for the name and whereabouts of the child."

"I will think of it, my lady," says the maid.

In the early morning Lady Tarleton is aroused by persistent knocking at her door, followed by the butler's voice saying that her maid Davenal has been discovered dead in bed with a scent of chloroform in the room.

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Cry in the Dawn.

"A pillow—chloroform—Davenal!"

Lady Tarleton repeated the words mechanically. Wide-eyed and pale to the lips, she was staring at the agitated man-servant who had blurted out so abruptly the terrible intimation which still rang in her ears. The butler watched her anxiously—she seemed on the point of swooning, though the first cold light of the winter day, stealing lividly through the long and dusky corridors of Groudle Tower, showed that the colour was already returning to her blanched features.

"Yes, my lady," he said, "we've done our best to bring her round with hartshorn and brandy, but she's gone, my lady, quite gone—murdered in her bed and none of us the wiser."

His mistress shuddered. "Murdered!" she whispered. "Oh, it can't be, it is impossible!"

The butler shook his head. "It's too true, my lady," he rejoined; "we might have thought she'd accidentally taken an overdose of the stuff, for sleeplessness or toothache. But the pillow had been held down over her face, there were black finger-marks on it, and under it was a towel that smelt of chloroform. I went through an operation once at the Carlisle Hospital, your ladyship, you may remember, and I know the smell."

Lady Tarleton stood motionless in the doorway of her room. She had put her hand to her side and she was breathing heavily.

"It—it is most mysteriously horrible," she said; "who can have had any reason to do such a ghastly thing? Are there—are there any signs of robbery?"

"No, my lady," rejoined the man-servant, "the room is otherwise undisturbed." Lady Tarleton knitted her brows.

"You had better send for the police," she told him, "and I suppose, a doctor, immediately. Is there a maid in the house that can help me to dress?"

"I believe so, my lady," was the answer; "I will send one of the upper housemaids to your ladyship—a very neat, willing young person. Your ladyship's orders with regard to a doctor and the police shall be carried out. Will your ladyship wait for a fire to dress by?"

His mistress looked back into the vast, sombre bedroom, dimly illuminated by the candle she had so hurriedly lighted. A shimmer of the growing day penetrated the faded venetians that covered the windows, and added to the desolation of the feathery ashes that littered the yawning grate. She shivered again and replied in the affirmative.

The butler bowed and went away, an incongruous figure with his jacket buttoned askew about his collarless throat, and his trousers caught into the heels of his slippers. Lady Tarleton retreated into her room, shut the door, staggered to her bed, and sank down upon it. A hoarse, almost involuntary exclamation broke from her.

"Deliverance!" she said, "deliverance! If—if only she had told me the whereabouts of the child!"

The speaker put out a hand to a bedside table, on which she had set the lighted candle. A cut-glass flask of smelling salts lay by the latter. She opened the silver cap and inhaled the strong vapour. The cold of the raw morning had pierced her to the marrow, and she was shivering keenly. Yet a wan, mirthless smile lifted the corners of her mouth and flickered in her eyes. With an impatient motion she dragged the bedclothes about her, and sat thinking.

A tap at the door heralded the arrival of a trim, rosy-cheeked country lass, with the requisites for a fire. A little awed by her mistress's presence, which she acknowledged with a species of curtesy, she lit the gas, knelt by the bleak hearth, and speedily kindled a cheerful blaze.

"Did *you* hear any noise in the night?" Lady Tarleton asked her sharply, as she was rising to leave the apartment. The girl curtsied once more.

"No, your ladyship," she said, "not a sound—which is odd, my lady, for I sleep in the next room to that Miss Davenal had, it having been empty before she came to the Tower with your ladyship."

"Quite so," observed her mistress frigidly; "that will do, you can say that I am ready to dress now."

"Yes, my lady," she was answered, and the kitchen lass withdrew. A few moments afterwards a quiet, well-mannered girl, in a dark gown, entered, and, with deft movements, began to assist in the elaborate toilet by which Lady Tarleton habitually endeavoured to conceal the ravages that time had made in a once florid and imperious beauty.

When at length her attendant drew up the blinds and allowed the harsh light of the gloomy winter day to fill the room, the elder woman was her own suave self again. The air of the chamber had grown pleasantly warm, and she shivered no longer as she sat by the fire for the maid to fasten her shoes. Also the wan, mirthless smile had died away from the corners of her mouth. But it still lingered in her eyes. The tragedy whose shadow had fallen upon Groudle Tower meant to her a welcome, if mysterious emancipation from bonds that had chafed her for nearly twenty years.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

"I had a Message for you."

"Kit, dear, won't you put on a hat? It is very cold this morning, though there is a little bit of sun."

Moira Davenal was calling from the door of the diver's cottage towards the gate which opened on the quay. Beside it stood Kate Hartigan, the March wind fluttering her skirts and blowing over her sightless eyes the soft brown tendrils about her forehead. She turned with a rebellious gesture.

"I'm all right, Mollie," she retorted, "don't worry about me, please. Groudle air never does me any harm, I'm too used to it."

For answer Moira went back into the cottage and emerged with the gay woollen tam-o'-shanter she herself used occasionally. She brought it to the blind girl and put it on the latter's head with gentle fingers. Kate Hartigan caught her hands and gave them a remorseful squeeze.

"I'm a bit of a vixen, Mollie," she exclaimed, "and you are an angel. But I do wish he would come—he's only been twice since he came back to Groudle. He says he's looking up old chums—well, if his sister's not more to him than friends he's as good as forgotten for years and years. I—I wish he'd stopped away."

The blind girl shrugged her shoulders, her child-like petulance changing once more to contrition.

"There," she added, "of course I know I'm unreasonable, Mollie; men like to be with men, and smoke, and tell stories, and swear now and then. But I did want Dennis to be fond of me, and I don't believe he really is."

She put an arm round Moira's waist.

"Tell me, dear," she said, "is he what you would call handsome? Do you think all the Groudle girls will set their caps at him?"

Moira frowned and gazed out at the ruffled waters of the small harbour, flecked with touches of foam that flashed brightly in the fitful March sunbeams. She seemed suddenly to behold the face of the returned ship's steward. Tanned, square, bloated, with its animal jaw and bullying black eyes, it revolted her unspeakably. Yet she knew that his bold self-possession and swaggering demeanour, his broad, strong figure and air of disdainful experience, would be likely enough to impress the young womanhood of Groudle.

"I can't be sure about setting their caps at him, Kit," she replied evasively, "but I don't suppose it would be difficult for him to get a wife here, if he is in search of one. Though

Digitized by Google

he may have no such idea, he must be used to being a bachelor by this time."

Kate Hartigan pondered. "I wish he'd come and live in Groudle," she declared, "and let me keep house for him. I could do it just as well as any sighted person——".

She broke off. Someone had stopped at the cottage gate. But her quick ear warned her that it was not the footstep for which she had been listening, and she waited for either Moira or the new arrival to speak.

Moira herself had glanced up. A youthful, stalwart groom, in a dark brown livery, with mauve facings, had halted at the wooden wicket.

"This—this is Mr. Davenal's place, isn't it?" he asked. "Mr. Davenal, the diver? Can I see him a moment?"

"This is Mr. Davenal's," said Moira, opening the gate; "but he is out at present, working over by the breakwater on a wreck."

She blushed a little, though there was no apparent call for it.

"On Sir Guy Vanbrugh's yacht," she added, "that was sunk there. But he will be back soon—for the tide is rising, and they can only work between the tides. Can I give him a message? Or perhaps you would like to wait, he may be in any moment."

The groom shook his head, and, with a glance at the blind girl, beckoned Moira aside. She stepped out of the gate a trifle puzzled.

"I'm from Groudle Tower," she was told, and the speaker lowered his voice; "Mr. Davenal has a sister who is maid to Lady Tarleton,"

"I believe so," said Moira; "my aunt Hannah. I have never seen her."

The other took off his hat and peered into it with an air of sympathetic embarrassment. "Nor ever will now," he replied; "leastways alive. There's been a sad business up at the Tower, and Miss Davenal—who was here unexpectedly with my lady—is dead. Killed, they say, that is—murdered!"

"I'm innocent of her death, and I'm here to prove it. I want one word—one single word—alone with her ladyship."

Moira recoiled, and the groom put on his hat again. "Mr. Davenal might care to come up to the Tower," he continued. "I must get back to the police-station round the corner, I was sent down in the dog-cart for a constable, and they're telephoning to consult the superintendent. I just slipped across meanwhile, thinking it was only right to let you know; there was talk up at the Tower, in the servants' hall, of Mr. Davenal being her only relation."

He scrutimised her with a sudden masculine interest, noticing her limpid grey eyes, her elastic figure, and the masses of golden-yellow hair that made a halo to her clear-cut features. Moira felt his scrutiny, and it annoyed her vaguely.

"I will see that father knows of it at once," she said curtly, and went in at the wicket, leaving the groom to make a somewhat lingering retreat. The blind girl was awaiting her; there was a look of pathetic alarm in Kate Hartigan's sightless orbs.

"What is the matter, Mollie?" she inquired tremulously. "Not—not anything wrong with Mr. Davenal? I fancied I heard his name."

Moira started. "No, dear," she said; "oh, I'm so sorry you thought it might be that! It was a groom from Groudle Tower to say that—that father's sister Hannah is dead. She was maid to Lady Tarleton. I don't believe father and she were friends—I have never seen her here. But the people at the Tower want father to be told; I suppose I had better run down to the breakwater and meet him. Then he can go straight up to the Tower."

She hastened into the cottage, to emerge with her hat on and a flapping cape thrown loosely on her shoulders.

The blind girl drew the gate wide for her, and Moira went down across the quay, fighting with the keen seabreeze to keep her cape from being blown over her head. The wind increased as she pressed forward along the edge of the harbour to gain the granite breakwater that ran out into the bay. The water on the seaward side of the breakwater was smooth with a sticky smoothness; the wind was in an unusual quarter.

At a point some twenty yards short of its extremity, and ten from its seaward edge, a stout vessel of the "smack" type lay off the breakwater, to which it was moored, lifting to the wash of the great eddy. A species of ladder descended into the water from the gunwale of the smack and the strong rope, electric-light wire, and substantial air-hose of a diver's equipment came out of the lapping wavelets at the vessel's counter. In the "waist" of the smack a man was turning steadily the handle of the air-pump that was connected with the hose. Another, and yet another man was busy with the rope.

Close to the smack was a squat, big-beamed steam-vessel, a wisp of smoke trailing from her dingy funnel. From her low hull there floated the monotonous jarring throb of powerful pumps. A foaming cataract of water over her side showed the task upon which she was engaged. A thick pipe of wire and rubber passed through a sling to plunge into the depths between the vessels.

Digitized by Google

Even while Moira paused to watch, the huge helmet of the diver rose out of the water at the smack's side, the sunlight glittering on its triple lenses and brass fittings. The men in her unhooked the leaden breast and back plates, helped the diver into the craft and unscrewed the great metal headpiece. The grave, flushed face and close-cropped head of John Davenal appeared.

His assistants relieved him of his heavy boots and he stepped into the after-part of the smack. Moira seated herself on a battered wooden bench near a flight of landing-stairs, and waited. Presently the small dinghy at the smack's stern was hauled round to her counter, and John Davenal, clad in his ordinary garments, got into it. One of his assistants followed, took up the sculls, and the dinghy shot towards the granite stairs. Moira got up and began to descend them.

The tide, though rising, was still low, and there were three long tiers of stairs. The dinghy reached the landing-platform as soon as she did. John Davenal was sitting in the stern-sheets, his head in his palms, allowing the rower to steer the boat with the sculls. As the dinghy touched the granite ledge he stepped out. Then, and not till then, did he see her. His face lit with a faint smile and he took her hands.

"Eh, Moira lass," he said, "so you wanted an airing and came to meet me. Well, you're a rare sight for a man to set eyes on who's been down under water for a couple of hours. But the job's practically done now and the pump's running free. The yacht's light, and lifting from the bottom like a cork."

A breath of relief stole through Moira's lips. "That is good, dad dear," she said; "then you won't have to go down any more."

"No," answered the diver slowly, "not again—bar accidents. Are you very glad, my lass?"

Moira sighed. "Oh, so glad," she answered, and put her arm through his.

The diver paused to give some instructions to his assistant, and then moved heavily up the landing-stairs. He had laid his great hand on Moira's and fondled it.

"You've been a lot to me all these years, Moira," he said hoarsely. "Down under the black water many and many a time when I felt as if I couldn't hold to my job any longer, I've remembered my little Moira, waiting at home for her old dad, and the thought of your golden locks was like a glint of sunshine in the dark and the cold. And I've gone on because being the best diver in England meant the best work and the biggest prices, and hastened the day when I could make my last dive. I've always been promising myself, you know, to settle down at home and build that new greenhouse we've talked about, or smoke my pipe by the fire and watch you come and go."

John Davenal's voice was trembling, and his big frame shook. He almost reeled as they gained the top of the breakwater and went along it. Moira hesitated to tell him her evil news.

"Poor dad!" she murmured soothingly, "you are so cold and tired. You shouldn't have gone out this morning so soon. You didn't have any breakfast."

The diver shook his head. "Better not," he said. "I wanted to go down at once. The tide served and the wind was in the right quarter."

Moira clasped his arm lovingly. "I'm glad it's finished, dad," she declared. "Don't go down any more, will you, for my sake, dad?"

John Davenal's broad chest heaved. "You—you wouldn't like the idea of leaving me, would you, Moira?" he queried huskily.

"Oh, dad!" began Moira, and checked herself. Had not Guy Vanbrugh asked her to be his wife! The diver did not notice the incompleteness of the sentence.

"I—I thought not," he answered, "I—I hoped not."

Moira wondered at his agitation and at the singular emotion that unsteadied his usually strong, deliberate tone. But she remembered her unfulfilled mission.

"Dad," she said shrinkingly, "I didn't come down only to meet you. I—I had a message for you—some news; not—not very good news."

The diver looked at her with a certain anxiety. "You're here and well, Moira," he responded, "and I won't rebel at aught else. What is it—not—not poor Kit—no accident?"

"No," Moira told him, "not to Kit. But a man, a groom, called from Groudle Tower to say that Aunt Hannah—it was Aunt Hannah who was maid to Lady Tarleton, wasn't it?—was dead. The man said—murdered."

John Davenal put a hand to his throat, he seemed to be struggling for breath. "Dead!" he faltered. "Hannah dead! Hannah—murdered!"

He stood still, swaying like a reed. His eyelids had drooped and his face grown suddenly florid. He leant heavily on Moira's shoulder; she strove in vain to steady his great bulk. The next moment she was supporting his head as he lay on the wind-blown granite of the breakwater. Big and powerful man as he was, he had fainted.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

Detective-Sergeant Ussher.

"No, I have absolutely no knowledge of anything that might have led to this extraordinary occurrence. Davenal was a most sober, respectable person. She had been my personal attendant from girlhood, and I should have thought it impossible that she had a single enemy in the world."

"Popular with the other servants, my lady?"

The question was put with a military abruptness. But there was a dry, deferential suggestiveness in the inquiry—a kind of confidential semi-secrecy that made the speaker's voice quite unlike the ringing, precise tones of the soldier. A projecting chin, blue with a closely-shaven beard, and marked with a deep, irregular dimple under the lower lip, a bushy, blunt-ended moustache sprinkled with grey, a long straight nose, and slowly-moving "bilious" eyes; these, with the addition of a loose, broadcloth suit, heavy boots, a stiff felt hat, and an open notebook completed his personality.

Lady Tarleton sank into a faded tapestry lounge in one of the great bare reception-rooms of Groudle Tower, and looked at the card in her fingers. It was marked:

Detective-Sergeant Ussher,
Criminal Investigation Department,
New Scotland Yard.

"I'm sure I can't say, Mr.—Mr. Ussher," she answered, a little haughtily; "I do not seek to penetrate the social mysteries of the servants' hall."

Mr. Ussher laid his hat, with a muttered apology, on a neighbouring chair, and jotted down a line or two in his notebook.

"In any case," added Lady Tarleton, "Davenal only came up to Groudle from town with me some thirty-six hours since. And she has never had much connection with the small household which is kept here to maintain the place in order."

Her interviewer rubbed his chin with his pencil, reflectively.

"Has your ladyship noticed recently any change in the demeanour of the deceased?" he asked; "any suggestion of mental worry—or anxiety?"

"None whatever," he was told; "even so late as last night her conduct and bearing were perfectly normal. I had spoken of returning to town to-day. She was to look out the first good train and make arrangements accordingly. I learn from the butler that she did so before retiring."

"Your ladyship's groom," said Mr. Ussher softly, "informed me during our drive here that the deceased was a native of Groudle and has relatives in the locality. Was she on good terms with her family?"

Lady Tarleton sighed impatiently. "I'm sure I cannot even venture an opinion, Mr.—Mr. Ussher," she retorted. "Naturally, I do not discuss with the servants either their own or my private affairs."

She had glanced at the card again to remind herself, with aristocratic languor, of his name.

"I see you are from Scotland Yard," she said; "are you temporarily attached to Groudle?"

Mr. Ussher put away his pencil and notebook.

"Not quite, my lady," he answered; "I have been engaged in a case with local ramifications, and being on the spot, the superintendent suggested my making—as rather an experienced hand, my lady—the preliminary inquiries into this unfortunate affair."

Lady Tarleton looked at him through a lorgnette that hung at her bosom.

"You are quite an expert, then," she observed; "how interesting! Well, I'm not vindictive, Mr. Ussher, but I have lost an excellent servant, and in a truly shocking fashion. I trust you will have no difficulty in bringing the criminal—or criminals—to justice. Pray give the superintendent my compliments, and say that I appreciate his thoughtfulness in intrusting the matter to a competent man like yourself."

The detective bowed.

"I am obliged to your ladyship," he said; "we shall, of course, endeavour to spare your ladyship as much as possible in connection with such public proceedings as may be necessary."

He took up his hat and retreated to the door. On the threshold he bowed again and stepped out into the hall. With a noiseless yet stolid stride, he crossed it, let himself out, and went down the avenue by which Groudle Tower was approached. His small hazel eyes, set in yellowish "whites," were fixed upon the ground, his head bent a trifle forward. Thus meditating, he gained the high-road and turned in the direction of the town. When he passed a chance wayfarer, his gaze lifted—and fell. He never looked at anyone twice, or for more than a fraction of a minute.

Paying no attention to the buffetings of the wind, he made his way through the cold, bright Spring weather into Groudle. He had chosen a roundabout route that brought him in at an extremity of the straggling sea-port. Noon was past, and the activity of the town was subdued by the quiet of the dinner hour. Mr. Ussher stalked thoughtfully along the main street, diving now and then into side thoroughfares until he had passed in review almost every shop in Groudle. Whenever he came to that of a chemist, and there were not more than three in all, he entered it, showed his official card, held a subdued colloquy with the tenant, and consulted a volume produced by the latter.

After emerging from one of these brief interviews—it was the last of his three calls—he passed onward for some half-dozen yards and then halted, to take out his note-book and write a name, that of the chemist he had just left. Under it he wrote a memorandum, "Sixpennyworth of chloroform, 20th March." He added another name and address, writing them with much deliberation, "Dennis Hartigan, Hawthorn Cottage, Groudle Quay."

This done, he turned his footsteps towards the waterside, and inspected methodically the buildings in its neighbourhood. A green-painted wicket caught his surreptitiously roving glance—a wicket inscribed in bold lettering, "Hawthorn Cottage—John Davenal."

Mr. Ussher went by it without faltering, to halt at a discreet distance, extract his note-book, and turn up a page. He had a memorandum on the sheet, "John Davenal, diver, of Groudle Quay—bro. of decd."

"Go slow, Tom Ussher!" he muttered, "Go slow! Is this a clue, or is it a booby-trap? John Davenal, brother of the deceased Hannah Davenal, who was chloroformed and suffocated. Chloroform bought yesterday by someone from J.D.'s address. Humph!"

He took a piece of dry, hard biscuit out of his pocket, broke it up and stood nibbling it. "Hartigan," he said, "who—is—Hartigan?"

Mr. Ussher reflected absorbedly for some moments, then threw away his biscuit, and, with an air of decision, went back to the diver's cottage, entered the wicket, and going through the neat garden, knocked at the door.

Moira answered the summons. The caller stepped in quickly.

"I want to see Mr. Davenal," he intimated; "I—I am from Groudle Tower."

Moira grew white.

"Oh, please," she said, "can't you leave it till another time? Father got such a shock this morning when he heard. We thought he was never going to come round. The doctor has only just gone. He says father must be kept very, very quiet. You see, father is a diver, and it is a strain on his heart—he had only just come up after two hours in five fathoms. Won't you call again, or tell me what it is?"

Mr. Ussher pondered.

"I think I had better call again, my dear," he replied paternally. "But can't I see Mr.—Mr. Hartigan now? He lives here, doesn't he?"

Moira answered in the negative, rather surprised.

"Oh, no," she said, "he's no relation to us, only to Kit, who lives with us! She is blind, you know, and Mr. Hartigan's sister."

"Dear me!" commented Mr. Ussher craftily. "I suppose that accounts for the mistake. I believe I used to be acquainted with Mr. Hartigan, though. Where is he living at present?"

"I think," said Moira doubtfully, "at the 'Half Brick,' on the Groudle Road. It's an old-fashioned public-house. But he's only just got home from sea!"

Mr. Ussher nodded. "Let me see," he murmured, "a week ago, wasn't it? A week or so yesterday—March the—twentieth—Wednesday, it was. I fancied I saw him. 'Dear me,' I said, 'that must be my old friend Dennis!'"

"Yes, it must have been," agreed Moira. "It was Wednesday that he first came to see us. He may call here at any time, though. Can I tell him your name?"

"N—no, thank you," responded

Digitized by Google

Edward Stormont

Mr. Ussher, "it doesn't matter. Well, I hope your father will soon be better. Good-day."

And he went out of Hawthorn Cottage, carefully shutting the door after him.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Welcome to Groudle Tower."

"Get us a conveyance of some sort, porter, and help my man with the bag."

The functionary thus instructed was standing on the platform of the small local station, contemplating, with an air of detached interest, the departure of the early evening express. He glanced quickly at the person who had spoken, and with a startled "Yes, sir!" hastened off. His gait showed that he was both elderly and rheumatic. The station-master had just signalled the train off. As he turned towards his office the hurrying porter ran against him.

"Dear me, sir," exclaimed the offender, "I beg your pardon! But would you believe it, sir, Mr. Stormont's back. He came on the express just now."

The station-master, a hale and grizzled veteran of the line, started. "Mr. Stormont!" he ejaculated. "Not Mr. Edward Stormont—Mr. Stormont of the Tower?"

"Yes, sir," said the porter, "and rare and grey he has got, to be sure. But I knew him at once!"

His superior strode down the platform. A couple of men in travelling suits and tweed caps were strolling to and fro near the exit gates of the station. One was tall and broad-shouldered, with a cropped iron-grey beard and powerful, weighty frame, the other shorter, slighter and younger, with a nut-brown complexion, a small, fair moustache, and humorous, good-tempered eyes. His bearing was suggestive of military associations, and yet his expression was not that of the trained disciplinarian—it was too thoughtful, too reflective. The station-master touched his cap, and addressed the taller.

"Glad to see you home again, Mr. Stormont," he said deferentially, "it's a long time since Groudle had a sight of you."

The other smiled a grave, melancholy smile. "Or I of Groudle," he replied. "Well, we must try to remedy that. I'm a little tired of running about the world, and London was never a favourite abiding-place of mine. I fancy in future I shall spend a few months of each year at the Tower. By the way, I suppose no one is there now?"

The station-master looked serious. "Yes, sir," he responded. "Her ladyship came down only the day before yesterday. And this morning, to tell the truth, sir, they do say that something very strange has happened up at the Tower. Her ladyship's maid, sir; there is word of an accident—or—or worse. Some say foul play, but I should hope that's not true. Have you any luggage, sir? I didn't notice any carriage from the Tower."

"No," he was answered, "they don't know I am coming. There are only a few bags, your porter is helping my valet with them, I think. You might hurry them up."

"Certainly sir," rejoined the stationmaster, and went off, taking his dismissal a little reluctantly. The elder man turned to the younger.

"Jerome," he said, "there seems to be a fatality about my visits to Groudle. I have been here three times in twenty years, and each time there has been a death. My wife, my child, and now—some servant or other must needs keep up the depressing coincidence. Well, at all events, we shall not find the Tower empty, my sister-in-law is there."

He moved to the entrance-gate, his valet was showing the collector the tickets, a couple of "flys" had drawn up outside, the porter and a flyman were piling a half-dozen portmanteaux and kit-bags, supplemented by a brace of gun-cases, into the rear vehicle. The hotel and train labels on them were those of every big city and line in Europe, and not a few in Asia and America.

Their owners got into the first of the "flys," the station-master closed the door and lifted his cap. The vehicles drove off. The sun was sinking across the bay as they climbed the hill out of the town, and the evening breeze blew chill.

"A pretty place, Jerome," observed Edward Stormont, "and yet it has more sad than sweet associations for me." He pointed to the black silhouette of the Tower conspicuous against the sky.

"There," he added, "I spent my honeymoon, there my wife died, there my baby daughter drooped and faded. It is a landmark of sweet and bitter memories."

He relapsed into silence. His companion sat back in the creaking vehicle, and marked, with a shrewd, interested gaze, the sights and sounds about him. At last the "flys" drove into the shadowy courtyard of Groudle Tower, and Edward Stormont sprang out.

"Welcome to Groudle Tower!" he said. The valet had descended from the second vehicle and gone to knock at the massive entrance-door. It opened after a brief delay, and Edward Stormont, motioning to his companion to precede him, walked in. He stopped abruptly.

The heavy gas-brackets in the hall of the great house were lighted and their yellow radiance fell upon a singular group. A couple of uniformed policemen were guarding a handcuffed prisoner—a short, thick-set man, with tanned and bloated features. Near him stood a stolid personage trifling with a notebook and pencil. And, facing these four, her head thrown back haughtily, her jewelled fingers catching restlessly at a lace handkerchief, was a well-dressed, grey-haired woman. It was Lady Tarleton.

As Edward Stormont paused in the doorway of the hall, she glanced up and saw him. The handcuffed prisoner was speaking defiantly.

"I'm Dennis Hartigan all right," he said, "and Hannah Davenal's husband all right. But I'm innocent of her death, and I'm here to prove it. I want one word—one single word—alone with her ladyship."

(The conversation between Lady Tarleton and Hartigan will be given next Tuesday.)

Jack: "Her heart is as hard as glass. I've little hope of making an impression on it." His Sister: "Try a diamond."

Tom: "The management seem to have spared no expense for the production of this play." Kitty: "No, indeed; they have given each chorus girl at least three coats of paint."

"Dear girl!" he said rapturously. "If it is just the same to you, George, I would prefer not to have you use that adjective," she returned. "Why not?" he demanded. "It reminds me too much of what papa sometimes says to me."

Mrs. Smarte says her husband is the worst man that ever was to go shopping. He's almost sure to get swindled. "Why," she says, "it was only t'other day that he bought a flute, and when it came home, if you'll believe me, it was full of holes."

Magistrate (to women charged with drunkenness): "You must pay 5s. each." Prisoner: "Sure, then, I've but 2s., and my companion 1s. in the world." Magistrate: "Then you must go to prison. If you hadn't got intoxicated with your money you'd have enough to pay the fine."

"Young man," said the prosperous old gentleman, "you say you haven't had a good meal for a week?" "I have not, sir." "And you've seen better days?" "I have." "Used to move in good society?" "Yes, sir." "Then come along with me to a first class restaurant, and I'll pay for some quail on toast. I want to learn the correct way to eat the blessed dish."

Digitized by Google

A Photographic Exposure.

And How it Showed Up a False Lover.

Leo Fox was his name, and Fox he was by nature as well as by name, though how his parents could have saddled him with such a combination as "Leo" *and* "Fox" is a mystery, as they were people of good birth and education. But Leo was quite another sort, and I hope I may be forgiven if I describe him as a "regular bounder."

The characteristics of this species are pretty generally known, so I need not enlarge on them, but curiously enough there was in this young man also a vein of pure cunning; he thoroughly enjoyed deceit for its own sake, and was never so happy as when playing a double part.

You will say that I have given myself away now, and that I must have some reason for taking away another man's character.

For the best of reasons I could not do that—he simply had no character, but I admit I had good cause both to dislike him and for my poor opinion of him.

Leo Fox was engaged to Miss Angel—or, to be more correct, Miss Angela Devine—and cad as he was, I have heard him give as a toast, "The divine Angel!"

Miss Angel, as I always called her, was the only daughter of old Devine, a rich country banker, well known for his philanthropic work and temperance leanings—I had nearly said fads—but in spite of these little drawbacks he was a most charming old gentleman in all but one respect, and that was that he could not be brought to see the real character of the man to whom he had promised his beautiful daughter.

Leo's parents died when he was about fifteen. The whole of their fortune having been swept away by the failure of an investment for which Mr. Devine was responsible, he thought to make amends by adopting the lad, and in time making all fair and square by a marriage between his ward and his only daughter.

Leo was certainly as fond of Miss Angel as it was possible for him to be of anyone, and she had always looked upon him as "just Leo," and criticised him no more than we usually do those with whom we have been brought up. But after the engagement there came a change.

Perhaps I had something to do with it.

I had a considerable reputation as one of the coming men at the School of Art in the neighbouring town of Hampton, and having introductions to old Mr. Devine, I became installed as drawing-master-in-ordinary to his daughter.

My modest income was, however, by no means to my taste, and I determined to try for press work. Very soon I cut the School of Art altogether, but went over to Little Hampton village regularly to instruct my best pupil, for she had a clever turn for caricature and one day I came upon a collection of drawings in which her acquaintances figured.

There was a capital sketch of me as "Brer Rabbit," which I did not in the least resent, and Leo was "Brer Fox," and you will remember that "Brer Fox" always got the worst of it. It was a good omen.

"Miss Angel," I said boldly, "you have hit upon the truth; it *is* a fight between Leo Fox and myself, and I intend to win."

"To win!" she echoed, turning first red, then pale. "Win what, Mr. Rutherford?"

"You," I answered bluntly. "You, Angel. Leo Fox is not the man for you, and you shall never marry him if I can prevent it. I may not succeed in winning your love, and Heaven knows I am not worthy of it either, but at least I will save you from marrying a gambler and card-sharper who would break your heart before a year was out!"

"Do you not think," she interrupted, rising to her feet and looking down on me full of anger, "it would be well to defer these accusations till you can make them to Leo's face, instead of slandering him behind his back? Where are your proofs?

"We have known Leo all our lives, his character is safe in this house. But you, Mr. Rutherford, we have taken on trust. Are we now to search the town for testimonials to your honour, truthfulness and disinterestedness?" She turned from me and swept to the door.

"Stop!" I said, "you have given me a hearing, but only a partial one, you must hear me out. Leo may have a character in this house, but I'm hanged if he has anywhere else! Go and ask in the town if you like—let Mr. Devine ask what goes on at the 'Royal' five nights out of six.

"Proofs! Yes I have them and I mean to use them. But that is not all. You became engaged to Leo Fox to please your father. You do not love him—I guessed it before. Now"—putting my hand on the caricatures—"I am certain of it.

"Listen, Angel! You are not happy, if you were I would not speak yet. But I am going away. I cannot stand seeing that cad always with you. I have got work elsewhere, and I mean to get on. Then I shall come back and get my answer. I have loved you since you were a fifteen-year-old pickle, and I love you more than ever now you are in danger of making a ghastly mistake."

She smiled scornfully.

"Yes, Angel, in real danger; speak to your father use your eyes, your ears, you cannot, must not, marry this man."

* * * * *

I heard nothing of or from the Devines' for some months, and I settled down to my new work in London feeling a little sore that I could be so completely forgotten. And then I found that my memory was still kept green but not in quite the way I should have chosen.

Mr. Devine wrote that "he had made the inquiries I so disinterestedly had demanded, and that he was more than ever satisfied of the excellent character of his future son-in-law."

I felt the snub. Only the heroes of fiction are above snubs, but I still meant to win. Angel was not to be married till the following spring, when she came of age, and Fox might give himself away long before that date arrived.

My chance came sooner than I had expected.

Derby Day! Blazing sun, clouds of dust over everything, and a moving sea of people! What a scene! And how could any man convey any real notion of it on one small canvas. I stood chatting to a chum who had come down with me.

"Come and sketch old Greenwood," he said.

The old book-maker was at his stand and the usual types of the betting-man were round him.

Women were there too, and one gaudily dressed specimen of her class had her hand on the shoulder of a man who was entering a bet in his book. He looked up and our eyes met.

It was Leo Fox.

He tossed his hat on to the back of his head, tipped me an impudent wink, and went off with his companion.

"Nice subjects," said the pressman. "I've put 'em in—seen *him* before; goes the pace a bit too! Surely not a chum of yours, Rutherford?"

"He's a beast," I answered, "an unmitigated beast!"

Digitized by Google

How I wished Mr. Devine could have seen him! I would not give much for Leo's chance of marrying Angel after; the old man thought "the devil and all his works" were met with on a race-ground sooner than anywhere else. But he'd never know anything of Fox's ways, and was as likely to turn up at the Derby as I was to preside at one of his prayer meetings.

Nothing further happened till September, when I was down at Brighton. I was sketching the remains of the old chain pier when a lady passed me. I turned sharply and she started. It was Miss Angel. The strong wind had given her a touch of colour, but I could see how thin and changed she was.

"How glad I am to meet you," she began hurriedly. "Oh! Mr. Rutherford——"

She stopped as suddenly as she had begun. I took her hand and drew her away out of the wind.

"Sit down," I said. "What is it?"

"Help me, do help me, there is no one else, and—and I am frightened," she answered almost in a whisper.

"No one half so ready or able," I said. "Tell me. Is it Leo?"

She nodded, half-shuddering.

"Yes, Leo—I can't do it—I thought I could, but since you spoke to me I am afraid, and I can't marry him."

"Speak to your father, or to Leo," I urged. "They both love you in their own way—as for me, I am not disinterested, you know."

She turned her head away, but her eyes filled with tears, and I felt like a brute; after all she had come to me for help.

"Break it off," I repeated, "what is to hinder? You don't love him."

"Leo wants the money—he lost his through father, and——"

"And you are to be the compensation. I for one don't see it. Let him take the money, but break it off. Make them listen to you."

"I can't; I have tried."

"You can refuse to marry him, can't you, what is easier?"

"Yes. No. I can't; I mean I would do it, only—only they would think I have some other reason, and I can't speak because——"

"Well?"

No answer.

"Well, just because," I asked, bending over her.

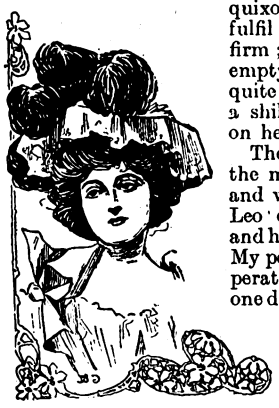
"Just because I do care," she whispered.

The dusk of the autumn afternoon closed in about us and we were alone together.

* * * * *

When I left Angel, it was settled that I was to go down to Little Hampton at Christmas.

Between now and then I was to devise some plan which would convince Mr. Devine of Leo's unsuitability as his son-in-law, and free Angel without my name being dragged into the matter. A nice task she had set me, yet it was the condition of my winning her, and unnecessary and quixotic as it seemed to me, I would fulfil it. For Angel, the darling, was firm; she would not come to me empty-handed, and Mr. Devine was quite capable of cutting her off with a shilling if she broke off the match on her own initiative.



The next thing I heard was that the marriage was being hastened on and was to take place at Christmas. Leo evidently suspected something, and had no intention of losing the cash. My poor little girl! I was getting desperate, barely a month to work in. Then one day in Regent Street a sudden idea struck me and I made my plans.

* * *

Everything was in train. I flattered myself that I was about to make it hot for "Brer Fox." I got off by the twentieth and went down to the village with Lee, my friend of the press.

There was little to amuse him except our grand annual entertainment, a sort of glorified tea-meeting, to which all the old people, the Temperance Society, Bands of Hope, and all Mr. Devine's friends who approved of philanthropic fads, were invited.

The village and the "Quality" made merry together, and the show included niggers, carols, recitations, the village choir, and, as a great and crowning finish, Animated Pictures.

Nervous old ladies predicted a second Paris fire; as for me, I shouldn't have minded a little flare up, which would enable me to rescue Angel while Leo ran away. But it might have been awkward if Leo rescued her instead, so on the whole I thought we would skip the fire.

The great evening came at last. Of course Lee and I were in the reserved seats, and I took care to sit just behind Mr. Devine and his party, but as we came in late while the gas was low, the old man had not the slightest idea that we were there.

Wild bursts of applause greeted the living pictures—a perfect hurricane of bravos, with stamping and clapping showed their appreciation of Jubilee Day.

"An' I shouldn't wonner," said a queer old biddy behind me, "if there worn't nobody so glad when it were all over, as pore ole Victoria 'erself!"

We were getting towards the end of the show now, and I held my breath as I waited. I furtively watched Leo Fox. He could not see me save by turning right round in his seat. He was between Mr. Devine and Angel, and he took advantage of the excitement to steal his arm round her waist and whisper in her ear. Of course it was pretty nearly dark, but I saw him, and saw also the shudder with which she drew herself away from him.

Brute that he was! How many other girls had he embraced in similar fashion. I could scarcely keep from hauling him out of his seat by main force. Then Lee chuckled in my ear.

"Time's up!" he said, with a sardonic grin, as he pointed to the screen.

The Derby Race-course was now to be seen. A horrified murmur broke from Mr. Devine; he had not bargained to be present at a Derby, but he could not help himself, it was too late to stop the show.

All at once the Squire, who was sitting on the other side of Angel, exclaimed in a loud voice:

"By Jove! There's Leo Fox!"

"Where? What? Bless my soul—so it is! To the very life!" stuttered the Vicar, as he nudged Mr. Devine. "I say, Devine, I never thought Leo——" He stopped short, remembering Angel.

"Cries of "Oh! I say, look at Mr. Fox!" "Who's the lady?" "I say, he's stuck fast." "Well, I never! Who would have thought it of Mr. Fox?" rang through the room.

One of the pictures had caught for a moment, and a corner of the race-course stood out distinctly; in the foreground was old Greenwood on his stand speaking to a man in a loud check suit. A woman at his side threw her arm over his shoulder. He was just entering a bet; as the obstacle was removed and the pictures glided on across the screen, he tipped his hat to the back of his head, winked to someone out of sight, and vanished.

The final scene where the crowd swarms over the course, flashed by as the murmurs of surprise went round the audience and the lights turned up with a glare, showed to all Angel's white face and Mr. Devine's look of fury.

It was a photographic exposure, and we had every reason to be gratified with the result.

On Christmas Day, Mr. Devine and Lee sat smoking together, and Angel and I were alone by the fire, she vowing that she *never, never* would be such a coward again; and I assuring her with equal emphasis, that she *never, never* would have the chance again.

N. Murrell Marris.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

LADY HONORIA. Sister of the Duke of Eastacres.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

ALPHONSE HERVÉ. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

CRAWLEY DAVENANT. An old friend of Lady Peggy.

We Stop at Monte Carlo.

THE next day Belinda came to me in great distress about the loss of the medal. She explained that it had to her, a sentimental value, that she would take any trouble, go to any expense to secure its return.

"It may have fallen on the floor of the carriage," she said. "Lady Peggy, may we not drive back to Florence so that I can search for it?"

Her appeal convinced me that whoever had abstracted the coin from my jewel-case, it was not Belinda. I consented to the proposed search, and took advantage of her absence with Honoria to thoroughly overhaul the latter's luggage—Mark had forwarded his wife's wardrobe before we left Florence.

I guessed beforehand that my investigation would be fruitless; not for an instant was it possible to credit Honoria with sufficient ingenuity to have entered my room and abstracted the keys without my knowledge. All the same I thought it better to make assurance doubly sure, and, as I say, I turned out her ladyship's belongings, but to no effect.

Next, I directed my attention to the innkeeper and his household. Here I met with no better success. Mine host was an elderly man of immense girth, who could not go upstairs by reason of his corpulence. His mother, an aged crone, and two peasant women, formed the staff of the establishment. It was idle to imagine that any one of them could have taken the coin.

I had to leave the problem unsolved. It was a long time before I discovered the whereabouts of the bronze token. I paid dearly for the knowledge.

We journeyed but slowly through Italy. Belinda's health was flagging, and she could not stand prolonged fatigue. We arrived at Nice the end of October, putting up at an exquisite little villa which Madame D'Astrea had placed at our disposal.

Belinda cared but little for the town, she was inspired with a love for the blue waters of the Mediterranean, however, and spent all her time upon the water.

The young Earl of Carmegan, who, with his mother, was staying at Monte Carlo, placed his yacht at our disposal. Often of a night—one of those exquisite southern nights when the air, laden with a thousand perfumes, fans the cheek like a caress, when the sky of wonderful clearness is jewelled with stars—we would sit on deck watching the lights of Nice in the distance.

The town appeared in the form of a string of lights, and in the middle of this string the building called Gêtée Promenade, shone like a gigantic lantern. As we came nearer each of the lights changed into a fiery pillar shivering on the moving line of the shore.

Sometimes, with gradually increasing motion, we shot past luxurious private yachts, fitted with all the ease and elegance of a bijou residence in Mayfair; past ironclads, whose enormous bodies were outlined harshly on the opalescent sky.

The deck of H.M.S. *Conqueror*, decorated with multi-coloured lanterns, and wreaths of roses stretched from slim Venetian poles, shone in the distance.

The officers were giving a ball, the band was playing, the sound of soft music and gay laughter came over the water. Nice is the paradise of the yachtsman, there he will meet vessels, world-famous for their speed, the elegance of their build, the luxury of their fittings.

Nice is no longer a favourite with the best people in Society. The consumptives have invaded the place and cast a gloom that even the bright sunshine cannot wholly dispel. The British colony is made up of the great middle-class, with a sprinkling of third-rate titles, who eke out a wretched income by introducing *parvenues* into what they term Society!

The first week in November we arrived at Monte Carlo. We drove from Nice by the road called Old Corniche, which stretches along the rocky shore.

The view is wonderful; to the right one looks upon the blue depths of the Mediterranean, sparkling like an immense turquoise in the sun. The roofs of the villas scattered along the shore, peep through thickets of eucalyptus, masses of almond blossom, and green and leafy palms.

Huge bushes of heliotrope scent everything with an exquisite fragrance, the fragrance of the orange blossom is in the air, and the sun—the glorious southern sun—is above all.

And this in a month when the good people of London are smothered with fog, and mud, and misery. You may shake your head at us, my dear middle-class matron, but confess you envy us in November.

We stayed at the Hotel de Paris. The *chef* there is devoted to me. Ever since I paid him a special compliment upon his stewed ortolans—they really are divine—he has looked forward to my yearly visit with the pleasure a great artist feels for appreciative admiration. The hotel is like most others. Fashionable hotels differ very little—they are all well appointed, perfectly managed, and frightfully dear!

Digitized by Google

The chief employment or recreation at the charming little principality, is, as you know, gambling. Other amusements are pigeon-shooting, music—the orchestra at the Casino is world-famous—and the theatre. At a pigeon-shooting match Belinda made herself horribly conspicuous.

Why on earth those persons who eat and enjoy pigeon-pie should worry themselves, and other people, over the way in which the succulent birds are dispatched, I can't think. It seems to me that one half of the world is always annoying the other half with absurd theories. Actually I believe there is a Society for the Protection of Pigeons! Can anything be more ridiculous?

In accordance with my plan, Eastacres arrived at Monte Carlo shortly after us. I cautioned him to keep out of sight for the present as it would not do to give Belinda the least cause for apprehension. He obeyed my instructions, and neither Belinda nor Honoria had a suspicion he was there.

One afternoon, however, we sauntered down to the lawn, a large expanse of smooth, green grass running out towards the sea, where the shooting takes place. The cages with the pigeons are disposed on it in a half circle. Each moment one of them opens suddenly, and the frightened bird flies out; then the shot resounds and the pigeon falls either on the grass or into the sea, where on the waves small boats with fishermen wait expectantly for the prey.

Often it happens that the pigeon is missed, then it flies towards the sea, and, making a circle, returns, seeking shelter on the roof of the Casino.

Immense sums are won and lost over pigeon-shooting. I have seen a man miss one, two, three birds, and known that his lack of luck or skill meant the gain of twenty thousand pounds, to a stripling, fresh from Eton, who bagged his bird every time.

Pigeon-shooting certainly does not call forth what old-fashioned people name sportsmanlike behaviour. Men will turn white with rage and mortification and savagely blaze away at a wretched bird which, with broken wing, vainly tries to escape.

All the world goes to the pigeon-shooting at Monte Carlo. Great ladies, wives of the well-to-do tradespeople, and ballet girls jostle each other in rivalry for a good place. Lady Saxby insisted on entering for a match; she mauled her birds horribly but never missed a shot.

When we arrived on the ground she was finishing a match with the Hon. Ian McAlister. He had scored eighteen out of a possible twenty; her record at the moment we came upon the scene was just sixteen.

A bird flew high up over our heads. Ping—the shot flew home, the creature dropped, fluttering in agony. Another bird was loosed, and with the same result. Lady Saxby looked triumphant. Her next shot missed, however, the bird flew off unharmed. The next and last shot would decide the match. If she winged the pigeon she would win the stakes of five hundred pounds, if not the match would be a draw.

The cage was opened, Lady Saxby took aim, but the pigeon, as if dazed, remained on the spot. They tried to force the bird to fly by rolling balls upon the grass, whistling and screaming at it. The creature was panic-stricken, however, and cowered closer to the ground.

Lady Saxby called impatiently for another bird to be let loose. McAlister negatived the proposition, and declared she must shoot that one or not at all.

At the moment, Belinda, who had gradually edged near the cages, uttered a chirping sort of call. The pigeon looked about, then suddenly stretched out its wings and flew straight for Belinda, who caught and held it in her hands.

"Let it go!" shouted Lady Saxby.

"Let it go," a hundred voices took up the cry. Quite unmoved, Belinda shook her head, stroking the soft, downy feathers of the bird, its pretty head and throbbing breast.

The creature, startled by the tumult, struggled from her grasp and perched itself on her shoulder. It made a pretty picture; Belinda, with her fair hair and earnest face, turning her cheek to rest against the frightened bird.

The next instant there was a report—the bird dropped like a stone to the ground.

"They've killed Belinda!" shrieked Honoria. "Murderers! Villains!"

I put her roughly aside, and hurried to the girl.

"I'm not hurt," she said, "but the bird. Oh, the poor thing!" She stooped and picked up the mass of blood-stained feathers, and, as I live, there were tears in her eyes!

"A wonderful shot, whoever winged the bird," said McAlister. "It wasn't Lady Saxby, I am glad to say. Had the aim been the least little bit lower Miss North would have been hurt. I wonder who it was?"

As he spoke I glanced to the other side of the lawn, where stood a slight, fair man carrying a smoking revolver. I had guessed instinctively that it was he, but the emotion of the moment forced a cry of surprise from my lips. Honoria looked up, and, by a most horrible mischance, her eyes fell upon that figure also.

"Eastacres!" she said. "Eastacres!" and her face went the colour of ashes.

I gripped her tightly by the arm. "If you tell Belinda your brother's here, I'll telegraph for Mark. You hear me? Don't you dare to disobey."

She listened with the usual air of helplessness, and a sort of sullen apathy that had lately shown itself in her.

"I shan't tell Belinda," she said dully—"I daren't."

A moment later I caught a look upon her face that gave me an unpleasant thrill. She was gazing at me, at *me*, who had done so much for her, who had actually paid away a hundred pounds to her wretch of a husband, with an expression of the deepest malignity. I mean it, malignity. I had not thought that she possessed sufficient character to feel, much less to look, malignant.

Her face relapsed into vacuity as she met my eyes. For a moment I was puzzled. I had not injured her; even so, she was so weakly good-natured that she would have forgiven any injury to herself. Could it be that she resented my conduct to Belinda and hated me because of it?

I dismissed the suggestion and decided that Honoria's expression was one of the nervous grimaces which at times contracted her features.

I sent a message to Eastacres telling him to meet me that evening in the gardens of the Casino.

Crawley, who always used to follow in my wake, had arrived at Monte Carlo that same morning. I confided Belinda and Honoria to his care, and having left them fascinated with the roll of the roulette wheel and the monotonous cry of the croupier, "*Messieurs, Mésdames, faites votre jeu*," went to keep my *rendezvous*.

"Eastacres," I said sharply, "what possessed you this afternoon? It's the barest chance in the world that Belinda didn't see you. As it is Honoria caught sight of you, and I only just managed to stop her telling Belinda."

"Well," he said calmly—"what then?"

I could have shaken him for his assumed stupidity.

"Do you not realise that the success of our scheme, yours and mine, depends on Belinda's belief that she is free from your attentions? If she dreamt that you were here in this place she would refuse to stir out of her room. She has a dislike, a detestation of you that amounts to a mania.

"She always disliked you except at the very first, but lately, since, since"—my eyes wavered under his sneer—"well, for the past three months she has feared you. I tell you it is of the utmost importance that she should not know you are here."

Digitized by Google

"I should have thought you'd have had her under better control by this time," he said. "It doesn't say much for your system, Lady Peggy, if the girl has still sufficient will to defy you. Still, I'm glad to hear she's afraid of me. It was her defiance that used to so enrage me."

"Look here," he added quickly, "why not turn this fear to good account? I've an idea, risky, but not more so than yours. And it has this advantage, that I can put it into practice very soon. No, I shan't tell you what it is. You must wait—like Belinda."

He left me much perturbed. There was that in his manner which alarmed me. I profoundly mistrusted Eastacres.

On my way back to my charges I passed through the Casino; vast salons, each with their tables thronged and crowded, blazing with light, that fell upon the smooth green cloth—a strip of sward, where gamblers nightly fight a duel with Chance—the faces of the players and their hands.

Your *habitués* of the tables preserve calm, impassive faces, whether luck be for or against them; only by the tremor of the hands, the twitching of the fingers, do they betray themselves. There they sit, night after night, a crowd of Poles, Russians, British, French, men and women of every nationality, all going to conquer the bank that every day repulses and breaks the crowds as a rock breaks the waves of the sea.

Great ladies elbow women from whom, outside the Casino, they withdraw their skirts; delicate, high-bred beauties discuss the chances of the game with thick-lipped Jewesses, whose necks and arms blaze with diamonds, and whose breath reeks of garlic.

The atmosphere grows hotter and hotter, the faces of the players whiten in the heat of the air and their own passions, and over all, like the voice of Fate, sounds the cry of the croupier:

"*Faites votre jeu, Messieurs et Mesdames, faites votre jeu!*"

"On red, on black," the voices cry round the table, piles of gold, of notes are pushed in position, and then the roulette wheel revolves slowly at first, then quicker.

"*Rouge gagne, rouge gagne,*" cries a little blonde who has staked her night's winnings upon red. And then the wheel slackens. "*Rouge perd.*" With a cry that she cannot strangle the blonde hurries from the table. The croupier rakes in her gold, and a tall, sallow woman steps into her place.

Some of the players are to be found year after year at the Casino. The Countess of Carmegan is familiar as the roulette wheel itself. A tall, slim woman of *eighty-five*, she presents a wonderful spectacle.

As you enter the room the elegance of her figure, the distinction of her bearing, impresses you. Exquisitely dressed, as a rule in pure white, with costly jewels and rich laces, at first sight you take her for a woman in the twenties. Her face is pink and white as a girl's, her hair a pale gold, her lips and teeth fresh as youth itself.

But when she looks at you, you feel a shiver almost of repulsion. Out of that youthful face stare eyes that are so old that you have a longing to cover them. She has spent a fortune on her frail old body. A new skin has been grafted on her face, and her hair has been preserved to a marvel. But all the wealth, all the knowledge of the world, can't alter her eyes. They bring a shuddering sense as of death on the beholder.

Within a few feet of her used to sit the Marquess of Dalesford and his brothers, the three finest men in Warwickshire, all of them over six feet, handsome, and careless.

Since then, the time of which I write, two are dead, the third gone under. The Marquess broke his neck trying to jump the family vault in the old churchyard in Warwickshire; the second shot himself; and the third, worst fate of all, married a nursery governess!

When certain great personages visit Monte Carlo *incognito* or otherwise, the management arrange that they shall play in private undisturbed and undetected. The late Empress of Austria had a salon reserved for her exclusive use, none entered it but her Majesty and those guests she honoured by an invitation.

My dear friend, the Countess of Warminster—her husband's position in the Cabinet at home prevented her gambling at the public tables—had a delicious little cabinet in the Casino where she and her friends played baccarat and roulette till the sun was high in the Heavens.

It was an exquisite apartment, the walls lined with cream satin, with a moulded gilt arabesque along the top; the floor was of parqueted oak, with thick Persian rugs; on the mantelpiece was a silver clock which unceasingly told the hours.

To this salon the Countess had easy access. Her beautiful villa above the town was built at an angle of the Casino, and a little private lawn stretched down in front of it to a terrace overlooking the sea. Crocuses, narcissi, and daffodils were sown all over the grass, and in the early Spring it used to look like a foreground of a pre-Raphaelite sketch.

In the pauses of play one could hear from the terrace a troupe of minstrels, or a famous violinist.

I visited the Countess' cabinet on my way back to Belinda. There were some six or eight people present, four men and as many women. Most of them were known to me and returned my greeting with enthusiasm. One of the men who had been looking out of the open window, suddenly drew in his head and turned to me abruptly.

For a moment I was too astonished to speak. I had need to be—it was my son-in-law, Millicent's husband.

"My dear Eric," I said, "this is very nice. Where is Millicent?"

He made no offer to take my outstretched hand, but plunged his own deep in his pockets.

"I don't know," he said.

"Eric!" I glanced at him suspiciously.

He was a man of coarse tastes, and—so Millicent said—took more brandy than was good for him or agreeable to his friends. Brandy makes a man brutal. I could not detect any signs that he had been drinking, however, and decided he was sulky. Possibly Millicent had upset him. She was trying at times, and more than a little extravagant.

"Is Millicent in Monte Carlo, Eric?" I asked, under my breath.

"*Is she at Monte Carlo?*" he repeated, jeering. "Don't you know?" he turned upon me fiercely—"don't you know that she's here? She and that underbred cur of a musician."

I caught my breath and felt the blood rush to my cheeks. The women looked at me maliciously. Courthorpe had been one of the catches of the season, and they have never forgiven me for marrying him to Millicent.

"If you want her," he continued, "find her. Don't ask me about her, that's all." He lounged off in his ungraceful fashion. I turned, distressed, to the Countess of Warminster.

"What is it?" I murmured. "I cannot understand what he means?"

"If you asked me *who* it was, Peggy, the question would be more to the point. Millicent's intrigues are notorious. She has had more scandals since her marriage, not a twelvemonth ago, than I've concealed in my whole life.

"At present, my dear, I believe it's Felix, the singer. Eric takes it rather foolishly, doesn't he? All the same, I think she should be careful. Talk to her, talk to her, my dear. You never know what men will do. Courthorpe's an awful beast, he might put her in the divorce court."

"Where is Courthorpe staying? I suppose she—she hasn't left him?"

"I think not — yet. They're at the Hotel Anglaise, Millicent is here to-night. I fancy Courthorpe was watching her and Felix just now on the terrace."

I needed no second word, but hurried out to

Digitized by Google

the terrace—that beautiful place where, at the time England is the home of snow, one can look upon orange groves, rose trees, gardens of lilies, groves of wild olives, with the sea like a lake of *lapis lazuli* beyond.

I found my daughter by herself. She had dismissed Felix, and was leaning moodily against the balustrade. Our interview was very painful. I urged upon her the foolishness, the wickedness of flying in the face of Society, and aggravating Courthorpe. She replied with an audacity worthy of Belinda herself.

"I am tired of Society and its subterfuges, its shams and its lies. I may do what I like it seems, so long as it is not done openly, in the light of day. I may have twenty lovers if I wish, so long as I behave discreetly, and do not endanger my marriage settlement. I have lived a life of torture since you married me.

"My husband is a brute—a brute, I say! Look!" She lifted the lace sleeve of her evening gown and pointed to an ugly bruise upon her arm. "Not only does he strike me, but he abuses me, hurls such names and epithets at me that no brave, no decent woman would endure. My life is one never-ending torment; not an hour, not a minute I am not subject to his insults, his abuse."

"You must have give him cause, Millicent. Eric is a jealous man."

"I have given him no cause!" she cried. "I am not like those other women, who smile to my face and vilify me behind my back. Felix is my friend, my best friend, no more."

"You will have to give him up, Millicent."

"Never!" she answered defiantly.

"What are you going to do, then, you foolish and misguided girl?"

"I'm going to leave my husband," she said proudly, "the man who has made my life a burden for the past year."

"*Millicent!*" I caught and held her tightly.

"Don't mistake me, mother. I shan't leave Courthorpe for any other man. I'm going to live by myself, that's all. I'm going to make my own way in the world, as I should have done long ago but for you."

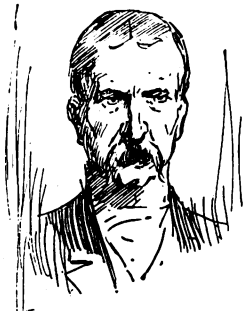
"You are mad!" I said, "quite mad!"

She laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"I knew you'd say that," she returned. "Still, I mean it. I mean to study painting, to work hard, *hard*, and earn my own living. I shall study at Duran's Atelier in Paris. You know he told me as a little girl that I had talent, and Hervé will help me. I shall leave for Paris to-morrow. I have told Courthorpe my decision. And now," she turned to me, "good-bye." She kissed me lightly on the cheek, and, before I had time to stop her, passed out of sight.

The wretched, misguided girl kept her word. She left a splendid house, threw up an immense income, sacrificed a great position—to live in a condition little removed from a workgirl, in Paris. And all because she wouldn't try to manage her husband. In my hands he would have been as wax.

The interview not only upset me on her account, but on my own. If the worst came to the worst I always thought I could make my home with Millicent. Now even that refuge was denied me.



THE DUKE OF EASTACRES

My other daughters were quite estranged from me—their husbands even more so. The blankness of despair settled on me for a moment. Then I took courage once again—and sought Belinda.

I had expected to find her sitting pensive at the tables, looking as much out of place as a saint from the Middle Ages. To my astonishment I found her in the grip of the gaming fever. She was winning, and the pile of gold before her rapidly increased.

Her youth, her beauty, and the rumours of her wealth, had attracted general attention. Women stopped on the way to their seats to touch her dress and to ask her for a number—the custom in Monte Carlo, where a lucky player is regarded as a mascot.

It was getting late, and I was anxious to leave the Casino. I touched Belinda's arm and pointed to the clock, but she paid no heed to me.

With flushed cheeks and eyes dilated with fever, and with the drug of which she took increasing quantities, she fixed her attention on the spinning roulette wheel.

The crowd pressed nearer, commenting audibly upon her luck, her loveliness, her youth. There had been a masked ball that night at one of the hotels, and, in the interval some of the dancers came to the Casino to chat with their friends, and whisper unpleasantnesses to their rivals.

One figure attracted my attention. He was in black from head to foot, black domino, black mask, with a hood of the same sable hue.

He dropped into a chair close to Belinda, and started play at once with the coolness of a finished gambler. His hands were cool and steady as a rock, not so much as by the twitching of a finger did he betray emotion when he lost or when he gained.

He played on steadily until the rooms gradually thinning were almost empty. Once again I urged Belinda to retire, but with more than her usual obstinacy she refused. This time Honoria added her intreaties to my commands.

"Come, dear," she said, "I can't bear to see you in this place."

Belinda took no notice of her appeal, and shook off the timid hand that rested for a moment on her shoulders.

Honoria, much distressed, left the table to wander up and down the room, pausing every now and then behind the black domino, as if he exercised a fascination over her.

At last he and Belinda were the only remaining players. With a courteous gesture he bent forward and said softly—

"You have won largely to-night. Are you content with your winnings?"

"I could go on for ever," she said. "It is wonderful."

"Shall we have a game to ourselves, just you and I? It will be more exciting even than roulette!"

"If you like," she said eagerly.

I judged it time to interfere, but as I approached, a sudden movement of the black domino restrained me.

"See," he divided his winnings into three. "I will stake a third of my possessions that the card which I turn up will be higher than yours." He motioned the croupier for a pack. After a whispered colloquy that individual agreed to allow the informal procedure of a gamble without the bank!

Belinda, her eyes aflame, nodded, and separating a third of her winnings, signed that she was ready.

"Cut, mademoiselle," he placed the cards before her, "if you please."

With a catching of the breath she cut the pack and held up the queen of hearts.

The black domino bowed, lifted a single card—it was the king of the same suit.

Belinda pushed over her share, shuffled her cards, and cut again. For a second time the black domino's card was the higher.

"Bring me another pack!" cried the girl. "These are unlucky cards."

But the new pack brought her no better fortune. Again the black domino was the victor.

"I should like to beat you," she said. "I could in time. I have not yet lost my pluck. I will play for my pearls."

She put the necklace on the table. It followed her gold, as did her bracelets, and all the money she could get from me.

"I hate to own myself defeated," she said fiercely.

"We will try again," he said. "See, mademoiselle, I will stake," he paused, "a hundred thousand pounds against your hand."

He touched the third finger of her right hand as he spoke,

Digitized by Google

the finger on which she wore a beautiful diamond. The girl was excited, and I think understood that he meant she should stake her ring.

"It's not worth a hundred thousand pounds, monsieur, but, such as it is, I'll risk it."

She placed her hand, palm downward, on the table; the diamond glittered on her slim finger.

The black domino bowed profoundly.

"Cut, Mademoiselle!" he said. For the last time Belinda raised the cards, turning up a two of spades.

"I think I shall win again," he murmured, and, with a deft movement picked up the lower portion of the pack.

Before he could deal out his card, Honoria, with a wild cry, flung herself upon him.

"No, no!" she cried, "you shall not, you shall never win." Panting, she tore off his mask and flung it on the table.

"Look, look!" she cried, and, with a gesture of contempt—contempt from Honoria!—she pointed at him, mocking, "My brother," she said, "look, it is my brother!"

(The conclusion of this series will appear next Tuesday.)

To Smoke or not to Smoke?

If a Girl Objects to Tobacco, Should she Ask her Fiancé to Cease Smoking?

"You don't care for me one bit, although you say you do!" said Nell indignantly. "You're like all the other men I know."

"I hope the other men don't say they care for you," said Jack. "If you'll give me the names and addresses of those who do, I shall feel inclined to go round and punch their heads for them."

"Yes, punch! That's another man's favourite expression."

"Another man altogether," he queried placidly, "or one of those who say they care for you?"

"You know what I mean. You think less of me than of your dirty pipe and your wretched tobacco!"

"Another girl's favourite expression!" said Jack. "If you will allow me to paraphrase your remark."

"Oh, don't consider me," said Nell, in rather a shaky voice.

"I could argue better if I didn't," he answered diplomatically.

"It doesn't matter so much now, because I can go into another room when you begin to smoke."

"Yes," groaned Jack; "and you do regularly, and I have to choose between two——"

"Two evils—the tobacco and me. Say what you mean, please."

"Two evils—giving up your society or putting my pipe aside. But you must admit that I never hesitate."

"N—no."

"And besides, I read somewhere that smoking is good for asthma."

"But you don't suffer from asthma?"

"No, because I smoke."

"I won't grumble if you'll promise not to smoke again until you have asthma."

"A man doesn't postpone saving until he's short of money," said Jack tentatively.

"But you really must choose between us. You know that wretched tobacco makes me quite ill. You're always saying you'd do anything to please me, and here's a chance. For it would please me a very, very great deal and I should think ever so much more of you, Jack. You don't want to give me up and make me miserable for ever, do you?"

"My ambition lies exactly the other way, and you know that, Nell."

"Then you'll give up tobacco to make me happy?"

"I—— Oh, I never said so, really."

"But you and I can understand each other without words. You know I think so much of you, Jack, that I can read your thoughts before you speak them."

"And before I think them too," groaned Jack to himself. "You don't mean it seriously, Nell?"

"Yes, I do."

"I'll agree not to smoke after we're married except in certain rooms hereinafter to be set forth and defined, coloured pink in the plan," and Jack smiled, though in rather a sickly manner.

"I didn't think you would try to dodge out of it like that," said Nell scornfully. "Which do you choose to give up entirely?"

"It's scarcely reasonable——"

"If you cared for me you wouldn't hesitate like this. Which is it to be, please?"

By this time they had reached the house where Nell lived.

He opened the garden-gate for her and rang the bell, then he turned to her for a last appeal.

"Do you really mean it, Nell?" he asked in trembling accents. "Do you mean to say 'Good-bye' because we don't quite agree on one subject, and that not an important one?"

"If it isn't important, you can give way. All right, Jane, I'll close the door."

"As a matter of principle I can't yield altogether. I've offered to meet you halfway."

"I don't care. If you cared for me really, you wouldn't find it so hard to choose."

"I want us to start fair when we're married," he said firmly, "And to give way to your unreasonable wish now would only cause trouble later on. You would always want your own way."

"Indeed, you shouldn't say such things. I never want my own way, and it isn't nice of you to say so. But, never mind. If you don't care sufficiently for me we'll say 'Good-bye.'"

"Good-bye, then," said Jack, as she hurried into the house.

She ran straight up to her own room, for her lips were quivering and the long-repressed tears were agitating to the surface.

As for Jack, he strode down the road in a regular tornado of rage, though he refused to admit even to himself that Nell had been more than unreasonable. But as it was necessary or him to find some outlet, he kicked savagely at every stone

Digitized by Google

that lay in the path, and finally banged the garden-gate with an energy that was, somehow, very consoling.

* * * * *

Nell's three brothers were sitting in the dining-room, smoking the blackest of tobacco through the noisiest of pipes.

"Is she likely to come in soon?" whispered Tom, the youngest. "Because, if she doesn't, this pipe will get me down. It's frightfully strong."

"Hsh! I can hear her now."

"No, it's someone tapping at the window—it's Jack! You go to the door, Tom, and keep Nell out for a few minutes."

Then he opened the widow. "Just a moment," he whispered. "We've got the room to look like a condensed battlefield in the days of black powder. Nell's in the hall, wait a minute, old man, and then we'll give you a leg-up through the window."

"I came to say that it's off," whispered Jack. "I don't like——"

"Rubbish, old chap! We've taken this matter up now, so don't worry yourself."

"Hello! here's Nell!" said Tom, in a warning voice, and his elder brother left the window hurriedly.

"Oh, how dreadfully smoky this room is!" cried Nell, as she entered. "You boys shouldn't use such strong tobacco."

"Just what Jack would say," says Fred gravely. "He doesn't believe in these strong mixtures, prefers light flake or some such rubbish."

"It isn't rubbish!" she said, colouring furiously. "And it's a lot more gentlemanly than your 'strong mixtures' which are far too strong for boys. I'm sure Tom isn't well."

"Nonsense!" said that young man, drawing vigorously. "Never felt better in my life."

"Then your looks go by contraries," she said wickedly. "For you never looked worse in your life. But I'm going out. I can't stand this any longer."

"Neither can I," murmured Tom faintly, as she disappeared, "another two minutes would have finished me."

His two elder brothers ran to the window, opened it, and whistled softly. Next moment they had drawn Jack up to the sill. As soon as he had grasped this, he was right, for he gripped the projecting woodwork of the window-frame and swarmed up into the room in an instant.

"Now's your chance, old chap," said Fred hurriedly. "She's gone to the drawing-room and Elsie is there with the ladies' cigarettes. Choose your time and go in and win."

"I really don't like it," said Jack doubtfully.

"Rubbish," and they took him in charge and led him out into the hall. "We've picked you as a suitable husband for Nell, and marry her you must." And even Tom patted him feebly on the back as he passed.

* * * * *

"What have you got there, Elsie? Chocolates?"

"No," said Nell's younger sister. "It's—er—tobacco. It's a packet of cigarettes."

"What!" cried Nell. "You are going to smoke?"

"I don't know," said Elsie doubtfully. "But—but look here, will you swear not to tell anyone?"

"Yes, I can promise that."

"Well, those wretched boys are always talking about the pleasure they find in smoking, so I've determined to test it for myself. You won't tell?"

"No."

"I daren't try any of their tobacco, because it's too strong, and Jack isn't here. Oh, I beg your pardon—I——"

"All right," said Nell wistfully. "Jack wouldn't smoke such rubbish as the boys do. His tobacco's ever so much nicer."

"I bought this packet of American cigarettes some weeks ago, but forgot them until to-day. They're advertised as a cheap brand, twenty-five for threepence. It isn't very extravagant, is it?" she asked anxiously.

"Elsie! Elsie!" cried someone.

"There's someone calling me," she said, pretending to listen.

Then Tom stepped back from beside the door, where he had been standing, and ran into the room. "Well, you might come, Elsie," he grumbled, "when a fellow calls for you."

"Depends upon what a fellow wants?" said Elsie, going with him nevertheless. She turned to Nell for a moment. "Why don't you try one?" she whispered. "I know what Tom wants.

"I promised to go out with him on the tandem, and Fred and Charlie are coming as well. You'll have a splendid chance, for we shall be away at least an hour." And away she ran, followed by Tom, and waving her hand encouragingly to Jack as she passed him in the hall.

Left alone, Nell stood thinking deeply, with one foot tapping gently upon the fender. Already she realised that she had taken up a wrong position. The ultimatum which had seemed so heroic twenty-four hours ago, was now a memory of which she felt rather ashamed. "I'm very glad he didn't give way to me," she murmured, and it was a great pity she didn't speak a little louder.

As for poor Jack, by-the-bye, who had received strict instructions to count twenty after he heard the striking of a match, he was beginning to "wobble" as Tom would have said.

The idea that had been with him throughout the conspiracy, now recurred with still greater force. He did not like to regain his Nell by means of a trick. It was all very well for Elsie and her brothers, to whom the whole affair was in the nature of a joke.

"I won't do it," he muttered, and turned to go.

"I won't do it," said Nell, as though echoing his thoughts, and Jack came to a standstill in amazement.

Nell also had made up her mind. If Jack liked to smoke he had a right to do so and she had no right to prevent him, especially as he was willing not to smoke when she was present. On the other hand, Nell started with a prejudice against tobacco, and to smoke a cigarette would probably not alter her feeling in the matter.

"I'll write to him and tell him I'm very sorry," she said, and sat down to the table with that intention. Jack heard this remark, and resolved to wait no longer. He walked into the room and found himself standing behind Nell, who was leaning forward to dip her pen in the ink. Knowing that the letter was for himself, he had no compunction in reading.

"My dear Jack," she wrote, and then threw the pen down in dismay. "Oh, I don't know how to write," she murmured. "But if he were here I could soon tell him all about it."

"Proceed," quoth Jack, and leant over her shoulder and kissed her.

Wal Frank.

Result of the "Verse" Competition.

The Gramophone prizes have been awarded as follows:

W. F. Pearson, 15 Shafton Road, South Hackney, N.E.; J. Perritt, 19 Russell Place, Norfolk Street, Hull; Mrs. Brownlie, St. Margaret's Manse, Hawick, N.B.; Captain Malam, Little Clacton, Essex; J. M. Andsley, 39 Caird Drive, Partickhill, Glasgow; F. Woolfall, "Meadows Hotel," Conway Street, Birkenhead; Mrs. E. B. Christie, Middletown Rectory, Tynan, Co. Armagh; H. Jackson, 10 Hamilton Road, New Brighton, Cheshire; J. H. Edwards, Rawnsley, Hednesford, Staffs.; W. Roberts, 2 New Cottages, Priory Road, Tonbridge.

Result of the "Request" Competition.

The Gramophone prizes have been awarded as follows:

J. Braidwood, 6 Gladstone Terrace, Edinburgh; R. Wright, 10 Gloster Place, Maindee, Newport, Mon.; C. Phillips, 20 The Terrace, Penzance; Miss M. Roe, 49 Newton Road, Ashton, Preston; F. J. Smart, 198 St. Saviours Road, Saltley, Birmingham; Miss F. Macintosh, Ambrose Villa, Milton Street, Southend-on-Sea; E. Moore, 69 Hamilton Road, Handsorth, Birmingham; M. E. Roe, Vineleigh, Billingshurst; H. Apps, 4 Chapel Street, Off Willow Home, Carlisle; W. Parfitt, 55 Glandwr Street, Abertillery, Newport, Mon.

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Starts in Two Weeks.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

30 Prizes of 10s. Each.

An entirely new competition will be placed before the public for the first time in "Short Stories" dated March 28th. It will be exceedingly simple, and will be open to every person who reads "Short Stories."

WHAT YOU WILL HAVE TO DO.

The competition will consist of paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom. You will have to write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of Railway Stations under the conditions stated.

The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

THE FIRST PARAGRAPHS WILL APPEAR IN *SHORT STORIES* DATED MARCH 28th. ORDER YOUR COPY NOW.

CHARLOTTE: "Oh, how slippery these rocks are. Take a good hold of my arm, John, and if I slip hold on like grim death; but if you slip, for goodness' sake let go."

PARVENU HOSTESS (to stable-boy, attired as waiter for the occasion of a dinner party): "James, why do you not fill Mr. de Gluttonne's glass?" James: "Lor', ma'am, what's the use? He empties it as fast as I fill it."

JONES: "I tell you, Miss Flywings is the most realistic actress I have ever seen." "How's that?" "Why, the other night, in the 'Maiden's Moon,' she laughed so bitterly that she had to eat a piece of sugar to get the taste out of her mouth."

MRS. WEATHERWAX: "I don't see where all the money comes from for these wars they are carrying on all over the earth?" Mr. Weatherwax: "I don't know myself, but it seems to me that map publishers ought to subscribe some of it, anyway."

"GOOD-DAY, Mrs. Brown, how is your husband this morning?" asked one countrywoman of another whose husband was ill. "Well, I think he's a bit better," was the reply. "He sat up for an hour yesterday, and had a little appetite. He ate a couple of chops, a veal and 'am pie, two helpings of apple pudding, and a snack o' cheese. I think by to-morrow he'll be able to swallow something substantial."

HE: "But couldn't you learn to love me, Ida?" She: "I don't think I could, George." He (reaching for his hat): "It was as I feared. You are too old to learn."

HER FATHER (coming suddenly into the room): "Eh, what is this?" Her Lover: "I was telling Miss Budd a story." Her Father: "With your arm round her waist? Her Lover: "Er—yes, sir. It was a love story."

"DON'T talk about life insurance companies to me," said Mrs. Waggles indignantly: "they aren't any good. Why, when my poor husband lay a-dyin' I sent word to the Profitable Assurance Company to come up and insure his life at once, and do you know the heathens wouldn't do it?"

LADY: "This house would suit me, but there are not enough cupboards." Landlord: "The number can easily be doubled." Lady: "Very well, then, I'll sign the lease." Landlord (half an hour later): "George, send a carpenter to that house to divide each of those cupboards into two."

A FRENCH lady who is on her first visit to England, was walking in Kew Gardens the other day. She was, on the whole, much pleased, but was greatly shocked at the notice, which she read at every turn, that "Birds-nesting is strictly forbidden." "How severe and cruel you are in this country," she at last sorrowfully exclaimed, "that even the little birds may not make their nests in your public gardens!"

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES. **YOU CAN BEGIN HERE.**

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

MY HEART'S DESIRE.

I AM a native of a seaside village in Cornwall. As I grew up I began to tire of the monotony of the life and determined to go out into the world and make a name for myself.

One day when I was in the ruins of the Old Keep, which is on the cliffs, meditating upon what I should do were I free to carve out my own destiny, two strangers appeared—evidently tourists, I thought. They told me they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood for a few days, and asked if I knew of any lodgings. I said that my father would be glad to put them up at the farm, and accordingly they came home with me.

I was delighted to find that they could tell me a great deal about the world I was so anxious to see. And you may be sure that I availed myself of every opportunity to learn what I could, and what they told me only fired my ambitions all the more.

Their names were the Honourable Robert Lestrange (commonly called Bobbie) and Di Northcote. Bobbie had just finished sowing an over-plentiful crop of wild oats, and had been sent off into the country under Mr. Northcote's care to be out of harm's way for a time.

I told these two Londoners of my desire to see the world. Bobbie encouraged me in my ambitions, but Di advised me to stay at home. This, however, was not at all in my line, as I told him, and when he saw that nothing would shake me from my resolve, he promised to try to find something for me to do when I arrived in the great city.

Though I did not like Di nearly so well as I did Bobbie, something instinctively seemed to draw me to him and caused me to look up to him.

I amused Bobbie and Di by my absolute ignorance of the world to which they belonged, and the latter warned me of some of the pitfalls into which a pretty girl—such as they told me I was—was liable to fall. I made up my mind that I would do marvellous things, and, if possible, become a great lady of the land—a duchess if possible.

First Experiences in London.

I HAVE only too great reason to remember my first arrival in London, for it was attended by very unlooked for, and none too pleasant experiences. The train was due at Waterloo about three, and as we drew near the city the atmosphere grew blacker and blacker, until it became as dark as night.

At first I was more curious than otherwise, this being my first glimpse of a genuine London fog, but when two other girls in the carriage began expressing anxious alarm as to whether certain of their friends would manage to get to the station to meet them, I grew frightened.

For I did not even know where I was going. In a letter, Bobbie had promised to get me lodgings and meet me, and I had simply left everything to him. Consequently, if anything happened to prevent his turning up, I should find myself in a very awkward plight.

Great was my relief, therefore, when, the moment I alighted, his well-known figure loomed out of the gloom and accosted me eagerly.

"How do you do, Miss Cardew?" he said, with evident pleasure. "This is a curious welcome and no mistake. London has put on one of her extra special best fogs in your honour. No doubt it is intended as a background to the brilliancy which she knows you bring with you," and he made me a little bow.

"I was getting so frightened lest you shouldn't get here," I said, not heeding his compliment. "Whatever should I have done?"

"It would certainly have been awkward, and I did have rather a bother. However, all's well that ends well—I've got you a comfortable bed-sitting-room in Bloomsbury, and Di has got you a job. He's going to call on you to-morrow morning. I hope you'll find plenty of soap, because he won't know you after this fog if you don't."

"Is Bloomsbury far?" I asked, beginning to choke and cough. "What a filthy atmosphere!"

"Oh, you'll get used to this," he laughed. "Sometimes we can't see each other in London for weeks on end. People come up from the country to live here because they love shops, and airing gay costumes—and this is what they get."

"When the fog lifts, you'll find you're nearly as black as a sweep. You had better take my arm, because if we got separated, we should not find each other easily."

"Where to, sir?" asked the porter carrying my box. "The underground railway is the best to-day, if it's at all in the right direction."

Digitized by Google

"Twenty-six Guilford Street, Bloomsbury," Bobbie read off a card. "It's the Russell Square end." He stopped to think a minute, adding, "No, we'll take a cab. The man who brought me here will manage it somehow."

We started off at a snail's pace, into what seemed a gulf of darkness, for the fog had come down suddenly, and very few of the street lamps had yet been lit. Bobbie chatted on, but I paid little heed to what he said, being far too anxious about our safe progress.

After some twenty minutes we came to a sudden standstill, and found two large drays had collided, blocking the whole road. The horses in both were getting unmanageable through fright, and we decided it was safest to alight for a few minutes.

I did not know Bobbie well enough then, but afterwards I understood how impossible it was for him to help going into the fray.

Whenever anything in any degree "untoward" happened in Bobbie's vicinity, he was bound to be in the thick of it, from a Royal procession to a street fight.

"Don't stir!" he exclaimed to me; "I must go to that horse's head."

It was all very well in theory, but when one of the dray horses appeared to be coming recklessly towards me, it was quite another thing in practice; and I turned and fled.

As a matter of fact it had merely been extricated from the harness, and a man was leading it; but, unnerved by the extraordinary darkness and half blinded by the fog, I imagined it had broken loose, and was coming straight down upon me. When I tried to get back a little later, I was hopelessly lost.

I tried a few steps first in one direction, and then another, without seeming to get anywhere, till at last I felt too frightened to move, and more inclined to sit down on the kerb and cry than anything.

While I stood trying to pull myself together and think of a plan, a tall, dark figure groped its way up to me, and turned to mount the steps of a house close by. At the top he paused, however, and finally came back.

"Are you lost?" he said politely, raising his hat. "Can I be of any service to you?"

"Oh, thank you!" I exclaimed, feeling as if an angel had dropped from the skies; "I am with a friend who is quite near, only I can't find him!" And I proceeded to relate what had happened, and explained my utter ignorance of London.

"Where is it you want to go?" he asked, and fortunately I remembered the address Bobbie had given the cabman, telling him at once. "Twenty-six Guilford Street, Bloomsbury."

"It is a long way off," he said. "I wonder if I could find your friend?"

"Oh, don't go away!" I cried; "you will never get back to me."

"I think the best plan for you will be to come in here, and see if the fog clears a little presently," he said at once, turning again to the steps; "you and your friend will never find each other as it is now."

I thought it was extremely kind of him, and followed gladly, too thankful not to be alone to care about anything else.

He led the way across the hall, and then ushered me into a small sitting-room, which was practically in darkness. When he had lighted the gas he turned and regarded me scrutinisingly with a pair of bold, black eyes.

I felt myself shrink a little, but attempted to appear at ease, and to glance casually round the room. Before I had got half way round, however, my eyes quickly sought the fireplace, and I felt my cheeks grow crimson. That was the first bachelor's den I had ever been into, and I had not yet learnt to appreciate high art.

"Won't you sit down," he said, pushing a chair towards the fire. "May I ring for some tea; the fog will not lift just yet, and it will help to drown the taste of it!" And he rang the bell without waiting for me to speak.

Not that I minded, for I was very tired and very hungry, and the idea of tea was most welcome.

When the servant came in, however, her expression as she glanced towards me, gave me an odd self-conscious feeling; and I remember I had a strong inclination to get up and box her ears. Why, I hardly know, but what with my host's continued scrutiny, and the maid's vaguely insinuating glance, I began to wonder what I had done.

On the chimney-piece were a quantity of photographs, chiefly of actresses, and, anxious to start a conversation, I picked one or two up and inquired about them.

My not knowing Ellen Terry when I saw her seemed to amuse him rather, and he asked me in a friendly way, where I came from. I told him "the wilds of Cornwall," and he bowed, remarking. "Very fair flowers grow in the wilds of Cornwall." Then he added: "May I ask why one of the fairest has been transplanted to this land of fog?"

"I have come to London to make my fortune," I said simply. "It is rather a weakness with the Cornish."

"It seems to me," he replied; "that if you are on a similar standing with a certain young lady in a well-known nursery rhyme, your fortune is already made."

Di coolly put on his eyeglass and looked at me again.

Digitized by Google

"It is what I have come to prove," I answered, and just then the servant entered with the tea-tray.

"You must do me the honour of pouring out," he said, and I did not know how to refuse, though I felt more and more that I was in a false position. At the same time my woman's love of pretty things was sufficiently strong to enable me to greatly appreciate the beautiful silver tray and tea service, and the exquisite china; and I could not restrain a certain pleasure at the prospect of dispensing the soothing cup under such circumstances.

I had never seen a silver tea-pot before, much less handled one, and this was dainty beyond words. I was much interested also in the crest and motto on the tray, and, curious to know the identity of my unlooked-for companion.

Tea proceeded pleasantly enough on the whole, except that I wished he would not stare so; but after tea he began to grow decidedly familiar. He talked to me in an easy, pointed way that I have since learnt how to take; but that afternoon I own I felt hopelessly at sea.

Meanwhile the fog continued in density, and the problem of my next move began to assume alarming dimensions.

"What shall I do if the fog doesn't lift?" I asked at last, unable to hide my anxiety any longer.

A curious expression crossed his eyes which frightened me a little, but he only said, "Oh, it is sure to lift presently. Are you tired of my company?"

I murmured something about being glad to get home, and then he produced a large album of photographic views, and asked me if I should care to look at it. I thought it would be an escape from a rather embarrassing conversation, and assented at once.

He then seated himself close beside me on the sofa, and opened the book upon our joint knees. I edged away at once; and he came a little nearer; and this continued at short intervals until I was on the extreme limit of the sofa.

Then my sense of humour saved the situation. I burst out laughing, and, getting up, crossed the room to the fire-place.

"I don't know much about London manners," I said, facing him squarely, "but so far they seem a little peculiar. If you want the whole of the sofa to yourself, why don't you say so, and have done with it."

He laughed too at that; then got up and came and stood on the rug beside me.

"I don't want it all to myself," he said, in a voice that I suppose was meant to be persuasive. "I don't want it at all without you, you little witch."

I made no reply, but I daresay I looked a little dangerous, for he added, in a conciliatory way—"But come! What would you like to do to beguile away the time?"

I crossed to the window and peered out into the fog. "I should like to try to get home," I said firmly.

Again he came and stood beside me, and again I was immediately possessed with a desire to get to the other side of the room.

At the first opportunity I carried out this desire. He followed me, however, and for about fifteen minutes we carried on a disjointed conversation, practically chasing each other round the room. Every time he came close to me, I moved away at once; and after a few moment's pause he followed me. At last I grew very angry, and giving my foot a little stamp, I exclaimed:

"Why can't you make up your mind where to sit, and stop there?"

"That is precisely the question I want to ask you," he said at once, with the utmost coolness.

"I think I will try to get home," I remarked, turning to pick up my coat, which I had taken off.

"It is quite impossible at present," he replied, and stepping forward hastily, put one hand over mine to prevent my getting into my coat.

I shook myself free angrily, and glared at him like some animal at bay. "I shall go at once," I said, "unless you sit down in that chair"—indicating the most distant one—"and stop there."

"In Cornwall," he said, with a slight sneer, "do the men take orders from strangers in their own homes?"

"In Cornwall," I retorted, "the men do not annoy a girl as you do. Had I known, nothing would have induced me to come in here."

He seemed amused.

"This is very mild," he said. "Personally, I consider that under the circumstances I have behaved remarkably well. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have kissed you before now."

"No, they wouldn't," I flashed out, "for I would have boxed their ears."

Again he was amused.

"They wouldn't have minded that," he said—"they like a bit of spirit. I've a good mind to risk it myself." And he took a step forward.

"If you dare," I gasped, and he halted.

"It isn't that I daren't," he said, "but you look so extraordinarily fine, I don't want to spoil the effect."

"You wretch!" I exclaimed, almost crying with rage. "I would rather be in a hundred fogs than here with you. I am going now."

But just at that moment there was a peal at the bell, and as I saw him glance towards the door wonderingly, I waited.

"If it is anyone to see me," he said, "you had better say you are my sister. I will introduce you so."

"You can please yourself about that," I said haughtily. "I shall certainly deny it at once."

"Don't be a little fool," he answered quickly. "It is the proper thing to do."

"I don't care in the least," was my retort. "I came here because I was lost in the fog, and if you don't tell the truth, I shall."

"Well, it won't make much difference," he sneered, "for they won't believe it."

I felt ready to fly at his throat for that, but just then the door opened, and in walked—Di Northcote.

For one moment I was delighted, and my immediate impulse was to dart forward. Suddenly, however, I felt myself grow hot with an unaccountable sense of guiltiness, and stood still silently.

"How do, Trevor?" he said, in his slow, lackadaisical fashion. "I though I'd——" Then he caught sight of me.

He made no exclamation at all, but he just stood still and looked at me. After the first few seconds, he coolly put on his eye-glass and looked again.

I grew hotter and hotter, though I was not aware that I had done anything to be ashamed of, and I tried to look straight back into his face.

"This is a most unexpected pleasure, Miss Cardew," he said sarcastically. "I did not know you had any friends in London."

"I had not," I blurted out. "I got lost in the fog, and this—this—gentleman," I hesitated purposely, "brought me in here."

"Oh, indeed!" with that same, delicate sneer, "And pray where is our friend Bobbie?"

"I don't know. We got separated, and I could not find him."

My rescuer then joined in.

"The lady was just outside my door," he said, "and I asked her to come in and wait a little, as it was impossible to find anyone, or get anywhere, just then."

Digitized by Google

"Oh, I quite understand," said Di, speaking very deliberately, "except that the fog has been practically nothing for quite half an hour."

"He said it was just as bad," I exclaimed. "I wanted to start long ago."

"Well you can do so now. I will take you to Bloomsbury myself. I just ran in, Trevor, to ask you to call at Queen's Gate to-morrow morning about those theatricals. There's a hitch somewhere, and the old Dowager wants to see you particularly."

"Right you are!" replied Trevor. "I'll go round early."

I had got into my coat by this time, and now turned at once to the door.

"Good-bye, Miss—Miss——?" said my late host, then paused and held out his hand.

"Good-bye!" I said frigidly, and with the slightest possible bow, hurried forward.

"I hope you will allow me the pleasure of seeing your fair friend again," he said to Di Northcote, as we stood waiting for a hansom. Something in his tone made me bite my lips angrily, and I saw Di flush slightly under his white skin.

"That will be entirely as Miss Cardew pleases," he answered coolly, and with a careless good-bye, escorted me down the steps.

"What a hateful man!" I exclaimed, as we drove off. "Are Londoners all like that?"

"I don't know that Londoners are very different from other men," he replied. "In most cases, what a man is depends a good deal upon whom he is with."

"Do you mean to imply?" I began indignantly.

"I don't mean anything," he said, "beyond a word of warning; but I should like to know what Bobbie is doing all this time? He ought to know how to take care of a girl better than this."

"It wasn't his fault. Besides, I am quite capable of taking care of myself."

"There I beg to differ. No girl who would go alone to the chambers of such a man as Cecil Trevor, or, indeed, to any strange man's chambers, is capable of taking care of herself!"

"You talk as if I went on purpose," I cried indignantly. "I believe you think——"

"Oh, no, I don't," he said carelessly. "I never think anything; it is far the wisest plan. Here we are, I daresay Bobbie is inside, awaiting the next turn of events."

He was quite right, for almost immediately his boyish form appeared in the doorway.

"Good Heavens, where have you been?" he exclaimed, grasping my hand. "I've had an awful time. It was no use looking for you in the fog, so I just came here and waited, hoping you would do the same. I never want such another hour in my life. And where, in the name of fortune, did you pick up Di?"

While he was still talking he led me into the room he had taken for me, and Mr. Northcote followed.

"I shall have to go," said the latter. "I have a dinner on to-night, and it is very late as it is. Good-bye, Miss Cardew, I will call to-morrow at eleven o'clock to tell you about the post I have secured for you." Then he nodded casually and hurried away.

"Well, what happened?" said Bobbie. "Sit down and tell me all about it."

He was lounging on the table himself, swinging one foot and regarding me questioningly. I told him how it was I got separated from him, and how I was frightened, and someone came to the rescue. When I related my going into the stranger's rooms, he muttered a surprised "By Jove!" then looked amused, in spite of himself.

"Mr. Northcote seemed angry," I said. "There was nothing very dreadful about it, was there?"

"Not under the circumstances, but it was rather rash. You don't happen to know who the chap was, do you?"

"Mr. Northcote called him 'Trevor.'"

"What! Cecil Trevor?" he cried quickly.

"Yes, that was the name—why?"

He gave a long, low whistle.

Then he threw back his head and burst out laughing.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "You have been into the lion's den. He's one of the worst men in London. I can't help laughing, it's really awfully funny to think of you going there. I'd have given a week's income to have seen Di's face when he found you. He simply hates Trevor—hates him like smoke. Oh, it's too funny!" and he laughed again. "I believe he would rather have found you at the police-station. Oh, good old Di! No wonder he looks distant and sarcastic!"

"Who is Mr. Trevor?" I asked, unable to resist a little curiosity.

"Not anyone who need interest you," said Bobbie, with boyish peremptoriness. "He's a bad lot!"

"He has some nice things," I said, a little mischievously.

"Oh, very likely! He's a duke's grandson, and he's got the 'oof,' but he's a low-down cad all the same. I don't think anything could have riled Di more than finding you with him."

"I don't see what it has to do with Mr. Northcote," I said obstinately. "I am not under his wing, and I am not going to be dictated to by him. He is very domineering. I don't like him."

"Oh, Di's all right! He's one of the best chaps going really, only he's a bit eccentric. He's beastly clever and philosophical, don't you know. That's why we call him Di—short for Diogenes. I don't know who Diogenes was, but he grew in a tub or something.

"I was so clever, you know, that they had to stop my studies for fear I learnt too much. They rather overdid it, because in the end I hardly knew anything at all."

"I don't think Mr. Northcote likes me," I went on. "He always makes me feel that he is sneering at me."

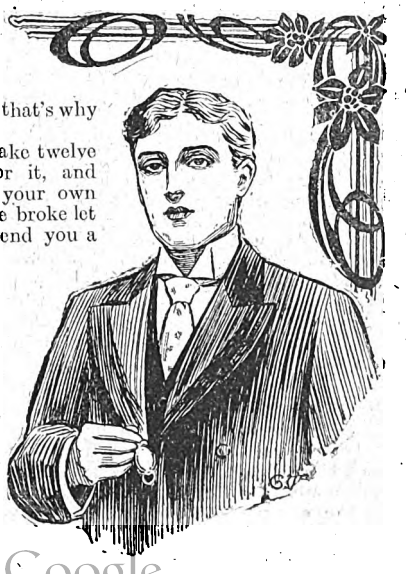
"Oh, that's only his way! He's just the same with everybody. You'll have to keep in with Di, you know, because he can do such a lot for you."

"Why can he do more than you?"

"Oh, well, you see, no one ever takes me seriously. I'm a kind of Society fool, whom they all pat on the back like a good little boy, and do just as they like with. The only marvel is no one has succeeded in landing me with a wife yet. Di, on the other hand, is a sort of high executioner. He tells everyone what ought to be done, and they do it. Even the mothers with marriageable daughters are afraid of Di."

"Why doesn't he marry?" I asked.

"Doesn't want to, I suppose! He'd take a bit of pleasing too, would Di. She'd have to be something very uncommon. Well, I suppose I ought to go now. A great pal of mine used to lodge in this house, and the landlady's rather a decent sort, that's why I took this room.



"She's going to take twelve shillings a week for it, and you've got to find your own grub. When you're broke let me know, and I'll send you a cheque to be repaid when you've married that nobleman you talked of," and he looked at me with a merry twinkle.

"You're awfully good, Bobbie," I said, not knowing how to thank him. "But I hope I'll soon earn some money, and not have to go to

Digitized by Google

anyone. What is the occupation Mr. Northcote has got for me?"

"Oh, he'll tell you all about it to-morrow! That's his province entirely. Mine is to look after you generally and see that you don't starve. When I fancy you look hungry I shall take you to have a good 'blow out,' don't you know, and if you're cold I'll bring round a sack of coals.

"It's beastly jolly nice to see you here, you know," he said boyishly. "Will you come out to-morrow afternoon to explore a bit of London?"

I agreed readily, and he went off looking very pleased.

I remember that first night so well. I had practically forgotten the unfortunate incidents of the day, and was all eagerness for the future. The very last thing I stood before the glass and looked at myself for a long time.

"Maud," I said, addressing my reflection, and gazing hard nto my own eyes, "remember, you are never to lose heart. Whatever goes wrong one day, make the best of it, and begin again. Pluck is the best friend you can have just now. Never be afraid, and you are sure to succeed. You have come to London to be famous, and you've got to do it all yourself." I threw back my head and laughed—it was a laugh of triumph.

"You have beauty, Maud," I said to the girl in the glass. "Beauty and brains, you needn't be afraid.

"For beauty is power," I finished, "and power is the thing that matters."

Well, I am not a duchess yet, but I am not ashamed to look that eager, ambitious girl in the face to-day, and that is saying something. What happened when Di Northcote called the next morning I must leave until another day, for I am expecting Bobbie, and if I don't want him to make his fifteenth proposal, I must have all my wits about me.

Not that I don't love him, for I do very much; I think he is just the sweetest boy alive. If I could dig a big hole (it would have to be a big one), and throw all my ambitions and aims into it, I would go up to the altar some fine morning with Bobbie, and we should come away the veriest couple of careless children that ever entered the holy estate of wedlock.

For Bobbie never knows anything about his affairs, and I know still less about mine. One month he will spend like a millionaire, and the next he will not have sixpence.

As for me, Di Northcote manages my money affairs. I really don't know why he should, for we are often not at all good friends, but somehow it answers well, and we just let things bide.

Sometimes when I am very bitter, I say I will break away from him, and I hold forth to myself, or Bobbie if he happens to be there, at great length about my innate hatred of him.

Bobbie always laughs and tells me not to be a fool, and "myself"—well, I can't understand "myself," only I am inclined to think she likes the man better than he deserves or else she is afraid to risk doing without him.

Heigho, but it's a weary world sometimes, even in the midst of success! My room is still heavy with the odour of the beautiful bouquets I brought home the evening before last.

This morning I went round picking out the dead blooms, and doing what I could to encourage the others to live on. And I couldn't help thinking they all seemed tired, as if it were such an effort to bloom in this heavy London atmosphere.

I am sometimes very tired too, and I put my face down among them, feeling like a country flower pining for its native air. I wondered for one wild moment if I would throw it all up, and go away with Bobbie to be careless and light-hearted, to make cowslip balls like children in the sun, and clamber about on the rocks.

A sudden wave of passionate home-sickness swept over me. "Shall I go?" I kept saying. "Shall I go? Bobbie, shall I throw it all up, and you and I go away together, and be like happy children in the sun?"

Well, it passed off, and I sit here again, beautifully dressed, and sip my tea contentedly from priceless china. And, if Bobbie makes that fifteenth proposal presently, I shall laugh at him, and pat his cheek and say, "Win or steal a Dukedom, Bobbie, then come back and fetch me to be your Duchess!"

(Next Tuesday I will tell you about my work.)

Your Editor Chats.

At the time of writing it has not been possible for me to receive any opinions on the merits of the two new features of last Tuesday's *Short Stories*—"Held Apart" and "The Confessions of a Self-made Girl"—but I have no fears that they will not be well received, and if they give you so much pleasure in the reading of them as they gave the authors in writing and myself in getting them I shall be quite satisfied.

The new competition is announced on page 335, and, as you will see, it is very simple and pleasant. It is a most fascinating as well as instructive occupation for the long evenings, and the prizes offered will amply repay the winners for the time spent in finding the correct solutions. The Index to Stations in Bradshaw's Guide, in which all the solutions to the puzzles are to be found, is the one which is being used in the great *Pearson's Weekly* £5 a Week for Life Competition, so if you are going in for that you will not need to purchase a new Index.

Below will be found Lady Peggy Carstairs' reply to the lady readers who objected to the statements she made regarding middle class wives in the articles "How I Chaperoned Belinda":

"To the Editor of *Short Stories*.

"Sir,—Your correspondents seem more concerned to attack me than interested to defend themselves. The facts stated in the article complained of came under my notice while residing in middle-class homes. Since I fell into straitened circumstances I have lived exclusively among the middle class, and have thus enjoyed unique opportunities of studying their women. Your middle class matron may or may not be a good mother—I did not raise that issue—but I say, and most emphatically, that the great majority are neither cheerful, sympathetic, helpful, nor appreciative wives.

"Your correspondents prove my assertions to a great extent; one and all they write—not as an indignant wife whose deepest feelings have been called in question—but as wearily tired mothers, so weighed with cares for their children that they have not time even to mention their poor husband! They stand self-convicted when they plead maternal solicitude as a justifiable reason for wifely neglect.

"If the women of the middle-class would give more time to their own clothes and less to the children's, if they would expend more thought on their own households and less on their neighbours', concern themselves more with their own faults than with those of 'Society' women, their homes might prove more attractive and their husbands look less careworn. I notice that your men correspondents fully indorse my statements. Alas! They have proved to their cost the truth of what I say.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) "Margaret Carstairs."

It is scarcely necessary for me to tell my readers that I do not at all agree with the views of Lady Peggy Carstairs on this subject. I publish her letter, however, to show how painfully ignorant a woman of her social status is of the genuine pleasures of life. She finds no happiness in middle-class homes—because her idea of happiness is one that does not appeal to the true British housewife. Nevertheless, I am sure that all those who have read "How I Chaperoned Belinda," will admit that money and gaiety do not bring true happiness.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

The Ghost of Gurnham Mine.

The Tale of a Narrow Escape.

He had failed! He stared at the girl, a savage glow in his dull eyes and his teeth set vindictively behind his red lips.

"I'll be even wi' ye!" he cried hoarsely at last, "I'll be even wi' ye, and that fool of a chap, as you've bin an' took up with o' late. Yo' shan't marry Tom Dashwood, not if I swings fo' it, yo' shan't."

He glared at her, his ugly, reckless face full of an evil light, and the girl fell away a little.

"Don't take it like that, Joe," she said gently. "I can't help liking him the best, and it's cruel to talk like that, even though you don't mean it——"

"But I do," he shouted hoarsely. "I do mean it. If yo' can't marry me yo' shan't marry 'im—a stranger as 'asn't bin in Gurnham six months. I tell yo' yo' shan't."

Bessie turned away and took a step across the dusty lane. Joe stopped her.

"Yo' hear what I say," he shouted again.

Bessie looked up. She was pale and trembling and afraid.

"Yes," she said unsteadily. "But I don't believe you. You wouldn't be unkind——"

He laughed hoarsely.

"Yo'll see," he cried. "It's toime 'e was gone, say I, and I tell yo' yo' ain't goin' to marry nobody but me."

She shrank from him again and this time he let her go, muttering hoarsely to himself as he watched her small, thin figure disappear round the bend of the lane.

She was met at the corner by a man, and Joe Ramsy's dark face grew still darker as he saw who it was.

"It's that chap agen," he muttered, and turned sharply on his heel and went back towards the village.

His face was very dark and hard when he came in sight of the irregular patch of small cottages at last.

He stood for a second, his eyes fixed savagely on the outbuildings and the tall chimney which stood between him and the mine in which he and most of the men in Gurnham worked. His brows knit together savagely as he looked. His teeth set.

"I'll 'ave 'im," he muttered. "'Im an' me's workin' together there a'most by ourselves in the shaft. There's on'y Bill, an' 'e'll 'elp me. 'E's got a grudge agen 'im' isself, an' I'll be even wi' 'im."

He ground out the last words aloud and as he did so a figure rose up from behind the hedge.

"Even with who, might I ask?" he said.

Joe started, turned sharply on his heel and flung out an oath.

"Mind yer own business," he shouted, and turning again strode quickly away.

Will Medwin stared after him.

"He means Tom, I'll bet," he said to himself. "He means mischief to Tom or my name's not what it is. Well, he'd better look out. Tom did me a good turn once and I shan't forget it—even though he wins the girl I love."

Her face flashed for a moment before his eyes—Bessie's face, girlish and bright, that he loved better than his life. He remembered, too, a certain look he had seen upon it, and the pain settled at his heart again. She loved Tom and what did his own pain matter? Tom once saved his life.

They had only been six months in Gurnham as Joe had said. They had come together and had remained there working shoulder by shoulder in the mine in which most of the Gurnham men earned their bread — Will, moody and taciturn, Tom, always cheerful, eager and happy.

But then he well might be, for the girl he loved loved him!

* * * *

It was black in the mine and Joe's lantern sent dim, dark shadows dancing over the dusky walls of shining coal. A narrow rail ran past him and bent away to the right. He walked along it for a little way and then turned in the other direction, followed by a man who had an uneasy look upon his sallow face.

Joe stopped at the narrow entrance and looked round furtively. They were alone at the end of the mine. He flashed his light along the narrow corridor and into the hollow cave. There was no one about. He could say what he had to say there without fear of anyone hearing, but all the same he lowered his voice and spoke in a whisper as he lifted the light of his lantern to the black roof above his head.

"Look," he whispered, "see that?"

Bill lifted his head and stared upwards. A long, narrow, uneven crack ran along the roof and down part of the wall, just at the entrance to the cave.

"See?" Joe whispered.

Bill stepped backwards.

"It wouldn't tak' much to mak' it coom down," he said, "a shout maybe 'ud bring it."

Joe nodded.

"That's it," he whispered. "Dy'e see now what I meant?"

There was an instant's silence. Bill stared hard into Joe's face, into his odd, dull eyes that were alight and glittering now.

"Not Tom Dashwood?" he cried. "You doan't mean as yo'll——"

He stopped short. He dared not speak the thought that rose to his mind, but Joe laughed.

"You'm mighty nash," he said. "Yes, it's Tom Dashwood I mean. 'E's to come in 'ere and that bit o' the roof's got t'fall on 'im and shut 'im in. D'ye see?"

Bill shivered. His face had whitened and his eyes glanced uneasily about the empty blackness. He wetted his dry lips and stepped a little farther away from Joe.

"Yo' cawn't mean it," he gasped.

"I tell yo' I do," said Joe, "and yo'll 'elp, or it'll be a bad look out for yer."

He stared steadily into Bill's terrified eyes, and Bill remem-

Google

bering certain unpleasant things that Joe knew, cringed suddenly.

"Oh, let us off this, Joe," he cried wildly. "Yo' doan't want me to 'elp—I couldn't do yo' no good—yo'll let me off, Joe?"

Joe set his teeth.

"Yo'll 'elp," he said doggedly. "Yo'll get Tom Dashwood inter this 'ere place to-morrow night, jest afore we go up, an' I shall be 'ere ter see as 'e is shut out o' the way. It's you as'll 'ave to bring 'im 'ere. 'E won't trust me, but 'e'll come for yo', and yo'll do it I tell yo', Bill."

Bill hesitated.

"It's all for nought," he whispered after a minute. "There ain't nought t' be got out o' it. An' us might swing fo' it."

"Us might," said Joe grimly, "but us won't. An' I tell yo' if 'e's once out o' the way Bessie'll marry me, and 'er uncle's got a bit o' money saved. There'll be a bit fo' yo' on our wedding day, Bill."

Bill's eyes hovered, wandered uneasily into the blackness of the pit and came back again. From the distance came the slow click click of a pick against the coal and the rattle of a car as it rolled along the rail.

"'Ow much would it be?" he asked at last.

"I'd promise yo' ten pun," Joe said, "ten pun an' p'raps more, an' we should be married afore Christmas."

Bill's eyes brightened and grew greedy. He looked back at the corridor and away from the cave.

"I'll do it," he said slowly, and then he began edging rapidly away from the yawning cave with the loose coal hanging over it.

It would be easy enough—ten pounds easily earned—to bring a man to that spot and push him in!

* * * * *

Bessie stood with her hand on Tom's shoulder, with her eyes looking up into his.

"Oh I don't trust him, Tom. He means ill to you. Promise me you'll take care, Tom?"

Tom laughed down at her. His face was full of the morning sunshine and he showed no trace of fear.

"Oh, you're a regular woman, Bess—full of fancies. But I'll take care, sweetheart. Never fear. He won't harm me."

"But he was so savage, Tom." Her eyes were serious and she refused to smile. "He frightens me. He swore he would marry me and he swore he would be even with me. Tom, darling, promise you won't even speak to him?"

Tom hesitated.

"It might make bad blood," he said, "but I promise if you're so set on it. I could manage to work away from him—at the far end of the shaft, and I will if it will make you feel happier, little woman?"

She sighed and he bent and kissed her and then set out for the pit.

It was early morning and there was a scent of hay and summer roses in the air, and the dreary blackness of the pit as he descended depressed him that morning. It seemed to him too that Joe, as he stood opposite to him in the "cage," had something ugly in his look as Bessie had said. Perhaps it was not all her imagination after all.

Still, Joe said nothing and the day passed without a word being exchanged between them. They worked in the same shaft, almost side by side.

They were expecting the whistle to sound every moment, when Bill edged up to Tom. His eyes, shifty and blood-shot, sank uneasily as Tom turned.

"Coom awa' from th' rest," he whispered. "I want t'speak t'ye."

Tom threw down his pick and straightened himself.

"What's the trouble now, Bill?" he asked.

Bill shuffled uneasily away from him, and shut his eyes and thoughts to the easy good nature of Tom's face, and the happy ring of his voice. He shut from him the thought of how soon that voice was to be silenced, and strode up the narrow corridor with his eyes on the black ground.

"Coom right away from them," he whispered again. "Right away so's they cawn't 'ear."

Tom obeyed unsuspectingly and they turned the bend out of sight, and went on up to the little cave where they were out of earshot too.

There Bill stopped.

"Hark ye, what was that?" he said abruptly.

It was the signal he and Joe had agreed upon, and as he spoke a dark figure sprang from the ground and tried to throw something over Tom's face. As he did so Tom staggered backwards, and his lantern which he had in his hand was dashed from him against the black wall.

There was a crash and then utter darkness, and Tom felt himself flung suddenly savagely to the floor.

He fell blindly, with a stunning crash, against a hard corner, and immediately everything grew confused. He was conscious of a dull rush of falling coal—instinct made him spring to his feet, and then a sudden blackness swept down upon him.

* * * * * *

When he opened his eyes it was to look round upon utter blackness. He drew a deep breath and tried to lift his head, but it was curiously heavy and ached maddeningly. He tried to cry out and could not. His lips were parched; his throat was dry and even to swallow was painful.

He lay still for a minute or two, and then made another effort and sat up. Where was he? His eyes strained through the darkness and could discover nothing. He put out his hands and groped blindly until they came in contact with a rough, dusty surface. Coal!

He caught his breath. He remembered now, and his heart began to beat. He remembered the struggle at the mouth of the cave—he remembered Bill and the face of Joe who had sprung at him suddenly out of the darkness. He remembered the rush of coal before he had become unconscious, and a sudden fear seized him. He was still in the mine, but where?

With an effort he raised himself to his knees and began groping painfully and blindly along. He crawled forward, his eyes trying to pierce the blackness ahead and seeing nothing!

He went on—on and on—his hands and knees blundering painfully over the uneven floor, and his heart throbbing—throbbing until it seemed to him that a thousand machines were at work within it.

How long he went on he did not know, but he fell exhausted at last with blackness still around him and machines still hammering at his head.

* * * * * *

A fall of coal in the mine and some men reported buried underneath!

A crowd of people stood at the pit's mouth, waiting with anxious faces for some further news. No one could tell as yet who had lost a husband, father or brother in the cruel pit, and they were waiting.

The report came soon enough. A fall of coal had completely blocked up the mouth of a small cave and part of a shaft, and men were required at once to set to work to force a way through.

There were plenty of volunteers and they worked all night through, without success. The fall had been heavier than

Digitized by Google

had been supposed and it seemed almost hopeless to find an entrance through the dead weight of solid coal.

But they worked hard and pluckily and they were still chopping at the black blocks when the men went down again next morning.

Joe and Bill were amongst them, Bill staring down into the black depths as if he were afraid, and Joe with an odd light in his eyes.

They were to work in a different place this morning—in a shaft at some distance away from the one in which the fall had taken place, and Joe, at least, was relieved.

He and Bill were side by side, and they had been working for some time with the other men at a short distance from them, when a sound made him look up. It was a sound like the shuffling of feet on the coal.

The sound came on, slowly, hesitatingly—scrape, scrape, over the rough floor. It made a weird accompaniment to the chip of the men's picks farther down the corridor, and a strange thrill ran down Joe's spine. Bill shrank back against the wall. He was afraid.

Joe stood, lantern in hand, waiting. And as he waited, peering into the darkness it seemed to him that there was an echo somewhere—a whisper that was carried from side to side of the shaft.

He drew a deep breath and something cold and clammy broke out upon his forehead. The light of the lantern began to shake and dance upon the shining black walls as his hand began to tremble, and there came to him a wild longing to scream.

Still he stood, and the slow shuffle of footsteps came nearer. Bill retreated backwards as it came. Then suddenly Joe dashed his lantern to the ground and turned.

His face was livid, his eyes were starting from his head.

He had seen the ghost of Tom Dashwood!

He turned and ran, shouting as he went. The other men who had been working with him ran too—back to the entrance and shouted wildly up the mouth of the pit.

When they got them up at last Bill was insensible and Joe was muttering something incoherent about Tom Dashwood—that he was lying buried underneath a heap of fallen coal—that he himself had pushed him in with his own hands and that his ghost was walking the mine!

The news circulated like wildfire—that the mine was haunted, and for some time none of the hands would venture down. A panic threatened, and then at last came a cage full of men bearing two bodies—the unconscious one of Will Medwin, and the half-fainting one of Tom Dashwood.

Will was carried straight to the hospital five miles away and Tom went to be tended by Bessie.

He was not hurt seriously, and in a day or two he was himself again, but with Will it was different and for weeks he hung between life and death.

When at last he was able to speak things became clear. He had been suspicious and afraid of Joe and he set to work to watch him, and when he saw him make for the cave he had followed him and lain in wait and watched.

When they had sprung upon Tom he had sprung too, dashing the lantern to the ground with the result that in the confusion Joe pushed *him* in the cave instead of Tom.

It was a narrow escape—so narrow that for many months afterwards Will felt the effects of it, and when Bessie and Tom came to see him she looked at his bandaged face with a shiver.

"You've saved my Tom's life," was all she said, but she could say no more for her heart was full, and she was thinking of Joe raving about his ghost in the county asylum.

Will looked up at them.

"It was only tit for tat," he said, "he saved *my* life once. And I knew Joe meant mischief."

Bessie's eyes were full.

"I shall never forget," she said. "It was my life as well as his for I couldn't ever live without him"—which flattery was enough to spoil any man, as Will told her.

But she says it hasn't spoilt Tom.

Annie O. Tibbits.

The Literary Editress.

And her Reply to the Humorous Editor.

The office boy came into the room of the Literary Editress, placed a letter upon her table, and quickly retired.

The busy little lady opened it mechanically, shaking it a bit as she did so and looking into the envelope for stray stamps.

The contribution was written in pencil upon a single sheet of "copy paper," and was as follows:

Office Humorous Editor,
Weekly Insanity.

Dear Miss Crit,—Please allow me to offer to you my Heart and Hand. Will you kindly consider as favourably as possible and accept if you find available, unless you are already more than supplied with offerings of a similar nature.

Very sincerely yours,
A. Blue Jester.

The little lady sat looking at the MS. for a long time, with a more pleased expression upon her face than was usual with her while examining the communications which came to her during office hours. At last she took from the pigeon holes in her desk two little printed forms, laid them side by side upon the desk before her, and gazed at them for a long time, with more interest than she usually bestowed upon them. They were inscribed as follows:

The Literary Editor of the *Weekly Insanity* takes pleasure in informing you that your..... is accepted with thanks.

The Literary Editor of the *Weekly Insanity* regrets that your.....is not available at this time. Rejection does not necessarily imply lack of merit, or that acceptance in some other quarter is improbable, but simply that what you offer does not just now seem desirable.

Neither of the forms seemed to fit the case exactly, and drawing a pad of paper towards her, she dashed off the following:

Office Literary Editor,
Weekly Insanity.

Dear Mr. Jester,—In declining unsolicited offerings, it has not hitherto been my custom to give any reasons for so doing—the great number received rendering individual comments impossible—but in the case of your "Heart and Hand" I feel that some explanation is due to you.

I have never before had occasion to consider a MS. such as yours, and, for once in my life, I am obliged to confess that I am somewhat at a loss. However, I think it best not to accept anything of the kind—for some time to come, at least.

There is, no doubt, good material in what you offer, but there are a hundred reasons, any one of which would prevent acceptance. True, I have not on hand, or engaged, anything of a similar nature, but at the same time the demand does not seem very pressing just at present.

Thanking you for the privilege of being allowed to consider your offering, and with regret that I do not find it available,

I remain, yours very truly,
Laura Crit.

P.S.—On sober second thoughts and a second reading, I have changed my mind; and, though not available just at present, if you care to wait a year or so for publication, will accept, with thanks, the "Heart and Hand" you offer. L. C.

And Miss Crit folded the sheet methodically, frowned slightly because Mr. Jester had neglected to inclose a self-addressed envelope, and a moment later the office boy was speeding down the corridor with a message which made the *Insanity's* humourist happy.

Arthur Worksop.

Digitized by Google

A 'Bus Driver's Story.

A Romance from Real Life of which he was a Witness.

THE other day I overheard a lady say to her companion as they sat on the front seat of my 'bus: "Dear me! how very monotonous the life of a 'bus driver must be!"

Her friend agreed with her, and they fell to thinking of other things. I couldn't help smiling to myself as I slowed up for a fat woman in blue, who was running frantically down a side street to catch my 'bus. I remembered the lady's remark as the fat woman climbed pantingly up the step and found a seat inside.

Monotonous? Well, yes, I suppose so, in a way. Day after day, week after week, month after month, and year upon year, I see the same streets, the same houses, the same people.

Long ago it got to be second nature for me to put on the brake, to stop and start, to wait for frantic fat women in blue, for feeble old men with canes, for worried mothers with their brood of half a dozen youngsters.

In my dreams I hear my conductor's short, sharp whistle, or his "All right," or his "Wait till the 'bus stops, lady!" which, by the way, always makes the lady cross—I wonder why?

Yes, I suppose a 'bus driver's life might be considered monotonous, but—well, we don't have much time for reading except the daily paper, but we sometimes see, lived out before our very eyes, a love story—a comedy—sometimes a tragedy.

It is more interesting than all the novels in the bookseller's shop!

They are live men and women—human, oh, how human!—creatures of flesh and blood, of joys and sorrows, of ups and downs; in fact, just commonplace, everyday people—like a 'bus driver, for instance. It is the best reading in the world, and books like these a fellow can read and earn his bread and butter at the same time.

When I first began to notice her she was a modest, brown-eyed little girl of perhaps seventeen, with an armful of dreary-looking books, going to school.

She always rode on my 'bus in the morning. There were always several school girls on the 'bus laughing, chattering, eating sweets—some of them—and casting coquettish glances—some of them—at my conductor, a good-looking young fellow.

They never gave me any of those laughing glances out of the corner of blue eyes or grey, for I'm old enough to have a girl of my own at school. God bless her! and there is a good sprinkling of silver in my hair.

But the little brown-eyed girl I'm telling you of—the other girls called her "Ruth"—was modest and quiet and well-bred—always.

You couldn't look at her without thinking of something pure and clean—a wild rose or a violet, or some such thing.

You wanted to pat her shoulder, or smooth her brown hair, or be good to her in some way or other. Now, you wouldn't believe a 'bus driver would be so susceptible to the charms of a simple little schoolgirl, would you?

When I first began to notice Smith, he was a clear-eyed, laughing-faced young fellow of about twenty-two. He worked in the City in one of the banks.

I don't know just what he had to do, neither do you care, but he always took my 'bus, and after a little I noticed him looking a good deal at Ruth.

Well, you know how such things will go on and on. It went on for a whole year right under my eyes. Neither of them dreamt the 'bus driver was watching and listening.

Smith was in love with the girl—that was as plain as she was pretty. Blame him? I'd have blamed him if he wasn't.

Well, it was as pretty a little romance as you ever read in a popular novel. She wasn't the flirty kind, you understand—just a dear little, commonplace, everyday sort of a girl that loved her mother and wasn't ashamed of her father!

One morning someone introduced them, and after that everything went on as smooth as glass. At the end of a year they were married.

In the first weeks of their honeymoon she often rode down on the 'bus with him in the morning, and if ever I saw a happy pair it was that pair! You'd think there couldn't a thing happen to cast a shadow on such happiness, but——

Well, they hired a pretty house on the line of route, and almost every time my 'bus passed I could catch glimpses of the little bride. Sometimes with a big, white apron on, sweeping the steps, sometimes picking violets from the bed in front of the house, sometimes chatting with a neighbour over the fence, as women dearly love to do.

Whatever she was about she was sweet and dainty and fresh as a wild rose.

I grew to look for her whenever my 'bus drove past, and somehow the house didn't look just natural when she wasn't in sight. Now, you wouldn't believe, would you, that a commonplace 'bus driver could be so sentimental?

That shadow I was speaking of a while ago—well, it came.

Smith was a jovial young fellow, and I suppose he couldn't say "no" when the gay set he fell in with said 'Come on Smith, it's my treat!"—much less when they said, "Smith, it's your treat this time!"

I suppose he began just like ten thousand other fine fellows, a little at a time, until—well, this isn't a temperance lecture, just an everyday sort of story of a man named Smith and the best and dearest little woman who ever bore that familiar name.

One night he rode home on my 'bus at 11 o'clock. I slowed up in front of the house and watched him get off. He was—well, he wasn't himself, that's all.

The front door was open and the red-shaded lamp shone out its bright welcome. A girlish figure ran down the steps and out to the gate. She had on a white dress, and her brown hair was hanging in one long braid.

She ran up to him and held out her hands.

Digitized by Google

"Jack! Jack!" she cried; "oh, I've been so anxious——"

I could hear Jack's thick voice trying to tell her something as he staggered in at the gate. And then I went on and left them. Do you know, I had a real heartache? Honestly, I did. That little girl—that tipsy fellow——

When my 'bus came back past the house, the red lamp was out. I wondered if she wasn't crying somewhere alone in the dark!

I wished I had hold of Smith; it seemed to me as though I would give a month's wages to shake him till his teeth chattered! And still—poor fool! his worst fault was his unfailing good-nature and his weakness of will.

Often and often after that I had to see the little tragedy played over again. She would come out to the street to meet him—always. Once, when he was worse than usual, she turned up to me such a white, pleading little face that I choked all up. I tell you, if ever there was heartache in a pair of brown eyes, I saw it that night.

After a while Smith lost his position at the bank, and hung about at home for a while with nothing to do. When he kept away from the city and his gay friends, he seemed to do better.

I saw him at work, mowing the lawn in his shirt sleeves, tying up her rose bushes and making lettuce and onion beds in the small garden at the back of the house.

She was sometimes out with him in her pink sunbonnet, helping here and there, and watching him with sad, brown eyes. Strange how two short years can take the sparkle out of a pair of brown eyes and the rose colour out of a face!

One day the doctor's horse and trap stood at the gate, and it looked strangely quiet about the place.

A few days later my heart gave a sudden jump as I went by, for out on the line, at the back of the house, hung a lot of snow-white baby clothes—little shirts and dresses, you know, and all that sort of thing—and there was a motherly old face at the window, smiling over a little bundle of white flannel on her lap. You see, the house is near the street, and a fellow can't help seeing.

Well, do you know, it's a fact that what even those soft, brown eyes couldn't do with that fellow Smith, a pair of little red fists did do. It's a fact that Smith braced himself up and became a good deal of a man.

When the baby was a week old he swung himself on to my 'bus and went back to his work in the bank. It seemed the bank folks liked him, and were willing to take him back on trial.

I smiled at the happy-faced young fellow as he sang out "hello" to me, as usual, and I said "there never was another like it, I suppose?"

He grinned all over, and blushed like a girl.

"You just ought to see him!" he said. "He's a fine, big fellow—weighs ten pounds. She's named him 'Jack,' after his dad! Original-sounding name, isn't it?—Jack Smith." He laughed. Smith always had a wholesome laugh.

Well, that was three years ago. Smith is all right yet, and I've got over worrying about him.

For a time I'll own I was pretty anxious about the chap. I've seen so many cases of relapse, and all that, you know, but Smith held out and behaved himself, like the fine fellow he is.

Smith and his wife and little Jack ride with me pretty often. On Sunday afternoon they go to the park. At Christmas-time they take the youngster to town to see Santa Claus at the big shops.

They always have a pleasant word for the driver as they sit down on the front seat of my 'bus, and more than once the little fellow has handed me down a bunch of violets with his father's own smile—a smile that shows the nicest little white teeth and two dimples in a pair of rose-tinted cheeks.

His eyes are brown—like hers—but he is his father's image in everything else. And that little woman—well, well, the happiness of that honeymoon wasn't a patch to the happiness of to-day, and I know it!

Yes, I think there are few things more monotonous than the life of a 'bus driver, but—well I don't know!

H. F. Crocker.

Better be sure than sorry.

Take BOVRIL

and prevent

INFLUENZA

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

A Romance of To-day.

By LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.

Piecing the Puzzle.

THE two waited to hear no more. They ran upstairs and Talbot would twice have fallen had not Brett supported him.

Reaching the corridor which contained their apartments, they found Sir Hubert, Lord Fairholme, Daubeney, and Mr. Winter, standing silently, a sorrowful, motionless group, outside Edith's room.

"What terrible thing has happened?" Brett asked them. "Surely Miss Talbot cannot be seriously hurt?"

The only one who could answer was Mr. Winter.

"We hope not sir," he said, "but the doctors will be here in a moment. They are extracting the bullet now."

Before the bewildered barrister could frame another question the door of Edith's room opened noiselessly, and two Italian gentlemen emerged. One of them spoke English well.

He addressed himself to Sir Hubert Fitzjames.

"I am glad to tell you," he said cheerfully, "that the young lady's wound is not at all dangerous. It looks worse than it is. Most fortunately, the bullet first struck a large bone button on her coat. This, combined with the thick woollen material, and some small amount of padding placed beneath the collar by the maker, offered such resistance that the bullet lodged itself against the collar bone without breaking it. Consequently, although the wound has a nasty appearance, it is not at all serious. The young lady herself makes light of it. Indeed, she thought that an anæsthetic was unnecessary, but of course we administered one prior to extraction and she is now resting quietly."

"You are not deceiving us, doctor? Tell us the truth, for Heaven's sake." It was Fairholme's voice, broken and hollow, that so fiercely uttered these words.

The kindly doctor turned and placed his hand upon the earl's shoulder.

"I would not dream of such a thing," he answered. "It would be cruel to raise false hopes if the young lady's condition were really dangerous. Believe me, there is nothing to fear. With the careful attention she will receive, she will be well able to travel within a week, though, of course, the wound will not be fully healed for a lengthy period."

Sir Hubert managed to stammer:

"When can we see her?"

"As soon as she wakes from sleep. We have given her a small draught, you understand, to secure complete rest after the shock of the operation. My colleague and I will return here at eight o'clock, and then there will probably be no reason why you should not speak to her. Meanwhile be confident; there is absolutely no cause for alarm."

With this reassuring statement they had perforce to rest content. The medical men were about to take their departure when Brett intervened:

"There is yet another patient who requires your attention, gentlemen," he said. "You will find him in room No. 41. He is suffering from a broken arm and other injuries."

The doctors hurried off, and it was not long before they were able to make a satisfactory report concerning Dubois.

"The fracture of the ulna is a simple one," said the spokesman, "and will become all right in the ordinary course of nature. But what happened to the man's face?"

"He settled a slight dispute with my friend here," said Brett, indicating Talbot, who was leaning with his head wearily resting upon his hands, for the accident to Edith had utterly unnerved her brother.

"Then all I can say," remarked the doctor, when he took his leave, "is that the settlement was complete. Whatever the debt may have been, it is paid in full!"

The Englishmen were now safe in the seculsion of a private room, so Brett resolved to arouse Talbot from the stupor which had settled upon him.

"Listen to me, Jack," he said. "You must pull yourself together. Don't forget you have an important trust to discharge. Our first duty is to ascertain whether or not the diamonds are intact."

He laid on the table the belt taken from Dubois, and lifted out its precious contents with careful exactness.

The men crowded around, for even amidst the exciting events of the hour, the sight of the fateful stones which had caused so much turmoil and bloodshed could not fail to be deeply interesting.

Predominant amongst them was the Imperial diamond, luminous, gigantic, awesome in its potentialities. Its size and known value rendered it one of the most remarkable objects in the world, whilst even in its present unfinished state the facets already cut by the workmen gave evidence of its brilliant purity.

Pulling himself together by an effort, Talbot advanced to the table and slowly counted the stones. There were fifty-one all told, and even the smallest of the collection was a diamond of great value.

"Yes," he said, "that is the correct number. I cannot be certain, but I believe they are the originals. The big one certainly is. It will be one of the happiest days of my life when I see the last of them."

"That day will arrive soon," remarked Brett quietly. "You and I, Mr. Winter, must sail on the *Blue-Bell* to-night for Marseilles. That is, if Mr. Daubeney is agreeable," he added, turning to that worthy gentleman, whose face was a trifle paler than it had been for years.

"I am at your service, gentlemen," he announced promptly.

"But what about Fairholme and the young lady?" he went on, turning to Sir Hubert.

"I think I understand," replied the baronet. "Mr.

Digitized by Google

Brett means that these wretched diamonds should pass officially out of the control of the British Government as early as possible."

The barrister nodded.

"That being so, no time should be lost. Edith, should all go well, will in any event be compelled to remain here for several days before she can be removed. You, Jack, and you, Mr. Brett, should you so desire, can easily return here from London, after having fulfilled the trust reposed in you."

"Then I only make one stipulation," put in Daubeney quickly. "The *Blue-Bell* will remain in Marseilles and bring you back."

Dubois Explains.

His eagerness evoked a quiet smile all round, and it was generally agreed that this programme should be followed. In the brief discussion which followed, Mr. Winter explained his earlier movements. The detectives attached to the British Embassy in Paris told him of Dubois' journey to Marseilles.

Learning that Brett was staying at the Hotel du Louvre et de la Paix, he went straight there on his arrival, only to learn that the barrister and some friends had quitted Marseilles that day on a private yacht bound for Palermo. The local police filled in some of the details, but chance did the rest.

Going to the P. and O. office to book his passage to Messina on the *Ganges*, he heard of Grosjean and the Turks, and then knew that he was on the right scent.

There was a touching meeting between Edith and the others that evening. She was naturally pale and weak, but her buoyant spirit triumphed over physical defects, and she made light of her injuries.

Even Fairholme was restored to a state of sanity by his brief visit, a fact that was evidenced by his quiet enjoyment of a cigar when he walked down to the quay to witness the departure of the *Blue-Bell*.

Before leaving Palermo Brett had another interview with the Chief of Police, the result being that unobtrusive but effective means were taken to safeguard the different members of the gang which had caused so much personal suffering and diplomatic uneasiness.

The reception of the party in London may be detailed in a sentence.

The Turkish Ambassador was specially instructed from Constantinople to take charge of the diamonds, and Talbot had the keen satisfaction of personally handing them over to the Sultan's representative, in the presence of his chief, at the Foreign Office.

The unlucky gems were forthwith taken back to their owner, and no doubt repose at this moment in a special reliquary, together with other mementoes of the Prophet, for the project which led to their first visit to London was definitely abandoned.

Meanwhile daily telegrams from Palermo assured Talbot and Brett as to the continued progress of the fair sufferer, who had so nearly sacrificed her life in her devoted championship of her brother's cause.

At last a day came when the *Blue-Bell* again steamed into the harbour of Palermo, and the manner in which Fairholme shouted when he caught sight of Daubeney standing on the bridge was in itself sufficient indication that all had gone well during their absence.

The travellers were surprised and delighted to find Edith herself seated in a carriage with her uncle on the wharf. Were it not that she was a trifle pale, and her right arm was tightly strapped across her breast to prevent any movement of the injured shoulder, no one could have guessed that she had recently undergone such a terrible experience.

But Brett, delighted as he was to meet his friends again under such pleasant conditions, experienced the keenest sentiments of triumphant elation when he entered the apartment where Dubois was still confined under the watchful guard of two detectives.

Talbot accompanied him. The young Englishman had by

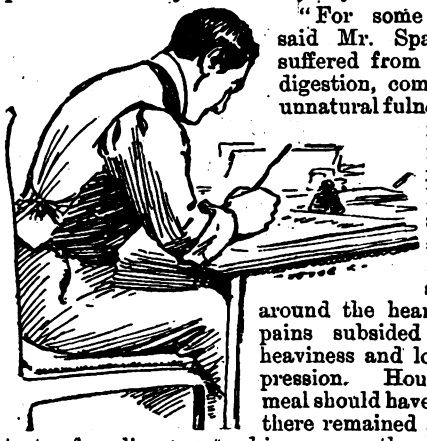
Life Was a Burden.

A TICKET WRITER'S AGONY BANISHED BY BILE BEANS.

INDIGESTION, CONSTIPATION, AND BAD BREATH CURED.

To all sufferers the story of how Mr. Frank John Sparks, of 76 Middle Street, Southsea, was cured by Bile Beans for Biliousness should appeal with overwhelming force.

Mr. Sparks communicated with a representative of the *Southern Daily Mail*, to whom he stated that he was employed as a ticket and show-card writer at an establishment in Russell Street, Southsea, and his occupation kept him in confined space and a sitting position for many hours every day without a break.



"For some years past," said Mr. Sparks, "I have suffered from attacks of indigestion, commencing with unnatural fulness after meals, followed by flatulence, a feeling of a heavy weight at the chest, sharp pains between the shoulders and around the heart. When the pains subsided they left a heaviness and low-spirited depression. Hours after one meal should have been digested there remained a disagreeable taste of undigested food in my mouth. Meantime the flatulence increased, gases seemed to accumulate, giving me severe pains moving about the lower part of the body, and a heavy, sinking sensation in the pit of the stomach. I was stubbornly constipated, and believing this to be the secret of my whole condition, I tried various opening medicines. The effect of these were only momentary and left me soon after more costive than before. I gradually became worse, until it was impossible to take an interest in my work—life, in fact, was a burden.

"A pamphlet about Bile Beans fell into my hands, and I found in it descriptions of cases so like mine that had been cured that I was led to try the Beans. They quickly rid me of constipation, and kept me free from wind and disagreeable sensation. A few weeks' continuance of the use of Bile Beans completely changed me into a bright, healthy, light-hearted fellow. Though I have been cured months now I take a Bean occasionally, as I find they keep me in splendid form. They are, indeed, a wonderful medicine."

Again and again Bile Beans have been shown to be an absolute specific for indigestion, constipation, fulness after eating, bad breath, heaviness, drowsiness, biliousness, headache, weakness, liver and kidney disorders, pains in the side, loins, and back, piles, dizziness, sleeplessness, anæmia, and all female ailments. Also for colds, chill, neuralgia, lumbago, rheumatism, and influenza. Bile Beans may be had of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., on receipt of prices, 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. (2s. 9d. box contains three times 1s. 1½d. size).

Digitized by Google

this time quite forgiven his enemy. He felt that he was more than quits with him. Indeed he was the first to speak when they came together.

"I am sorry to see it is your turn to be trussed up in bed, Dubois," he said. "How are you feeling now? Getting along all right, I hope."

The Frenchman did not answer him directly. A faint smile illumined his pale face. He turned to Brett with a nonchalant question:

"Mr. Brett, have you any influence with those two worthy Italian doctors?"

"Perhaps," said the barrister. "What is it you want?"

"I want a cigarette. They won't let me smoke. Surely to goodness, a cigarette won't hurt my arm."

The barrister turned a questioning glance towards the male nurse in charge of the patient, but the man did not understand what had been said.

Brett, who spoke no Italian, indicated by pantomime what it was the Frenchman required, and the attendant signified his sentiments in silent eloquence—he turned and looked out of the window. So Dubois enjoyed his cigarette in peace. He gave a sigh of great contentment, and then said, lazily:

"Now, ask me anything you like. I am ready."

"There is only one point concerning which I am really at fault," began Brett. "How did your Turkish associates manage to murder Mehemet Ali and his secretaries so quietly?"

"Oh, that was easy enough," declared the Frenchman. "You understand I was in no way responsible for the bloodletting, and indeed strongly disapproved of it."

"Yes," replied the barrister. "I believe that."

"Well, the rest of the business was simplicity itself. Hussein—the Envoy's confidential servant—was in our pay. It was, of course, absolutely necessary to have an accomplice in the house, and his price was a small one—five hundred pounds, I think. The credentials we brought, which you, Mr. Talbot, examined were not forgeries."

"How can that be?" cried Jack. "The Sultan would never be a party to a plot for his own undoing."

"Don't ask me for explanations I cannot give," responded Dubois coolly. "The exact facts of this story can only be ascertained at Yildiz Kiosk, and I do not suppose that anyone there will ever tell you. No doubt you saw for yourself that Mehemet Ali was convinced. Were it not for you, he would have given up control that night. But you and your policemen, and your confounded English notions of right and wrong, rendered necessary the adoption of the second part of the plan we had decided upon, in case the first by chance miscarried. After I left the house with you, Hussein brought in more coffee. That which he and my Turkish friends drank was all right. The beverage given to Mehemet Ali and his secretaries was drugged."

"Ah," interrupted Brett, "that explains everything. But why was Hussein killed?"

"That is another matter, which only a Turk can explain. These fellows believe in the knife or a piece of whipcord as ending unpleasant difficulties most effectually. You see they were not ordinary rogues. They pretended to be conspirators actuated by pure political motives—motives which a common servant like Hussein could not really be expected to understand. So to close his mouth thoroughly they stabbed him whilst he was taking some loose cash from his master's pockets. Then it occurred to them that when Mehemet Ali and the others recovered from the effects of the drug, they also would be able to throw an unpleasantly strong light upon the complicity of certain high personages in Constantinople. This was sufficient reason for the adoption of strong measures, so they also were peacefully dispatched."

"But where did the knife come from?" pursued Brett. "It was not in their possession when they entered, nor when they left."

"No; of course not. Hussein brought it himself, to be used in case of necessity. He also brought the pliers, which cut the wire blinds, and the material used for concealing the broken strands subsequently. Hussein was really an excellent confederate, and I was furious when I heard that he was dead. You know how the diamonds were abstracted from the house?"

"Yes," said Brett. "They were made up into a parcel and flung through the window into the park. The knife and pliers accompanied them, I suppose?"

"The third Turk—the gentleman who pulled you down on to the bed so unceremoniously, Mr. Talbot—was waiting there for the packet. But he had to hide in the park all the night, until the gates were opened in the morning. It was a ticklish business right through. I did not know at what hour the police might discover the extent of the crime. The diamonds did not reach me until seven o'clock. And then I had some difficulty in persuading the Turks to give them up to me. You see, I had my own little plan, too, which these excellent gentlemen never suspected, as they already had paid me £5,000 for my help. But the real heads of the party were in Paris, Hussein ul Mulk and that gang, you know, and by representing the danger to their cause which would result from any attempt on the part of the Turks in London to reach France, they were at last persuaded. By nine o'clock that morning I got them safely off to the docks, where they boarded a vessel bound for Smyrna. Their passages were already booked in Armenian names. Grosjean, who had no connection with the affair personally, stayed at a small hotel in Soho in order to report all clear during the next few days. He happened by chance to travel with you and the other man. It was a clever scheme, I assure you, from beginning to end. By the way, may I trouble you for another cigarette?"

(To be concluded next week.)

HOW and WHAT to DANCE.

By W. LAMB.

Containing complete instructions in the Art of Dancing, including all the latest and fashionable square dances and skirt dancing.

Price 1/-, Post free 1/2.

PEARSON'S FORTUNE TELLER.

BY

Prof. P. R. S. FOLI.

Some of the subjects in the book are:

What birds foretell—Gipsy fortune-tellers' card reading—Charms—Crystal gazing—Psychometry, advice and hints for beginners—Lucky tars, etc., etc.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, 1/-, Post free 1/2.

ORDER FORM

To the Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of
"How and What to Dance," for which I inclose 1s. 2d.
"Pearson's Fortune Teller" " " " 1s. 2d.

Name.....

Address.....

Digitized by Google

HYPNOTISM

Its Increasing Use in Daily Life, by English People.

No Longer a Secret Art, But Now In the Hands of Thousands.

A London Publishing House Distributing Free Books on Hypnotism.

Some Strange Secrets of Personal Influence Laid Bare.

The London office of a well-known publishing house is creating a deal of surprised interest here in the subject of hypnotism and allied science by the novel method of giving away books absolutely free. By merely writing to the Psychic Research Publishing Company, Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C., you can, according to their advertisement, receive by return post a most remarkable, fascinating, and instructive illustrated book called "The Power Within." This book and accompanying literature contain some most startling information, setting forth not only how to set about it to learn hypnotism at your own home, but revealing the fact that this mysterious art is now actually being used to advantage by English people in daily life.

According to the publishers, the aim of this startling little free book is to answer such questions as occur to all interested in the mysterious relation between mind and matter.

Such questions as these, for instance:—Can I learn how to hypnotise? Why is the art not more widely known? Just how should I set about it to learn at home, and practise it? Is instantaneous hypnotism possible? What is "personal magnetism," and how is it acquired? What is the mysterious secret of the wonderful success and influence of certain people who seem most ordinary in other ways? Is there really a scientific mode of life or thought which attracts health, success, and happiness? Is it possible to thus radically change one's whole life in a few days, as many claim to have done? Is it true that humanity in general is, in a sense, hypnotised by conventionality and thus blinded to splendid opportunities for success and happiness which lie on every hand? What can I do to arouse myself from this "hypnosis of custom," and rise to the attainments which my natural ability would warrant? What must I do to become a hypnotist? To develop a magnetic, attractive, forceful character? To acquire courage, ambition, cheerfulness? To kill fear and worry? To make myself a source of happiness and inspiration to my friends?

The reader will readily see that a book, especially a free book, dealing with such vitally interesting subjects as these is arousing a lively demand, and the edition provided by the Company is being rapidly exhausted. To obtain this book, which is entitled "The Power Within," it is only necessary to send your plainly written name and address, enclosing a penny stamp for return postage, to the Psychic Research Company (Dept. 437), Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C.

As the nature of the contents of this book is of such vital interest and importance to many, it is requested that no one write out of mere curiosity. It is desired to supply the book only to those having a genuine wish to be informed on these subjects.

BORAX
DRY SOAP.

You can always tell

the house in which Borax Dry Soap is regularly used. There's a pleasant healthy sweetness pervading it which is distinctive. No other powder soap has the desirable antiseptic quality of Borax Dry Soap—a quality which cannot be overrated now that epidemic disease is rife.

Servants prefer it because it helps them wash clothes perfectly with the minimum of effort.

It restores the sparkle to grubby plate and culinary utensils, the lustre to glass, the freshness to woodwork and paint, and brightens all the house like a flood of sunshine.

Particular housewives buy no other.

Why not say: BORAX, and get the best?

Sold at usual dry soap prices by Grocers and Stores everywhere.

FREE SAMPLE PACKET AND SOME NOVELTIES if you name this paper and your grocer.

Facsimile Packet.

By Special Appointment Makers to the King.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham.

SMART JACKET

Direct from the Actual Maker.

NOTE the Excellence of the STYLE
NOTE the Excellence of the MAKE
NOTE the Smartness of the CUT

and if the value doesn't satisfy, ask us to return your money—we'll do so with pleasure.

This Smart Chesterfield
MODEL 1735.
has the new wide sleeves and full sac back, supplied in Grey Tweed only. Length 36 ins. Price 10/6. Carriage 6d. extra. 10/6

A Full Dress Length
of J.N. Cheviot Serge (6 yds., 52 ins. wide) for 7/6. Carriage 6d. COLOURS: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, &c. 7/6

10/6

JOHN NOBLE LTD
148 BROOK ST MILLS MANCHESTER

MACKINTOSH'S
IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.
EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

CHILDREN'S COUGHS

RAPIDLY CURED BY

VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE.

An Eminent London Authoress Strongly Recommends It.

Ministers, doctors, and analysts, besides an army of less important persons, have written strongly recommending Veno's Lightning Cough Cure. The great reputation of this remedy is now too well-known to require much further proof of its vast superiority in all chest, throat, and lung diseases in children or adults. No more reliable authority on health subjects can be quoted than

Mrs. ADA S. BALLIN, 18 Somerset Street, Portman Square, London, W., Editoress of *Womanhood*. She writes:—"Veno's Lightning Cough Cure is an exceedingly successful remedy; it is very pleasant to take, and the relief it gives is very rapid. The preparation is perfectly safe for children."

GEO. KNOX, 256 Second Avenue, Pittsburg, writes:—"Veno's Lightning Cough Cure excels in children's coughs and bronchitis, and is especially good for children."

VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE is a new scientific remedy prepared in one of the most modern laboratories in the world from ingredients which are not generally known in Great Britain. It is most effective in both acute and chronic cases of coughs, colds, whooping cough, asthma, bronchitis, catarrh, influenza and weak lungs.

Ask for Veno's Lightning Cough Cure. Price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle. Sold at all Chemists, or post free from

THE VENO DRUG CO., HULME, MANCHESTER.

There is a crisp **£5** note waiting

for the reader who displays most interest and energy in Masters' Novel Birthday Booklet Competition.

There is no element of chance!

There is no guessing!

Masters' Bridal Birthday Book

is a Free Gift, and is in itself a perfect Gold-mine of information as to Lucky Birthday Gems and their significance, and valuable hints to lovers as to Secret Posies, and other circumstances of courtship, whilst the £5 note is an actual and genuine prize to the fortunate individual who succeeds simply in obtaining the greatest number of bona-fide Birthday Signatures of friends and aquaintances in the spaces provided. The object of the Prize being to make Masters' name known as widely as possible amongst your friends.

Masters' Beautiful Birthday Booklet, a charming Natal Souvenir, is sent free to anyone applying for a copy and kindly mentioning that you saw the advertisement in *Short Stories*. Address your application (a post-card will do) to

MASTERS LTD., 157 HIGH STREET, RYE, SUSSEX, ENGLAND.

MERLIN CYCLES

MARVELLOUS VALUE A HIGH GRADE £10 10 0 Cycle for £5 19 6. Free Wheel and Back-pedal Brake.

Brand New Guaranteed Pneumatic-tyred Cycles for £3 19 6

Merlin Cycles are always good, no matter what price you pay.

MERLIN CYCLE Co., Martineau St, Birmingham

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive **Free** on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU—
NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at 2d. each, making 4/- altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Thimbleoscope or other Presents of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of **£2 10s. per week**. Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE, Delamere Crescent, London, W.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

FREE TO YOU

To advertise S.L.S Records, we are giving away our noted Phonographs for a limited time. Write, giving full address and nearest railway station; enclose stamp.

Symonds' London Stores, 128, City Road, London.

RUN NO RISK

KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE

THE WORST COUGH

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½% repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director*

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles**, and by contract buy for thousands annually. I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY**.

Premiers, Rovers, Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Eagles, Singers, &c.

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade COVENTRY CYCLE for £6-0-0.

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. EDWARD O'BRIEN, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, COVENTRY.

Doctor's Orders.

She: "The doctor said you must not call any more." He: "Did he say that?" She: "Well, he said that I needed eight hours' sleep."

Hopeless.

"Tom has proposed, and asks me to give him his answer in a letter." "Shall you do it?" "No; I will be more liberal, and give him his answer in two letters."

A Deep Laid Plot.

George: "Who is that beautiful girl over there?" Amelia: "Why, George, that's a mirror—it's me!" George: "————?" Amelia (blushing): "Yes, George."

Love, Indeed!

She: "Darling, do you love me?" He (kissing her rapturously and repeatedly): "Do I? I wish you were a two-headed girl. That's all I can say." And she believed in his love.

The Engagement is Off Now.

He (pleadingly): "Why can't we be married right away?" She (coyly): "Oh, I can't bear to leave father alone just now." He (earnestly): "But, my darling, he has had you such a long time." She (freezingly): "Sir!"

Certain Proof.

He: "You are the only woman I have ever loved." She: "Do you expect me to believe that?" He: "I do. I swear it is true." She: "Then I believe you. Any man who would expect a woman to believe that cannot have been much in the company of women."

Unlucky Mrs. White.

He (reading paper): "Here's a note about an accident at White's house. The servant girl put some gunpowder into the fire, and was blown through the roof." She (sympathetically): "Poor Mrs. White has so much trouble with her girls! They are always leaving her without giving notice!"

Wanted To Make a Decision.

Girl: "Papa, I wish you'd lock up your money and pretend to fail, there's a good old dear. It needn't last more than a week or two, and there are so many failures now no one will find fault." Father: "Of all things! Wha——" Girl: "Oh, it's all right. You see, I'm engaged to nine young men, and I've got to get rid of at least eight of them somehow."

She Was Flattered.

Mrs. Sansom: "I understand, sir, that you have secretly been making love to my daughter, and I must forbid an acquaintance begun in that way. You should have seen me first." Shrewd Suitor: "Madam, had I seen you first I should have forgotten your daughter and fallen in love with you." Mrs. Sansom: "Um—the informality of the proceeding was all I objected to. Come with me and I will introduce you."

A Fair Question.

He (bitterly): "Pshaw! All women are alike." She: "Then why in the world do you spend so much time trying to find the one you want to marry?"

Papa's Match-box.

"This," said the dear girl, as she led the way into a secluded little nook in the conservatory, "is what papa calls his 'match-box.' Everybody comes in here to propose."

Her First Chance.

He (accepted): "You say you were never engaged before?" She: "Yes." He: "How does that happen? I thought all women usually had three or four engagements." She (guilelessly): "Well, I presume I shall, too. You see, this is the first chance I've had."

Appropriate Title.

He: "I wonder what the meaning of that picture is? The youth and the maiden are in a tender attitude." She: "Oh, don't you see? He has just asked her to marry him, and she is accepting him." "Ah! how appropriate the title." "I don't see it." "Why, that card at the bottom says 'Sold.'"

What We Are Coming To.

Boothby: "What are you thinking about, Ethel?" Miss Warringford: "About our wedding. I wanted to ask a favour of you." Boothby: "Anything, dearest." Miss Warringford: "Well—I don't want to change my name to Mrs. Henry Boothby. I want you to change yours to Mr. Ethel Warringford."

She Might be Engaged Then.

"I'm so glad you have come, Miss Morrison! I have so longed for a dance with you. May I have the fourth waltz?" "You may if I am not engaged." "Your card shows that you're not." "Yes—but I'm going to sit out the third waltz with Jack, and—well, I may be engaged when the fourth comes."

Her Revenge.

"Why were you so cross to your husband at breakfast?" "I couldn't help it. I felt as if I must scold somebody or burst. Just physical irritability, you know—and then everything went wrong. Breakfast was late, the bacon burnt, the coffee thin, and the bread stale." "Then why didn't you scold the cook?" "Oh, I daren't. She'd leave."

A Cool Reception.

There were plenty of empty seats in the 'bus, but the smiling youth who wore his hat on the back part of his head, stopped opposite the handsome young woman in the red hat, and said in his most engaging manner: "Can I take this seat, Miss?" "I have no objection, sir," she said, in a tone that froze the smile fast on his face, "but I think it's nailed down."

Her Share of Economy.

"My dear," said Mr. Darley to his wife, "we shall have to economise." "Very well, love," replied Mrs. Darley cheerfully. "Suppose you resign your club, give up smoking, and shave yourself." "That's a pretty programme, I must say. And what will you do as your share of our economy?" "I will cut your hair."

Only One Arm Necessary.

Jack Fiancé (gushingly): "Darling, you must not refuse me the pleasure of taking you to ride in my new horseless carriage." Daisy Hugger (apprehensively): "But—er—Jack, don't you—er—(blush)—have you to use both arms to steer those horseless carriages?" Jack Fiancé (rapturously): "No, dearest. Mine is a new pattern of pedal-steering attachment, and——" Daisy Hugger: "Oh, Jack. Say to-morrow night."

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Home Duties Versus District Visiting.

I am very glad to hear, Stella, that you take so much interest in parish work, and do so much for the poor. You say that your father objects to you spending so much of your time visiting, and says that you should be more at home. He has, you add, often complained of the way his meals are served up, and does not accept your excuse that you are busy with your parish work. What do I think of his attitude? Do I not think that the poor people are entitled to more attention than one's own well-to-do relations?

* * * * *

Now, work among the poor is very, very good. There are many women who can rightly spend all their time at it. But I take it that every women puts her duty to her own folk first, as she was intended to do. When a girl has a father, as you have, who expects a little proper attention, it is her first duty to give it. If the world were run on any other lines, it would be a more miserable place than it is. Do as much parish work as you can—in your spare moments—but first of all do the duties at home to which you should, as a woman, give first place.

❦❦❦

About Novel Reading.

Flo is sixteen, and is fond of reading. But her people tell her it is wrong for her to read novels. Do I agree with this?

* * * * *

While you are young, you must do as your people wish. I do not know their views on the subject of reading, but no doubt they know your tendencies better than I do. Some girls may read every book ever written, and their minds will remain as pure as if they had never read a line. Others will seek out unhealthy reading, and perhaps be injured much by it.

* * * * *

Your parents know your own nature, and no doubt are acting in your own interest in restricting your reading. A very good way out of this difficulty would be for the mother or father to read to their children. It is generally much nicer to hear someone read a story than to strain one's eyes wading through it oneself.

❦❦❦

Unnecessary Requests.

Yes, B. M., I do occasionally advise readers by post, but unless the communication is of an exceptionally private nature, prefer to do so in this column. In most cases there is very little advice which I can give clients that needs privacy, seeing names are concealed; so will those readers who constantly request private answers to the most ordinary questions please remember that in the offices of a paper time is a precious commodity, and that a lot of letter writing occupies a great deal of it.

"Gadding About" at Seventy-One.

"At what age should a woman give up gadding about?" F. R. is seventy-one, and has several grandchildren. But she does not feel any older than she did twenty years ago, and finds she can get about and visit as well as a young woman. Her children, however, reproach her for this, saying that at her age she ought to stop quietly at home, and leave "gadding about" to the younger ones.

* * * * *

They are all quite wrong, F. R. So long as you feel you can get about, do so. I know many ladies of three score who are even healthier and stronger than young girls, and so long as they can enjoy life, let them do it. That notion about "giving up" on principle is nonsense. So long as one can take exercise, one should do so. It prolongs life.

❦❦❦

Is It Flirting?

Snowdrop knows two young men, and is not sure which she likes the better. Both have a habit of waiting for Snowdrop outside her church after service, not by arrangement. She confesses that she likes the company of either, but is not sure that she is in love. Would it be flirting for her to accept the attentions of both, as she is at present doing?

* * * * *

Well, I do not know that I should call it flirting to a very serious extent. Assuming you have not led either young man to suppose that you regard him other than as a friend, there could be no objection to your continuing on friendly terms with either. Besides, it is only right that you should give both of them a trial, in order to test which you really do like the better.

* * * * *

Another important fact will be the effect on either of them of the knowledge that you treat them both equally. If it does not lead to some declaration on the part of each, I should be surprised. I must repeat, however, that to avoid being called a flirt, you must not allow your conduct with either man to go beyond the limits of friendly acquaintanceship. If you do, then you may rightly be accused of double-dealing.

❦❦❦

Wants to be a Waitress.

Sophie has an unpleasant time at home, as she belongs to a large family, and has to do most of the housework. In fact, she tells me she is little more than a drudge. Supposing she could get employment as a restaurant waitress, do I think the money she would make would justify her in going out? She thinks the life could not be harder than her present one.

* * * * *

I would not recommend any girl who has parents able to keep her to take work such as that of a waitress. A very pretty girl sometimes meets the right man at a restaurant, but, generally speaking, those affairs are little better than dangerous flirtations.

* * * * *

Besides, the wages of restaurant waitresses are very, very small. Most of them start with 8s. a week, which rises to 12s. If they are promoted to behind the counter, they may in time rise to 23s.—or more. A manageress gets about 28s.—and half-pay in case of illness.

* * * * *

If a girl really needs the money, it would not be bad for her to take such work, as later on she will be independent. But I think Sophie will find even the drudgery of home life better than the worry and very hard work of waiting on busy diners with bad tempers.

Cynthia

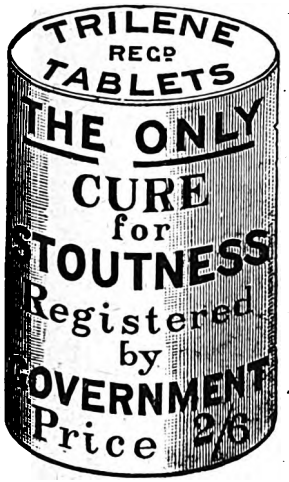
Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ALL FAT PEOPLE

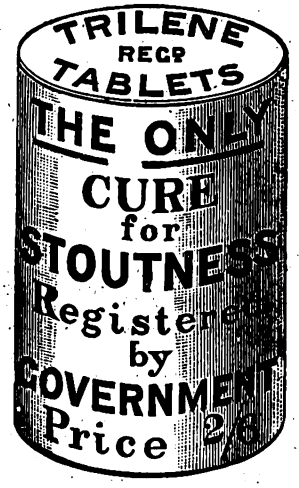
Can be **CURED** by taking

TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."



Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest valu I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

Digitized by Google

Have You Indigestion?

Have You Sick Headache?

TAKE

BEECHAM'S PILLS

To Avoid Indigestion

That distressed feeling is simply a poorly-working stomach—it needs a little help—but no matter how bad it may be, a dose of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** will speedily give relief. Take **BEECHAM'S PILLS** for a few days and the trouble will disappear.

To Cure Sick Headache

Sick headache means an overtaxed stomach and a derangement of the digestive Organs. **BEECHAM'S PILLS** have proved themselves a boon for removing that distressed feeling and discomfort. A dose will remove the immediate cause, and if repeated for a few days will enable your system to work normally.

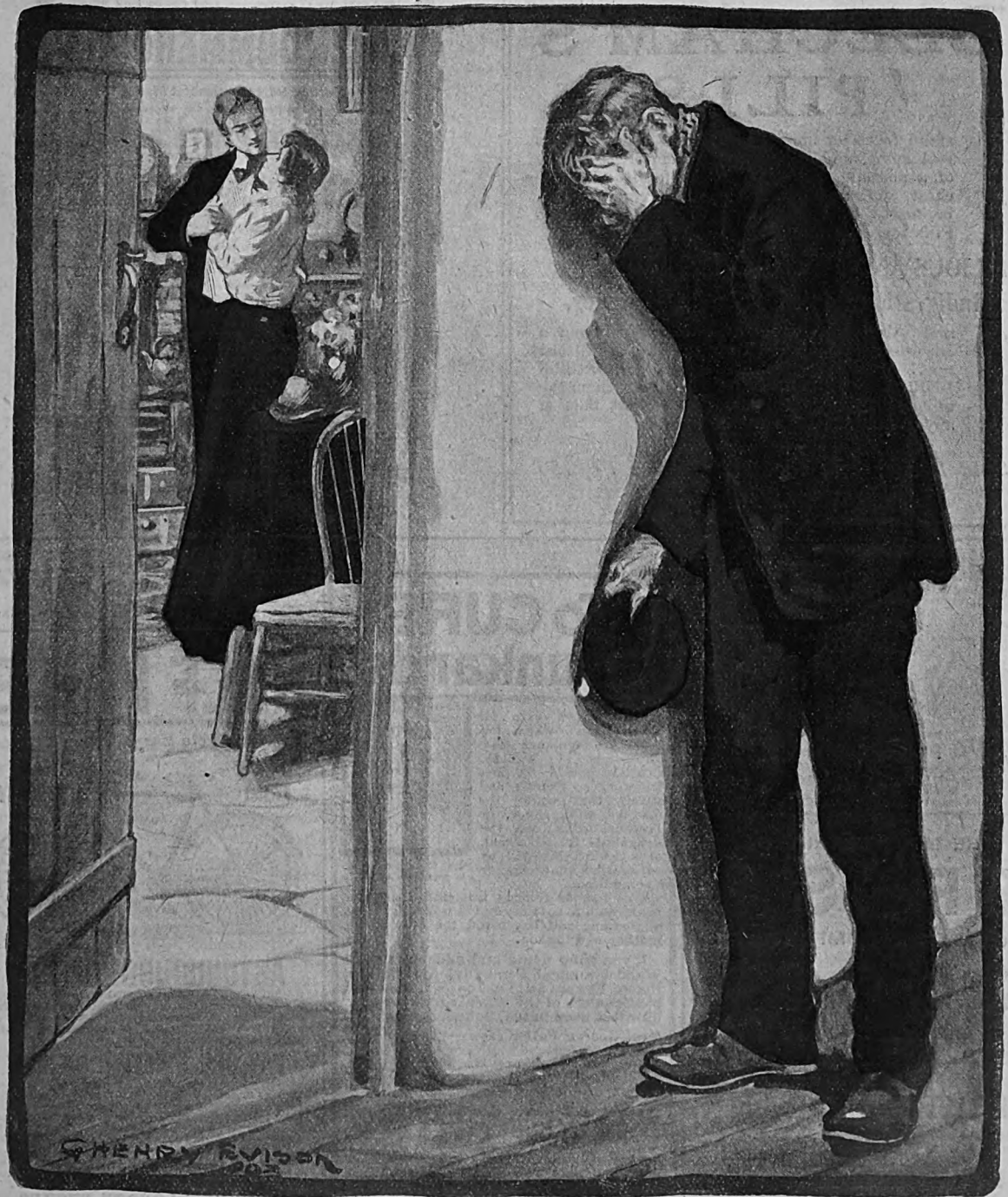
Sold Everywhere in Boxes.

Price 1s. 1½d. (56 Pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 Pills).

Powerful New Serial Just Started.

SHORT STORIES.

No. 742.] Week ending March 21, 1903. [Price One Penny.



The diver covered his face with his hand. "Sir Guy loves her," he whispered, "and she—she loves him. I have lost her—lost her after all!" * * * *

(A Dramatic Incident from our New Serial Story, "HELD APART." See Inside.)

Digitized by Google

TO BE FIRST

Is to occupy an enviable position. Many aspire for first place, but few attain it. To acquire the lead, aspiration and push alone are not sufficient. Merit is required. This is exactly why . . . .

BEECHAM'S PILLS

stand foremost among medicines. They possess real merit, and have proved themselves worthy of a permanent position in the family medicine chest. Trial purchasers become regular users, because they find nothing to equal Beecham's Pills for dispelling

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Indigestion, Sick Headache, Languor,

and other such troubles which arise from a Disordered Stomach. They regulate and tone up the entire system. The genuine worth of BEECHAM'S PILLS has obtained for them the unique position of having the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World.

Sold Everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills) and 2/9 (168 Pills).

GRAVES'

"SAFE AS THE BANK OF ENGLAND."

This is the feeling of those who deal with the firm of J. G. Graves, because all goods are sent out to handle and examine at leisure, and need not be kept unless they give the fullest satisfaction.

THE 'COMMERCIAL'

Sterling Silver Horizontal Watch,

will be forwarded Post Free to any address on receipt of a deposit of only 2/6; the balance can be remitted in nine more MONTHLY payments of 2/6; or, HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment. **25/**

LET'S TALK OF GRAVES

. . The Largest . . Watch-Sales Firm in the World.

SPECIFICATION. Horizontal Movement, Rim Cap, Fully Jewelled Escapement, White Enamelled Dial, Extra Strong Sterling Silver Cases.

This Watch is Warranted for Five Years and will give Perfect Satisfaction.

You would be pleased with our No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Cutlery and Plate, and Fancy Goods, which we supply GRATIS and Post Free to all applicants. Please send Post Card for a copy.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in every town and village. No Risk. Good Commission.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

WATCHES

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

Carr. Paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s.	15/10	£9 10s	17/6
£9	16/8	£10 5s.	19/3.

Juno Motor Cycle £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lower prices than any other house; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6. Write for New Season List, over 100 pages and 500 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co., Ltd. (S.S. De t.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

E·P PS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½% repayable on demand.

The Birkbeck Almanack, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

To CURE Drunkards

Mrs. Geo. Fuller, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

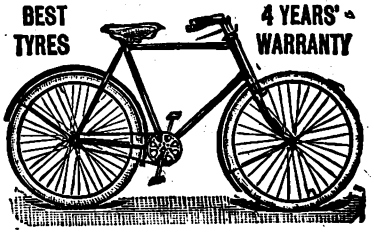
PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PAGES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-. Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

HALF PRICE

Greatest Cycle Bargain ever Offered

BEST TYRES 4 YEARS' WARRANTY



ASTONISHING OFFER!

To introduce Royal Duke Cycles, we will supply 2,000 now, for only half list price—£7 7s. cash—with 4 years' warranty. Free wheel, choice of noted tyres, Crabbe brake, triple enamelling and many other important features.

PAY ONE SHILLING WEEKLY

On easy payments, you can send 1 shilling weekly, or any larger amount that suits your convenience. No guarantor, no unreasonable enquiries. Pay while enjoying the use of your machine. Ladies', gents', boys' and girls' models. Every penny of your money returned if not as represented. We point with pride to thousands of voluntary testimonials. Write for full particulars of Royal Duke Cycles, mentioning name of this publication. Enclose stamp. Address:

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, City Road, London, E.C. Also at 15, Peter Street, Manchester.

Short Stories.

No. 742.] Week Ending March 21st 1903. [One Penny.

NEW SERIAL. **START TO-DAY.**

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Moira Davenal is sitting in the little cottage on Groudle Quay busy with her ribbon work. Sir Guy Vanbrugh is talking to her.

"Moira, have I the least little bit of a chance?"

"I—I don't know, Sir Guy," she falters. "I never thought about you seriously; and they would all say I married you for your money!"

"Then there is a chance for me," he says, biting his lip. "Moira, I love you so much. Won't you——"

He pauses. There is a heavy step in the hallway of the cottage, and a burly figure enters the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal. I'm off to London for the week-end and was just leaving a message for you with your daughter. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph?*"

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," says John Davenal, who is a diver engaged in raising Sir Guy's yacht. "She'll soon be afloat."

After Sir Guy has gone a sailor appears at the door singing in drunken tones the scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

"I want to see Davenal—John Davenal," he says thickly.

The diver rises to his feet.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarks loudly. "Glad to see you. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

While Moira goes out on an errand a conversation takes place between the two men, from which it appears that Moira is really Hartigan's daughter. Davenal agrees to pay him £50 a year so that he may keep her.

The sailor—who is a ship's steward—sits back in his chair and begins to sing again the drunken chorus.

He halts abruptly, for the door slowly opens, and a blind woman comes in.

Dennis Hartigan recognises her as his sister Kate. She tells her brother that she heard the song he was singing—sung in just the same way—once when she was sitting on a breakwater at Groudle. She also adds that the man who was singing said, evidently to someone with him: "This is out far enough. In with it;" after which there was a splash.

Hannah Davenal (Hartigan's wife and the diver's sister) is maid to Lady Tarleton. She is possessed of a secret with which she continually blackmails her mistress.

One afternoon Lady Tarleton and Hannah Davenal go down to Groudle Tower, and together they make a mysterious journey at midnight.

The following day, at the Half Brick Inn at Groudle, Hannah encounters her husband, whom she advises to leave Groudle.

The next morning Hannah is found dead in bed, a towel smelling of chloroform is on her face, and over that a pillow on which are some dirty finger marks.

The police are informed of the tragedy, and Detective-Sergeant Ussher is sent down from Scotland Yard to investigate. The information he obtains decides him to arrest Dennis Hartigan.

Edward Stormont, the owner of Groudle Tower, and Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law, now arrives at Groudle with his friend Paul Jerome, a war-correspondent. When they enter the Tower Lady Tarleton is observed facing four men, who are Hartigan, Ussher, and two policemen, guarding the ship's steward.

As Stormont pauses in the doorway of the hall Lady Tarleton glances up and sees him. The prisoner is speaking defiantly.

"I'm Dennis Hartigan all right," he says, "and Hannah Davenal's husband all right. But I'm innocent of her death, and I'm here to prove it. I want one word—one single word—alone with her ladyship."

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

Edward Stormont

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Welcome to Groudle Tower."

Lady Tarleton gazed irresolutely at the handcuffed captive. Dennis Hartigan, standing passively between the two country policemen, answered the gaze with a stare of grim and significant defiance. Lady Tarleton's gaze fell, then travelled to the stalwart figure of Edward Stormont, checked on his own threshold by so singular a spectacle. She moved with eager steps towards him. She was very agitated.

"Edward!" she exclaimed, "is it really you? Good Heavens, and I did not know you were in England!"

Her brother-in-law took the hand she extended to him.

"I only landed at Hull last night, and the whim seized me to see Groudle once again before coming south. I had no idea you were in residence, till they told me at the station that some more or less tragic event had occurred here. You are, I gather, in the throes of a police investigation. But I am forgetting. Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Jerome."

He turned to his companion. "Jerome," he observed—"Lady Tarleton, my sister-in-law. Jerome, my dear Adeline, has plucked a peaceful laurel-wreath out of the perils of modern warfare. In other words, he has scored the latest success in war-correspondence. Notwithstanding which, he remains the most modest of men."

Lady Tarleton forced a smile. "I am very glad to make Mr. Jerome's acquaintance," she replied, giving the war-correspondent the tips of her fingers, "but I wish that he had reached Groudle Tower at a juncture not quite so melancholy. Davenal, my maid, was found this morning dead in her room, under circumstances, that point, almost conclusively, to murder. Mr. Ussher!"

She motioned to the detective. He crossed the hall to her side, closing his note-book; he had been writing in it.

"Mr. Ussher," she said, "this is Mr. Stormont, my brother-in-law. Mr. Stormont, as you may know, is the owner of Groudle Tower. Will you please explain to him why you arrested this man, and particularly why you have brought him here."

"Certainly, my lady," answered Mr. Ussher blandly, and drew a pace nearer to Edward Stormont.

"You see, sir," he pursued, "the woman Davenal had evidently been chloroformed and then suffocated—with a pillow. The pillow had apparently been handled by a person of the lower class—it was much finger-marked, showing that the murderer's hands had been the reverse of clean. That was one clue. I ascertained without delay what purchases of chloroform had been lately made in Groudle. I discovered that a quantity had been sold to a certain Dennis Hartigan, who wrote in the poison-register of the chemist from whom it was bought the address 'Hawthorn Cottage, Groudle Quay.' Hawthorn Cottage is the residence of John Davenal, the brother of the deceased. That was clue number two."

The detective started. His glance had encountered that of the war-correspondent. Mr. Ussher bowed and lifted two fingers to his forehead. Paul Jerome nodded familiarly.

"Don't let me interrupt you, Ussher," he remarked, "though I was wondering how long you would be in recognising a friend. You are in excellent hands, Lady Tarleton," he added; "Mr. Ussher and I met often at one time—drawn together by the bonds that unite the police and the press—and I can assure you that he is a most zealous and considerate officer."

Mr. Ussher coughed modestly.

"Mr. Jerome is too kind, my lady," he declared. "But I was about to inform Mr. Stormont, my lady, that on finding chloroform had recently been supplied to a person apparently connected with the Davenal family, I traced that person, and learnt that he was lodging at an inn just outside Groudle town."

Edward Stormont chafed visibly.

"May I remind you, Mr.—Mr. Ussher," he remarked, "that your prisoner, whom I conclude to be the Hartigan you speak of, has offered to prove his innocence, and has asked to have a moment's conversation with Lady Tarleton. That is a most extraordinary request. Perhaps you would be good enough to say exactly what accusation is made against him. I believe he said something about being 'innocent of her death.'"

The detective regarded the speaker tolerantly, yet with a distinct air of reproof.

"The prisoner," he rejoined, "undoubtedly lies under suspicion in connection with the murder of his wife, although I have not yet formally charged him. Not only, however, did he purchase the chloroform to which I have referred, but he is known to have quarrelled with the deceased at the 'Half Brick'—the inn in question—over a kiss, begging her ladyship's pardon, given to a serving-maid. An ostler at the 'Half Brick,' returning from town, saw and recognised Miss Davenal—that is to say, Mrs. Hartigan. She was with the prisoner. They were then at some distance from the inn, and she was heard to say: 'If he happens to have a wife like me, Dennis!'"

Lady Tarleton was plucking at the lace handkerchief in her fingers; she turned her head to glance at the short, thick-set form between the constables. Dennis Hartigan was looking at her, his bold blue eyes anxious yet vaguely cruel.

"Mr. Stormont has reminded you, Mr. Ussher," she said, "that this person has asserted his desire to prove his innocence, and has asked for a single word—by which I presume he means a few minutes' conversation—alone with me. Did you bring him here in order to suggest that I should grant this request?"

Mr. Ussher rubbed his deep and dimpled chin with the butt of his pencil.

"Well, my lady," he responded, "I was in somewhat of a quandary. The prisoner asserted that your ladyship could prove his innocence, and demanded to be confronted, if I may use the term, my lady, with you. Naturally, I shrank from lodging a definite charge while there was any possibility, however remote, of my being on the wrong track."

The detective coloured slightly and he averted his glance from that of the war-correspondent. For some reason or other Paul Jerome had been unable to repress a smile.

"But it was not until he got face to face with your ladyship," continued Mr. Ussher, "that he blurted out the request for a private interview. I am bound to confess, my lady, that that would be a most unusual proceeding, and for the life of me, my lady, I fail to see how it can help him. Any facts which might be within the present knowledge of your ladyship, could not be affected—at all events, legally—by such an interview."

Lady Tarleton waved him aside and stepped past him. A close observer might have doubted if it were by accident or with intent that she had moved to a position where, though she faced the policemen and their captive, her features were in shadow. She directed herself imperiously to Dennis Hartigan.

"What do you want with me," she asked—"tell me frankly? If you are an innocent man, you have the right to claim our sympathy under this terrible charge. You say you are the husband of my maid, Hannah Davenal?"

Dennis Hartigan studied her expression; his eyes seemed to be reading her very soul.

"Yes, my lady," she was told, "as you know, my lady, she was married. I am aware your ladyship wasn't acquainted with my name, but she explained, I believe, that I was a ship's steward; you remember, my lady, when she warned you she'd be wanting to leave, as I was giving up the sea and planning to take a country public-house with her. Now what I want your ladyship to tell the police is that you promised Hannah a money-present when she left—a very handsome present, my lady, but she'd been your maid for over twenty years. I won't be particular to the exact amount, but it was enough to buy us a very good business, my lady."

"Yes," said Lady Tarleton slowly, "that is so. I promised

Digitized by Google

to give her some hundreds of pounds, and—to lend her as much more as she needed."

The other straightened himself, shrugged his shoulders, and looked round at his captors—at the imperturbable Mr. Ussher, at Edward Stormont, and Paul Jerome, at the curious servants who lingered about the extremities of the great hall.

"So she told me, my lady," he answered, "and what I ask is, would I have been fool enough, for a few words over a chance peck at a pretty mouth, to do away with my poor Hannah and lose myself three fat figures in solid cash? For it stands to reason that you weren't going to give me the money, my lady, if anything happened to Hannah before she left your service."

Mr. Ussher wrinkled his brows and bit at his pencil. But he gave no other sign of interest in his prisoner's observations.

"And as for the chloroform I bought," added Dennis Hartigan scornfully, "I got it for John Davenal's ear-ache; he's a diver and suffers with his ears. But the stuff I used there and left there, and there's witnesses to that."

Lady Tarleton put the twisted handkerchief to her lips, she had scarcely marked the latter portion of Dennis Hartigan's defence.

"There is common sense in what you say about your monetary loss by your wife's death," she observed, "and so far I can support at least the probability of your innocence. But I can do nothing more."

Dennis Hartigan sprang suddenly clear of his flanking guardians, fell at her feet, and clutched her gown. His tanned, bloated face peered up into hers with a pretended frenzy.

"Don't desert me, my lady!" he cried. "I am innocent!" He dropped his voice to a whisper and a sentence reached her, and her alone, an instant before the two constables, darting forward, had pinned and dragged him up. Lady Tarleton staggered. His fierce words rang hissingly in her ear.

"*The child, you fool! Save me, or I speak!*"

She felt a strong arm about her shoulder. It was that of Paul Jerome; he had noticed the sick spasm that had swayed her. He drew her aside.

"Permit me," he said, "this is all rather trying, isn't it? But I don't think the fellow meant you any harm—he was only unstrung. After all, I fancy Ussher is on the wrong track, and not for the first time. Stormont!"

The war-correspondent was calling to his host, who, irritable and amazed, watched the abruptly metamorphosed scene.

"Lady Tarleton is a little agitated," he added; "if you will stay with her I will go and talk to Mr. Ussher, whom I know of old. He is a little afraid of me; as a young and enthusiastic journalist I upset one or two of his best 'clues' in a famous criminal case."

He resigned Lady Tarleton into the care of the elder man, and went across to the detective, who was superintending an alteration in his prisoner's fetters. Dennis Hartigan's hands were being secured behind his back.

"Ussher," said the war-correspondent, "one moment." The detective spun about, a look of veiled hostility on his bland, secretive countenance. Paul Jerome regarded him amusedly.

"You spoke of a soiled and finger-marked pillow," he continued in an undertone. "Now surely those finger-marks will soon show you if you ought to charge this luckless wretch with the murder or not."

Mr. Ussher's jaw dropped. The war-correspondent smiled at his change of demeanour.

"If I might suggest," he said, "your prisoner could be taken to the station and detained for an hour or two. That will enable you to make at your leisure the necessary examination of the finger-prints—any ordinary magnifying glass will serve your purpose. Some trifling expedient will allow you to compare them with your prisoner's finger-tips, and you'll act accordingly. But understand, I do not advise, I merely suggest. Good night, Mr. Ussher."

He nodded pleasantly and withdrew a few paces. The detective pulled himself together and gave the order to his men. Then the three marched off with the handcuffed ship's steward. Dennis Hartigan glanced back. Lady Tarleton saw the look, and leant heavily upon her brother-in-law. The war-correspondent went up to them.

"I perceive," he observed, "that Lady Tarleton has a certain sympathy with that poor beggar. So have I, I can't tell why. But in any case, if he is innocent, he will soon be free. I have provided Ussher with an infallible test."

Edward Stormont gave an arm to his sister-in-law, and led her out of the hall. Paul Jerome followed.

"I'm afraid, Jerome," said the elder man, "that this is rather an unexpected kind of welcome."

"Don't mention it," answered the war correspondent; "I'm only wondering if I shall turn out to have travelled three thousand miles for the especial purpose of—to put it vulgarly—'wiping Mr. Ussher's eye.' However, in a few hours his prisoner will be either free or else as good as found guilty."

Lady Tarleton opened her lips as if she would have answered. But she closed them again abruptly. When she spoke it was to remark that they must be both hungry and tired, and to suggest their dining forthwith.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Jerome was Quite Right.

"Yes, it's a fine old place, but dismal, my dear fellow, dismal! Even to a tenant who had not, as I have, the saddest of recollections associated with it, Groudle Tower would soon reveal itself as an excellent residence to live out of."

Edward Stormont, the war-correspondent at his side, was strolling through the long corridors of the ancient country seat upon which he had just passed so disparaging a criticism. He returned an unlighted cigar to its position between his sensitive, melancholy lips, and plunged his hands once more into the deep pockets of his loose lounge coat.

With his pointed, iron-grey beard, his dreamy blue eyes and negligent, abstracted bearing, Edward Stormont was a man of striking, almost poetic appearance. Few would have taken him for what he was, a daring explorer of the earth's wildest and most desert corners.

Pushing open a door, he ushered Paul Jerome into the apartment beyond, a huge, bare chamber with a high roof, carved oak wainscoting, and small, latticed panes in the big mullioned windows.

"Once upon a time," he said, taking the cigar from his mouth, "when the owners of Groudle Tower were great lords, and judges in their own right of half the county, this room was their court of summary jurisdiction. To this day it is called the justice-room. The roof is a splendid specimen of Jacobean vaulting."

He drew out a tiny gold case, raised the spring lid, and snapped it again.

"Have you a match, Jerome?" he asked; "I have not one left."

Jerome offered him a battered metal box, the explorer lit his Havana, and going to the window, flung the casement wide. It gave upon the large central square of the Tower. The sunshine of the spring morning lay across it, and the March wind whistled sharply past the stone framework of the window.

Edward Stormont stepped out, and glanced up at the ruinous, ivy-grown keep that rose at an angle of the square. The war-correspondent had followed him out.

"Twenty years ago, Jerome," remarked the elder man slowly, "I climbed that tower at night and, alone with the wind and the stars, fought my way back to sanity and self-control. Fate had dealt me a cruel blow, Jerome—a lovely young creature, whose heart and

Digitized by Google

mind were stamped with a rarer charm than even her outward beauty, lay dead within these walls. A little baby girl was motherless, I, her father, robbed of an idolised wife that Death had scarcely spared to me for eighteen months."

His strong, grave voice faltered, and he was silent, his breast heaving.

"When we drove up the hill yesterday evening," he added abruptly, "the sight of the Tower brought it all back, and though I am a score of years older, Jerome, I could have wept aloud."

Edward Stormont's white teeth closed upon his cigar, a puff or two of smoke escaped from his lips. He sighed and walked onwards.

"I wish the little lass had lived," he exclaimed; "I have wanted something to love all these years, and though I have made friends with many a loyal brute and many an honest fellow, it has not filled the void in my heart. The wound death opened still bleeds, a daughter's hand might have—would have healed it. But a truce to this womanish talk—who comes yonder, is it not that solemn plain-clothes policeman whom we found in possession here last night?"

He shaded his eyes with his palm, and gazed across the courtyard. Paul Jerome glanced in the same direction. Mr. Ussher's large and stooping figure was passing through the massive entrance which gave admittance to Groudle Tower. His note-book was in his hand—he paused to make a memorandum in it, then looked up and saw them. Putting away the oblong red volume, he came forward athwart the smooth turf that occupied the middle of the square.

"Good day," he said, addressing Edward Stormont before recognising, with dry politeness, the presence of the war-correspondent. "I was about to seek a brief interview with you. An inquest will be necessary, but any wish that her ladyship or yourself may entertain as to time and place can, no doubt, be met. I have just left the coroner's officer, who will be here in the course of the morning."

Edward Stormont made an impatient gesture.

"Arrange it as you will, Mr.—Mr. Ussher," he answered; "I am quite indifferent. Naturally I shall remain with my sister-in-law until the unpleasant business is settled and shelved. But as I know nothing whatever of the affair, you will not want me. By the way, how about your prisoner, the man Hartigan—is he to be charged?"

Mr. Ussher's ruddy countenance grew a shade more crimson.

"I merely detained him a few hours," he responded, glancing down at his large and polished boot toe. "Mr. Jerome was quite right; a comparison of the marks on the pillow and Hartigan's finger tips was, in one respect, conclusive. It was not, at all events, Hartigan who actually committed the crime. Also, on inquiry at Hawthorn Cottage, I found corroboration of his assertion as to the cause for which he had purchased the chloroform."

"So," said the war-correspondent provokingly, "the poor fellow was allowed to slip through the meshes of your terrible net? Well, well, Ussher, I thought somehow you were on the wrong track. But there, to err is human."

The detective rubbed his chin with the back of a forefinger. "The coincidence was obviously a remarkable one, Mr. Jerome," he rejoined stiffly, "and it was my duty to follow the clue. It is only the amateur who starts with a theory, we professionals go over the ground bit by bit, and allow the facts to suggest their own explanation."

He turned to the elder man. "Perhaps, sir," he observed, "you would ascertain if Lady Tarleton has any objection to the inquest being held here and to-morrow. It is not strictly in my province, sir, but I fancy I can arrange for her ladyship's convenience to be consulted."

Edward Stormont moved from the neighbourhood of the justice-room and towards the great nail-studded hall doors of Groudle Tower.

"I will see if my sister-in-law has any views," he rejoined; "but I rather expect her wish will coincide with mine, to get the whole thing over as soon as possible."

He rang at the door as he spoke. It was opened by a male servant, who started at the sight of his master and the war-correspondent, hatless, and accompanied by the redoubtable Mr. Ussher.

"If you please, sir," he said, "a person is inquiring at the kitchen entrance for Mr. Ussher—a person of the name of John Davenal—brother of the—my lady's late maid, sir."

Mr. Ussher nodded. "With your permission, sir," he remarked, "I will go through and see him while you are consulting her ladyship."

"Certainly," began Edward Stormont, then stopped, Paul Jerome had touched his arm.

"I say, Stormont," murmured the war-correspondent in his friend's ear; "I'm beginning to be interested in this domestic tragedy of yours. I think I shall try to fathom it. Besides, I want to worry Ussher a bit. Let us suggest his having this fellow through, and see if we can pick up a thread or two of the mystery."

"By all means, if it interests you," said Edward Stormont, and added aloud, "Mr. Ussher, I think I should like to ask this man Davenal some questions. Suppose we have him in?"

Mr. Ussher sighed inaudibly, and shot a rebellious glance at the war-correspondent. "As you please, sir," he answered.

Edward Stormont gave an order, and the three men waited. A moment later, and then a burly, powerful form passed into the hall from the servants' quarters beyond. The diver walked with a stick, slowly, almost unsteadily. His face was pale, his expression heavy and spiritless. His eyes wandered from one to another of the trio who stood in the hall. Mr. Ussher stepped forward.

"You wished to see me, I believe, Mr. Davenal," he said. "I called at your cottage yesterday, and again at night, but you were in bed, I believe, indisposed."

John Davenal bent his head. "I was," he replied; "I heard the news of my—my poor sister's death"—rather abruptly—"after a long spell of work under the water; I am a diver, as you may know. It gave me a queer kind of heart shock, the doctor says."

He drew himself up, standing with a hand on his stick.

"You are Mr. Ussher, I reckon," he continued; "and a detective."

Mr. Ussher assented. John Davenal put a finger and thumb into a vest pocket, and pulled out a small, two-ounce bottle. It was partly filled with a colourless fluid, and bore a red poison label.

"There's the chloroform bottle you were asking about," he proceeded, in the same brusque fashion, "I had laid it by myself, after Dennis had used it for my ear, it being dangerous stuff. Moira said you had been rare and set on her finding it. And now you have it I shall be glad to learn why you wanted it, and why you came troubling my Moira with so many questions. There's something I hear in Groudle about Hannah having been chloroformed to death. Surely, surely you can't think——"

The detective had taken the small phial, uncorked it, and sniffed at it.

"I'm obliged to you, Mr. Davenal," he said, interrupting the diver, and returning him the bottle, "but it's of no importance. No charge whatever is being made against your brother-in-law in connection with his wife's death."

John Davenal recoiled. "Dennis!" he cried, "his wife—then you know he was her husband?"

Mr. Ussher got out his note-book. "We do," he rejoined, "will you be good enough to tell me when she was married, and why she lived apart from Mr. Hartigan?"

The diver hesitated. "I don't understand how it's come out," he said; "nor what it—it can have to do with her

Digitized by Google

death, but she was married to Dennis going on for twenty odd years ago. He was a wild sort, and she found it out and decided to stay on in service. They had been married before he went away on a voyage, and were intending to settle down when he got back. But meantime she learnt too much about him, and they never did settle down."

A hand was laid on his arm and a chair was set behind him. Paul Jerome had moved it considerately from its place against the wall.

"Sit down, Mr. Davenal," he suggested kindly, "you are not yet, I fear, quite as completely recovered as you think."

The diver sank into the chair and looked up at the shrewd, pleasant visage of the war-correspondent.

"Thank you, sir," he said huskily. Paul Jerome stepped back to Edward Stormont's side and they continued their silent study of the colloquy. Mr. Ussher had been making a series of memoranda.

"Any children of the marriage?" he queried. John Davenal answered with a scarcely perceptible pause.

"No," he said; "none." The detective added a fresh memorandum to his previous ones.

"When did you last see your sister—alive?" he asked. The diver folded his arms upon his stick.

"Two days ago," he replied; "she came to Groudle Quay to see me."

"Were you in the habit of seeing her often?" pursued Mr. Ussher.

"No," said John Davenal, "it was the first time in—in many years. Though she wrote—at times."

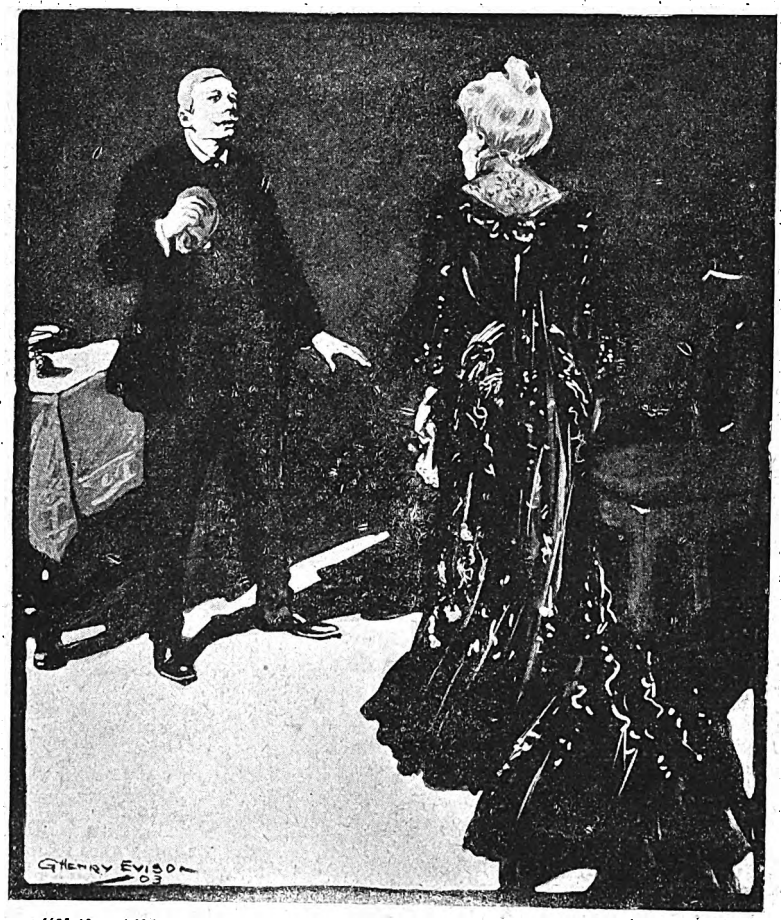
Edward Stormont intervened. "Mr. Davenal," he remarked, "you seem to have been acquainted with her private affairs—this marriage, for instance. Can you suggest anything that might lead some person to desire her death?"

"I cannot, sir," said the diver; "it is a mystery to me. But then I had known nothing of her and her doings for—for more years than I can count on my fingers."

Mr. Ussher closed his note-book. "Well, Mr. Stormont," he observed, "I will not trouble Mr. Davenal any further. If you have any additional questions to put——"

Edward Stormont shook his head, but Paul Jerome struck in quickly.

"This visit of your sister to you, Mr. Davenal," he said; "it was the first in many years. May we ask the reason of what must have been to you a highly unexpected visit?"



"If the child were no longer in my path," she murmured," I would give ten thousand pounds—to the man who told me so!"

The diver sat motionless. "It—it had to do with the family affairs," he answered sternly—"old family matters, dead and buried long ago, except between her and I. I cannot speak more of them, sir, than that."

Paul Jerome bent a keen glance upon him. "It could have, of course, nothing to do with her painfully sudden death?" he said.

"No, sir," responded the diver deliberately. He sat and waited, and then, as no one put a question, he rose.

"I suppose," he added, "now that her marriage is known about, that you will look to Dennis to bury her. If—if he's not able, I will. You will let me know, I hope, when the law is satisfied, and she can be taken away."

Edward Stormont answered gently. "It shall be done," he promised.

"Thank you sir," murmured John Davenal, and moved to leave the hall, by the rear exit. Edward Stormont signed to a footman and the hall-doors were thrown open. John Davenal turned towards them, and, walking slowly, passed out of Groudle Tower.

In the same halting, uneven fashion, he retraced the route to the little seaport below, and gained the entrance to his little cottage. He raised the latch and stepped into the tiny square lobby, or ante-room, that lay beyond. The door into the kitchen was half open and voices came to him. Both were familiar. One was that of Moira, one that of Sir Guy Vanbrugh.

The diver made a motion as if to enter the room when a word, more clearly uttered than before, arrested him. The word was spoken tenderly, yet in firm, masculine tones, and it was the single sacred syllable "wife"!

"Say you will let me hope, Moira," Guy Vanbrugh was pleading; "say that you have missed my daily visit one tithe as much as I have missed my daily glimpse of your sweet face, and I will be patient, if you keep me in suspense a whole year. Can you not hold me out a little hope, dear, it is not such a terrifying word, is it—my 'wife'!"

John Davenal held his breath, yet his big frame was trembling in a pitiable excitement.

A soft murmur—the sigh of a woman's heart surrendering to its own weakness—reached his ear, and he heard Moira's voice. But he had never heard so sweet and childish a thrill in it.

Digitized by Google

"Oh, Sir Guy," she said, and her voice was muffled suddenly as though she had sunk upon her lover's breast, "I think I have loved you all the time."

The diver drew himself up, and his face distorted as if he were in agony. A moan broke from him.

"Him, him!" he whispered. "Sir Guy loves her—and she—she loves him. I have lost her; lost her after all!"

NINTH CHAPTER.

Two Meetings and a Crossing.

"Indeed, Miss Irene, and we're rare glad to see you at Groudle Tower again, though it's a sad reason that keeps my lady here and brings you to her instead of her to you. But you're looking both well and bonny, for all London is such an unhealthy place."

The speaker was a fresh-coloured, North-country woman, whose smooth and snowy tresses, showing beneath her white lace cap and black ribbons, betrayed that she was far advanced in years. Yet the figure in the plain, dark dress was upright and sprightly. Irene Tarleton had taken her withered hands impulsively.

"Yes," she said, "isn't it horrible about poor Davenal? If it wasn't for that I'd be charmed to be back in Cumberland, dear Mrs. Lintot. I do manage to keep fit in London, somehow, but it's a hard task. Give me a wet morning on the breakwater, with the wind blowing half a gale off Groudle Head, and you can take all the Rows and Bond Streets in the world. But I must go and pay my respects to the *mater*—you and I will have a long gossip later on."

She crossed the gloomy hall—at whose wide entrance the servants were bringing in her bicycle and travelling-bags. As she neared the foot of the great staircase, someone flashed down it, someone clad in a tweed riding suit, and carrying a light, silver-mounted switch. Irene gasped and coloured up to her eyebrows.

"Mr. Jerome!" she exclaimed, "is it you—or your ghost? And if you are real, how on earth did you get here?"

The war-correspondent laughed, and took the gloved hand held out to him.

"I came from Copenhagen with Mr. Stormont," he said. "We met at Petersburg—I on my way from the Turkish frontier, he from Thibet. We went on to Copenhagen with a Danish friend, and then made for Hull. Our visit to Groudle was due to a whim of Stormont's. So now you have it all in a mouthful."

He was still holding her hand—she released it gently, stealing a shy, feminine glance at his tanned features.

"So you have been making yourself famous," she observed.

"Thank you for the papers you had sent me, but I always bought the *Gazette*, and felt quite proud to think you were a friend of mine."

Paul Jerome fingered his riding-switch. "I—I thought about you often when I was writing for the *Gazette*," he said; "pictured you drinking tea in Bond Street or waltzing at Lady Somebody's and all that sort of thing. I liked to believe you'd be sorry if I went under, and so I—I didn't."

Irene smiled. "Then I'm glad you believed it," she retorted and coloured again. The war-correspondent stepped aside.

"What a clumsy beggar I am," he said, "here I'm yarning on when you've only just arrived, and are no doubt tired and hungry. Well, I will possess my soul in patience till we meet again."

He stood to watch her as she ran upstairs. The shy, girlish smile lingered about Irene's lips as she went to her mother's room, and her eyes were both soft and bright. And she was singing a snatch of song that Mr. Paul Jerome would have given a good deal to hear.

"*The pibroch is sounding o'er valley and scaur,*
'Tis Allen, my own, coming home from the war."

She blushed at the second line, and only hummed the last two-thirds of it.

Lady Tarleton encountered her on the threshold. "Oh," she observed petulantly, "so you've got here at last. If you're hungry, you'd better tell Lintot to give you a little cold chicken and a cup of chocolate; we have lunched."

She swept by her daughter and vanished down the stairs. At its foot she paused and motioned to a footman.

"Where is this person?" she asked.

"In the small drawing-room, my lady," responded the servant and went to a door hard by. He threw it open and Lady Tarleton entered. At her appearance a lounging figure rose from a chair. It was Dennis Hartigan.

Lady Tarleton waited till the door had reclosed. Dennis Hartigan waited also. Yet the eyes of each were studying the other.

The woman was the first to speak. "Well," she said, "I expected this visit when I heard that you had been released. Let me spare you the clumsy diplomacy of your class. Blackmail is written in your face. I have read the word too often in your wife's not to know it by now."

Dennis Hartigan raised his brows. The decision of her attack had disconcerted him, as it was meant to.

"I am not a rich woman," went on Lady Tarleton. "Though I am, of course, the heir to the estate, my brother-in-law has an exclusive life interest. My husband left me a beggar. You cannot get out of me what I have not got."

The other grinned. "That is just what I can do, my lady," he said, lowering his voice, and coming close to her. "You haven't got these estates and the fortune that goes with them. But though you haven't got them I can take them off you. Mr. Stormont's heir is not you, my lady. One lives that can take the property from you, and, at her majority, from him—his daughter."

Lady Tarleton gazed at the speaker, and a spasm passed over her worn, selfish countenance—a spasm that might have been either hate or alarm.

"I must try to borrow," she answered coldly. "If you can tell me the child's whereabouts, you shall have, by hook or by crook, a thousand pounds."

Dennis Hartigan shook his head. "You offered Hannah five," he said. "I must have five at least. But what good will her name and whereabouts do you? You don't suppose I should let you put her out of the way, do you, and rob me of my trump card?"

Lady Tarleton hesitated.

"If—if the child were no longer in my path," she murmured, "I would give, not five, but ten thousand pounds—to the man who told me so."

The steward started. Lady Tarleton played with the rings on her fingers.

"Does anyone but you know of the—the proceedings that followed the child's supposed death?" she asked.

"N—no," said Dennis Hartigan, "that is, no my lady, no one."

Lady Tarleton took out her purse and gave him a note for a hundred pounds. "If I judge you rightly, Mr. Hartigan, she remarked, "you are a bold, a ruthless, and a discreet man. Go away and think over what I have said to you."

She snapped the clasp of her purse and turned away.

"Think it well over," she said, glancing back at him as she reached out a hand to the bell. Dennis Hartigan folded up the note.

Digitized by Google

"I—I will, my lady," he answered, "and thank your ladyship."

He moved towards the opening door and passed out. From the threshold he looked round reflectively. Lady Tarleton met the look with cold directness.

Reaching the high road he turned along it in the direction of Groudle, past the 'Half Brick.' Between that point and Groudle Town, he became aware of an approaching figure, slight, girlish, and moving with a curious caution along the edge of the kerb. He saw that she was blind before he had recognised her as his sister, Kit.

He muttered an expletive under his breath as he went to meet her. His step attracted her attention and she stopped, listening. Then she laughed happily.

"It's you, Dennis, I know your walk. For shame, you selfish fellow, where have you been all this time? Thinking of anything but your poor little sister, I'll be bound! Well, I was just coming up to the 'Half Brick' to ask about you, for all the world as if I were your wife."

"And if you were," grumbled her brother wrathfully, "I'd break every bone in your body, to teach you better manners!"

"No, you wouldn't," Kit said, "for if I were your wife I should know how to coax you. There, I forgive you, Dennis, dear, but I have wanted you really. Moira says I do nothing but sing—

"Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,
Tell her that she'll never see her sailor any more."

"Stow that!" cried the ex-steward, for she had broken into an imitation of his own drunken accents. "Come on, I was just going down to the cottage, let's go together."

Kit put her arm in his, and they passed on side by side.

"Do you know, Dennis, dear," she remarked, "I was dreaming about you last night. Oh, such a queer dream."

"Was it?" said her brother, morosely.

"Yes," continued the blind girl. "I dreamt I was down on the old breakwater, sitting on the steps as I used to. And I dreamt I heard someone come along the breakwater—someone singing 'Give my love to Nancy,' and I got up and ran up the steps. And as soon as I reached the top I recognised the walk. It was you, Dennis, and I said, 'Oh, then it was you all the time!' Wasn't that a silly dream?"

The ex-steward showed his teeth in a silent snarl. "Yes," he answered, "a foolish dream enough."

Kit laughed. "I asked Moira this morning," she added, "if she had ever heard that song about Nancy. She said, 'No.' And Mr. Davenal hadn't either."

Dennis Hartigan's eyes flashed. They had come to a winding, sequestered lane that crossed their road. He turned down it—it had high, over-grown banks and deep, brim-full ditches. Dennis Hartigan looked before and behind him with a singular anxiety.

"No, not that way," said the blind girl, "that's the level crossing, Dennis, and I hate the trains."

An expression of grim intelligence flickered over the other's features. "Oh, nonsense," he said, "I'm with you!" And he drew her forward along the lane.

From the first bend in the narrow thoroughfare he could see the level crossing. And the great central gates were shut. The ex-steward's glance went to the distance signals of the neighbouring station. They were down, a train was almost due. He led the blind girl onward, and piloted her through the the small side-gate. Already his ear had caught the rumble of the approaching train. He passed on to the level crossing, leading the blind girl.

The shriek of a whistle sounded, and the funnel and buffers of a locomotive showed round the distant bend.

Dennis Hartigan loosed his hold of his sister's arm, and sprang over the wooden flooring of the crossing. "Stand there," he said, "you are quite safe."

The blind girl, left standing alone between the metals, extended her hands gropingly; the ground was shaken by the tremendous vibrations of the oncoming express.

(*Another instalment next week.*)

Your Editor Chats.

An announcement of the new competition which will start next week appears on page 367. If you carefully read all the particulars you will see what a simple and pleasant occupation it will afford for the long, dull evenings. The prizes, too, are well worth winning. The Index to Stations in Bradshaw's Guide, in which all the correct solutions are to be found, is the one which competitors in the *Pearson's Weekly* £5 a Week for Life Competition are using, so, if you are going in for that, there will be no need for you to purchase a new index. To prevent disappointment you should at once order a copy of next Tuesday's *Short Stories*—it is dated March 28th—to be reserved for you; there is sure to be a big demand for that number. If you have not already got an Index to Stations, it will be as well to send for one *now*, so as to be able to start the competition without any delay.

In addition to the valuable money prizes offered in the new competition, we are giving away twenty-five of our plendid Gramophones. A large number of these have been awarded already in various competitions, and all the lucky recipients have expressed their very great delight at getting such handsome presents. There may still be a few persons who do not know what a Gramophone is, and perhaps think that it is an intricate machine which requires very careful handling, if it is not soon to get out of order. Such, however, is not the case. The Gramophones which we are giving away are very simple in construction, and they reproduce perfectly whatever is on the records, whether it be a song, recitation, or instrumental music. All you have to do is to place the record in position, and then set the machine in motion. It will continue to reproduce the sounds as long as you wish it to do so. Each instrument is accompanied by two records and is fitted with a concert sound-box, which greatly increases the volume of sound.

The last of the series of articles by Lady Peggy Carstairs on "How I Chaperoned Belinda" appears on page 375 and the four succeeding pages. I am sure that all my readers will be sorry that they have come to an end—I myself most certainly am.

"The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl," on pages 368-372, are well worth perusal, and I would recommend my readers—especially the members of the fair sex who have to earn their own living, and are hoping to make a name in the world—to read them carefully, and endeavour to profit by the experiences through which Maud Cardew passed before she attained her present position.

I have been glad to receive a large number of favourable criticisms of the new serial story, "Held Apart," and strongly recommend those who have not yet started to read it to do so at once.

In a few weeks' time I shall publish reproductions of a number of heads of men of various nationalities. They have taken a considerable time to get together owing to the difficulty of obtaining the correct national costume, and even now the number is not quite so complete as I could wish, but I think I have managed to find the most picturesque ones.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

The Story of a - - Masterful Woman.

Miss Elizabeth Morant was impatient; that was rendered perfectly clear by the contraction of the brows and the firmly-closed lips, and it was further indicated by the quick, intermittent tapping of the fingers on the little rosewood table.

Her dress and surroundings denoted ample means, while the strong, imperious face bore proof of the exceptional character of the woman. People who knew her said that, given the regal power, she might have become a modern Queen Elizabeth, for she was a woman born to command.

She had reached the age of thirty without marrying—not very surprising, remarked the gossips with a smile. The number of men who could love such a woman was small; some might have married her for money, being satisfied to play second fiddle in order to better their social position, but she had not encouraged any advances so far.

It was an open secret that she had come into her wealth unexpectedly; an elderly great-uncle had died intestate and she was the only relative; she had not even known of his existence and the inheritance was a great surprise for her, but she entered into her new life with the utmost composure.

She appeared quite unmoved by the sudden change from genteel poverty and drudgery to affluence and ease, a fact which testified to her almost unwomanly strength of mind.

Of her career prior to her elevation to fortune, her few friends had learnt nothing; she told them nothing about it and she ignored all "leading" questions and broad hints. They felt that there was something in it that would have interested them, but their curiosity was not satisfied.

The contracted brows were drawn still closer to the half-closed eyes and the tapping became more impatient. At that moment the timepiece chimed three o'clock, ending with three musical notes to indicate the hour, and Miss Morant's brow cleared as she uttered a low laugh.

"How foolish of me!" she exclaimed. "I remember now! I said a quarter-past three, not a quarter to three. Of course, I altered *to* into *past!* I was afraid that he was behind the appointed time, which would have been an indication that he was not much disposed to—to be my tool!" she concluded with a quiet significance that was calculated to produce an uncanny feeling in the person who heard it had there been any one present to hear it.

She rose and went to a larger table, from the drawer of which she took a thin packet. It contained two photographs.

"The dead love and the living!" she murmured. A softened expression crept over the imperious features, effecting a great change in the woman. "Perhaps I ought not to call Ralph Seton my dead love," she continued reflectively. "He is dead, but I still have a place for him in my heart, and I am proving it by remaining true to the vow I made to repay him who made Ralph suffer, flee and die of malaria in a foreign land before I could scrape together the money to follow him.

"And you"—addressing the other portrait—"I love you now, and I know that Ralph would approve, for you are bold and determined, as he was and as I am. Yes, I love you, I love you!"

She raised the senseless card to her lips and kissed it in the way that one would expect such a woman to do it, passionately, as though her whole being were condensed into that kiss. As she took the card from her lips a maid entered with a message. The girl stopped in confusion, but Miss Morant remained unabashed and haughty.

"Yes, show Mr. Poole in here!" she commanded.

She replaced the packet in the drawer and seated herself to receive the expected caller. Mr. Poole was a man of medium height, clean-shaven, alert; his eyes were of extraordinary keenness, which he tried to repress. He took in the general aspect of the room and its contents in one swift glance, and stepped towards the chair to which Miss Morant motioned him.

"Well?" she inquired.

"I'll do it!" replied Mr. Poole, with just a trace of hesitation. "Business in the private inquiry line is bad and——"

"The Maxham case did not help you much?" she queried, with the faintest of smiles.

"No!" admitted Mr. Poole with a flush. "That was a bit awkward, but I did nothing shady. Over zealous, that was it. Served my client too well! But this job of yours—you see, it might be necessary to trump up something. I think it's worth more than you offer!"

"I'll add £250!"

"Then it's a bargain!" said Poole. "It won't be my fault if it doesn't come off. Give me the full particulars."

"Here they are!" returned Miss Morant with her usual calmness. "Ralph Seton and I were engaged. He was employed in the firm of Masters & Co. One day it was discovered that someone had been embezzling some money—a large sum. Ralph was suspected, and, to avoid prison, he fled.

"He hoped to get away till the hue and cry had subsided and then return and work quietly till he had gathered the evidence necessary to clear himself. He died of malaria in South America. I hadn't enough money to go out to him. I have visited his grave since then and have vowed to repay the debt incurred by the one who accused Ralph."

"It's revenge, that's what it comes to when you put it in plain language!" said Poole bluntly.

Digitized by Google

Miss Morant winced and frowned; she always spoke out unequivocally herself, but she resented this bluntness on the part of another.

"Call it what you like; I call it justice!" she answered frigidly. "Now you know what to do. I have given you the name of the firm and of the accused man, the unjustly accused man. It occurred nearly seven years ago, and I have been hoping to—to avenge Ralph myself. I use your own word, for avenging is to have revenge! I have not done it; the task is not one for a woman unaided. I want you to do it."

"You want to ruin the man who accused Ralph Seton, if I can find him! And if Ralph Seton was guilty, really?"

Poole was amazed at the effect of his words. Miss Morant's eyes seemed to flash fire, she sprang from her seat and stood before him with clenched hands.

"He was innocent to me, and I care not what the world thinks! He was taken from me, our happiness was wrecked, and it is but justice that the life of the one who brought this upon us should receive the same fate. Your instructions are to ruin the man who ruined our lives; do the work and receive the pay!"

Poole left the presence of Miss Morant about ten minutes later with £250 in gold in his pockets, the first instalment of his pay. He was hard up and this liberal treatment, before he had done a stroke, won him over.

"She will part with even more than she said if I work the thing all right!" he muttered. "I don't want all this heavy stuff about me though; I'd sooner have paper. I shan't bank it; that might lead to something against me later on.

"She's artful! No cheque, no paper, but gold, so that there's no tracing it back to her! I'll bet that she has collected this money now and then, so as not to draw on a big cheque!" He meditated further. "Can't understand a woman like that being capable of the tender passion that love is supposed to be! Still, love works wonders."

Mr. Poole would have seen the confirmation of his concluding remark had he been present at the Tristam ball that evening.

Miss Elizabeth Morant, attired in a manner that became her to perfection, was attracting general attention and a certain amount of envious admiration. Was she not beautiful and was she not receiving marked attention from Lord Alminton?

Younger ladies saw with sorrow their chance of capturing this eligible young man vanishing before their eyes. There had been some gossip about these two; rumour had said that Lord Alminton had paid Miss Morant much attention during a stay in Nice, but the matter had not been taken seriously.

A particularly delightful waltz had just terminated and Lord Alminton was escorting Miss Morant to a seat. The dreamy music and the enjoyment of the dance had exhilarated both; he was flushed and entranced, while her face wore an expression that no one had seen on it before. It resembled the look that overspread her countenance when gazing at the portraits, but nobody in the ball-room had seen that.

"Miss Morant, may I take you to a seat and get you an ice or—or will you walk with me through the gallery? This is the interval, and—it would give me great pleasure to spend a few minutes with you apart from the crowd!"

It was curious that each should lose some of his or her individuality when with the other. He was not usually so hesitating, and she almost blushed at her action in securing his portrait unknown to him. It was so unlike her to feel abashed!

"I prefer a walk along the gallery," she said, not daring to look up.

His heart gave a great bound. He conducted her to a quiet corner and, forgetful of the supposed desire to walk through the gallery they sat down.

"Miss Morant, I have been waiting for this opportunity ever since we met in Paris. I have tried to get near to you, I have haunted the places where I expected to find you. I have been tormented when I saw you surrounded by others or when I could not find you, and I have been transported with joy when I could get near you for a moment

"I was determined to bring matters to a climax to-night. Elizabeth"—taking her hand in his—"it may be presumption but I must tell you to-night that I love you! I must learn my fate. Dare I hope that I am not to go from here with the sadness of disappointment—dare I hope that my love is returned, even in some slight measure?"

She kept her eyes lowered for a moment; she could not look at him till she had controlled her emotion; she must not betray the depth of her passion immediately. With an effort she repressed the feeling which she knew was gleaming in her eyes; then she looked up at him, with something like composure and replied softly: "You may hope!"

"Elizabeth! Those words bring happiness to me!" With a swift movement he bent forward and kissed her. The kiss was returned with a warmth that sent him into the seventh heaven of a lover's paradise. He would have repeated the caress, but another couple came into view.

"Why did you say that you must learn your fate to-night, Robin?" she asked as they went back to the ball-room, the happiest of mortals. "You seemed to lay special stress on the word."

"Ah! The remembrance makes me unhappy, for it brings me back to earth!" he cried. "I must be off to-morrow on business, and it will be a month before I return—I am going to Egpyt. But the time will pass, and when I come back, our engagement shall be announced!"

The idea of parting so soon was not pleasant, but Elizabeth was strong-minded enough to make the best of it and be happy. She was simply brilliant during the rest of the evening, eclipsing all the members of her sex and enchanting all the members of the opposite sex.

He had told her to call him by his family pet name of "Robin," and she had not thought to ask him for any other. Letters could be addressed with his title, and she could wait to learn the other; she might find out from a book of reference, but she would not buy or borrow one, or seek the information through a third party. "He will tell me, and it matters nothing!" she declared, with a mixture of loving confidence and queenly dignity that befitted her. So she waited.

Mr. Poole called a week later, and he found Miss Morant as hard and haughty as on the previous occasion.

"Yes, I'm on the track, well on it!" he replied, in answer to her question. "I've got my hand on the man who shouted the whole thing from the housetops, so to say."

"Well?" said Miss Morant, in a tone of sarcastic inquiry. "You know what to do, I think? Why trouble me? Your money is safe when you have finished! Or do you want some more on account?"

"I'll take it, although that is not what I came about!" retorted Poole, with a slight flush. "I've come to ask if I shall go on, because I've heard a rumour—about you—and I thought it would—might, I mean—alter your plans!"

Mr. Poole was not easily embarrassed, but this woman was so different from others. If she had been a man, she would have been one of those who rule an Empire or a Government, dragging subjects or colleagues wherever she pleased. Miss Morant wa-

Digitized by Google

nettled that this fellow should mention that he had heard her name coupled with that of Lord Alminton, and she crushed him.

"Never mind what you have heard! I have not engaged you to play the spy on myself!" she said icily. "Devote your attention to the work for which I am paying you!"

There was a sting in that little speech that pierced its way deep into the sensitive portion of Mr. Poole's anatomy, and he shut his teeth hard as he rose to go.

"Then Basil Westerham is to be made to go through it, that's the programme?" he said rather insolently. "Very good! I have my finger on the whole thing, and I can make the transaction look shady for him by just a little juggling with this or that, I fancy.

"Most people believe that the other fellow was guilty, but it is a bit involved, and it's a toss up whether he wouldn't have cleared himself, or got off for want of absolute clear proof, if he hadn't scooted! I suppose you are playing your own little game, and if you don't like to let me into the know, I can do without it! Yes, I'd like another instalment, a good one!"

Another payment was made, again in gold.

"She's a demon!" mused Mr. Poole, as he went homewards. "I must get some more out of her in a week, so that I'm pretty safe if the thing doesn't succeed! It'll make a stir, and he may have a tough job to clear himself, but I'm inclined to think that it isn't possible to push it so far as she wants. But I'm not going to concern myself about her; she is pretty artful in keeping clear, and I must be the same. That last move of hers is smart, if it's true!"

Mr. Poole kept his word, and demanded another instalment of his pay at the end of seven days. Then he set to work, and Miss Morant followed his request to watch the newspapers for news of Basil Westerham.

Miss Morant began to grow impatient as the days passed without news. Lord Alminton was expected back, and would arrive in Southampton on the 27th, and she hungered for her triumph of revenge before she enjoyed the triumph of love.

Occasionally she felt uneasy, a strange sentiment for her; if Lord Alminton should know of her action in crushing Basil Westerham and avenging Ralph Seton, would he approve? He might, for he was a strong man, and he was the soul of honour, and if Ralph had really been guilty? She laughed mirthlessly; could it be that she was becoming a prey to remorse?

She had believed that Ralph Seton was innocent. Stay! Had she believed it or had she been blinded by the love of a strong woman, as she was? Had she blindly followed the rage which the destruction of her happiness had aroused in her?

"A good lover can be a good hater," says the old saw; this is true from the very fact that anyone who is capable of deep feeling must have intense sentiments of all kinds, good or bad.

Elizabeth Morant had allowed this intensity of feeling to have full play, and she had hated the man who had brought the embezzlement to light, hated him with an intensity that would not allow her to think of anything else than the fact that he had ruined her happiness.

She tried to shut out the disturbing thoughts, but they forced themselves upon her, day by day, till she grew nervous. Her old calmness was deserting her. She thought of sending for Poole, and telling him to desist, but this was such a turnabout that she could not at first reconcile conflicting feelings.

At length she resolved to undo all that she had done. "I have the prospect of being happier than I dreamt of!" she said. "I must not endanger that happiness! I will let the other pass!" So she sent for Poole.

He was gone and his office closed! That accounted for the absence of news! Miss Morant hardly knew whether to be angry or pleased, but Lord Alminton was to arrive that day and he would visit her in the evening.

She waited for him, but he came not. Perhaps the vessel had been delayed; he would come on the morrow. She passed a restless night, full of foreboding, and read the confirmation of that presentiment of evil as soon as she opened her newspaper on the following morning.

A most sensational affair, the newspapers called it. Young Lord Alminton, on arriving at Southampton late in the evening, the vessel having been delayed by stress of weather in the Bay of Biscay, had been charged with being concerned in the embezzlement of a sum of money from Messrs. Masters and Co.

The actual theft had been committed years ago, when Lord Alminton, then Basil Westerham, a clerk with small prospects, had brought the charge of embezzlement against Ralph Seton, a fellow clerk. Seton was believed to be guilty, and he confirmed this opinion by fleeing the country.

Lately, however, a younger member of the firm had been going over the old papers at the instigation of one of his staff, and had, it was alleged, found evidence enough to support a charge of complicity, if not one of embezzlement itself.

Basil Westerham was well connected, but did not dream of succeeding to the title; fate had removed those who had stood nearer to it, and he had suddenly found himself heir. He adopted the family name of the Almintons, calling himself Basil Casselton, and had finally succeeded to the title. There was a rumour that further revelations were to be expected.

Elizabeth Morant knew very little of what passed that day. A telegram arrived from "Robin" after midday, saying that he would be with her in the evening. She waited for him with a dull sense of annihilation. He was coming to her, liberated on bail, and suffering under the charge which she had brought upon him! Now she understood what Poole had begun to tell her! Oh, why had she been so haughty, so vindictive! Had she been less imperious, she might have averted the consequences of her acts!

He came, and she retreated from him.

"My darling!" he cried in anguish. "Surely *you* do not think me capable of such a vile thing!"

He had misinterpreted her movement. No! She could not believe him capable of it! Yet—was Ralph really guilty? She was torn by opposing sentiments, but the sight of Robin's face threw the weight of conviction into the scale that stood for him.

"I shrink from you because I am unworthy of you, Robin!" she cried, calling him by the name that had become so dear to her. "It is not you who are guilty; it is I. I have brought this upon you!"

"You!" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes! I will tell you!" She cast aside all reserve; standing erect and scorning to spare herself one iota of the shame, she confessed what she had done—confessed it humbly and fully.

"I will make it all plain and clear you!" she cried, when she had finished the wretched confession. "Then I will go from you to prison, if it be my lot. All I ask is—do not despise me too much, for I love you, and your condemnation of me will be the bitterest part of my punishment!"

"It is dreadful, and it might have been impossible to undo all this wrong! No, I will not blame you more!" he said, as she cowered before him. "Your punishment is great."

"And you share it! I have brought it upon you!" she wailed. "My wickedness has recoiled upon me, but you suffer as well. I cannot bear it!"

"The happiness of the past month will help me to bear the pain of separation," he said sadly. "I forgive you!"

She glanced at him with yearning, her eyes lighted by a resolve that had just sprung up within her.

"We must part, but before you go, grant me one favour!" she pleaded.

He seemed to divine her wish. Their lips touched, and she kissed him with passionate fervour, as she had kissed his portrait. Then she saw him go, slowly, reluctantly.

Lord Alminton was cleared of the charge, but no scandal resulted. To the public, it was treated as a grave mistake, and in private the wrongdoers were let off lightly at Lord Alminton's request, whereby he saved the woman he loved. She lives quietly in a little village now, and once a year she receives a specially printed card with good wishes, over which she always weeps.

George Day.

Digitized by Google

AN ATTEMPTED ELOPEMENT.

Telling of One which had a Happy Ending.

"We hadn't much money, but weddings are cheap,
So, while the old fellow was snoring asleep,
With a lad and a ladder she managed to creep
Over the garden wall!"

"Don't endure it, Ida, darling!" cried Frank.

"I won't!" cried Ida. She swallowed hard, and looked very determined. She was always brave when she was with Frank. "If I hadn't money do you suppose my step-father would want to keep me? I have to be governess and nurse-maid in chief for his impertinent children five hours out of every day.

"I wouldn't mind if they were my own half-brothers and sisters. I don't see what possessed mamma to marry a man who had two stupid boys and three cross girls for her to wait upon!"

Frank Keith prided himself upon his strict sense of justice.

"Jasper Rayforth is a handsome man still," he said.

"Handsome!" Ida Sitwell's voice was contemptuous. "He looks like a brigand! Exactly like the brigand of a story-book—black, pointed beard, black eyes, sham courtesy, and deference that is a cloak for scheming insolence. Oh, why did mamma ever listen to him? She and I were so happy together!"

They were walking through Hyde Park, which was overwhelmingly majestic and beautiful in its royal ermine and innumerable glittering frost jewels.

"Not so happy as you and I shall be together, Ida, if only——" Not even the snowflakes heard the remainder of the softly-spoken words. But Ida did; Ida, listening with bright head bent and soft cheeks flushing.

Many walking briskly across the short cut to Rotten Row—there were no saunterers in the park that cold, bracing, midwinter day—looked with eyes lenient or envious at the two who seemed so completely oblivious of all save each other.

He, tall and vigorous, straight-striding, and manly—she, fair and girlish and fur-clad as a princess of the Russias.

"Oh, I—I couldn't, Frank! I wouldn't dare to!"

"I suppose I'm a fool to hope you would!" he returned bitterly. "Your people would put me down for a fortune-hunter; but even if I should not succeed in my profession—I've got enough to take good care of you, and——"

Ida drew a quick little breath and turned suddenly.

"Now—Frank! Don't be unjust! I haven't any people—as you say. Only a person. That's my mother. And I haven't all of her since she married Rayforth. And if I knew you could give me only a third-storey flat and two pairs of gloves a year I'd marry you just the same, because——"

"My dear little love!" he murmured. "I can't bear to see you unhappy there, Ida—and Heaven knows I'm not half the fellow I might be if I had you beside me! Your mother——"

"Oh, my mother," said the girl, with a piteous touch of finality in her tone. "She is changed. She is no longer like a gay elder sister as she always was before her second marriage. She is controlled by that man. His influence dominates her. But still for her sake I would not like——"

"She loves you—desires your happiness?"

"Above all things."

"Then——" he began. And once more he spoke so low that only she heard. He pleaded well. He was no laggard in love. His passionate protestations reached the depths of the girl's soul and rang there like inspiriting music. "If brave heart were to win fair lady——"

Suddenly, with a little swift, impulsive, gracious motion she swayed slightly towards him, slipped her hand within his arm. And she said just one word.

The bare, black-limbed trees of the park were silhouetted against a sky of pallid gold when Ida Sitwell reached home.

The house of Jasper Rayforth was a grim, square, old-fashioned mansion set back among dense shrubbery, and having for its nearest neighbour another house equally grim, and, if possible, more quaint of outline and aspect.

Supper was on the table when the girl entered. Rayforth, having eaten a comfortable midday meal in town himself, frowned upon the idea of dinner in the evening. A shrill babel of young voices arose:

"Ida, I've got to have you play over that fantasie for me to-night!"

"Ida, you must help me with my German!"

"Ida, mamma says you'll trim my hat for me."

"What kept you so long, any way?"

The girl made no reply; no comment. She took her accustomed seat. The rose colour which the cold had brought to her cheeks did not fade; indeed, it deepened. But when her mother spoke to her in a low voice she listened attentively, replying with a quick, warm smile.

"That old chap next door is becoming more of a crank than ever," remarked Rayforth. "I met him to-day and he looked at me as though I were an utter stranger."

"He is always very polite to me," Mrs. Rayforth declared.

Ida laughed.

"Oh, that's because you admired the flowers he grew in the back garden last summer," she said.

When the tasks of the evening had been accomplished and Ida was alone in her own little room looking out on the garden which had been so gay a few months before she set deliberately to work.

First she put on her best dress. Then she packed her

Digitized by Google

portmanteau. After that she got together in a handbag such necessaries, valuables, and papers, as were of especial worth to her. There was the writing of a note remaining.

The little blurred, loving letter written, she turned out the gas, softly opened the window, and, warmly wrapped up, sat down by the sill—listening, waiting.

The night air came to her crisp, sweet, invigorating. Stars twinkled down in quite a sociable and conniving fashion.

Even the man in the pearl-white moon that went sailing up into a sapphire vault, seemed to wink with friendly and comical appreciation of a romance the like of which he had aided or defeated many a time in his innumerable experiences as spy or conspirator.

"Hark!" Ida started up as a sound came to her. She leant forward. "Frank."

"Sh—h! Yes!"

A wavering black object slowly upreared itself, resting against the window-sill. Ida lifted her handbag out of the window, lowered it to the ground by the cord to which it was attached.

The next instant, trusting to the consideration of the moon which had momentarily disappeared, for all the world like an accommodating chaperon, she stepped out on the ladder, began her light, sure-footed, confident descent.

She was half way to the ground, to her lover, freedom, happiness, when the side door of the house next door was flung wide—a billow of light streamed forth.

"Hold on, there!" cried a cracked voice. "Oh, I say Rayforth—Rayforth!"

The next instant a gaunt old figure, attired in pyjamas, a flapping dressing gown, and a skull cap, came flying down the steps leading from his library, darted across the space intervening between the houses and pounded upon the nearest window of the house Ida had just quitted.

"Burglars!" they heard him quaver in shrill accents. "Burglars!"

Ida felt her courage oozing out at her finger tips.

"They will find us! He will make me go back! Oh, Frank!"

But Frank was not to be baulked of his bride. He seized the ladder, carried it a few feet, propped it against another window.

Already there was movement and clamour inside. Lights flashed up over the house. They could hear the excited tones of Rayforth as he sent someone for the police. Frank grabbed up Ida's bag—caught her by the hand. "Run!" he whispered, "we've got to rush for it!"

A swift dash, then they paused, dismayed. There was no scaling the high wooden fence at the rear. And in front the light from a gas lamp made the street as bright as day.

The open door to the left caught Keith's eye; to see was to act. A whispered word—a rapid scamper—and the two, panting, laughing, breathless, faced each other in the cosy den of the recluse neighbour of the Rayforths.

Even as they stood so, they heard sounds as if the police had arrived. Quick as thought Ida turned out the light. Unseen they peered out. They saw dancing lights, dark, moving forms, heard sharp inquiries.

A cordon of police surrounded the house. Sudden excitement stimulated the searchers. The ladder had been discovered! He of the skull cap was pipingly reiterating how he had seen the burglary attempted.

"They're in my house, too!" he shrieked suddenly. "The light has been put out!"

He made a dash across the snowy lawn. A couple of brawny policemen outstripped him. Ida and Keith, fled towards the door opening into the hall, out in the darkness, came crash against a book-case. Lanterns flashed. Electricity flared up.

Keith, his arm flung round Ida, stood defiantly facing the burglar-hunters. At sight of the tenant of the house he gave a violent start. "Uncle Hugo!" he cried.

"Frank Keith!" The old man was smiling grimly. "I didn't think I was interrupting an elopement!"

Furious with rage Jasper Rayforth tore in. He was waving a letter wildly. His wife timidly followed.

"You must come back, Ida!" he shrieked. "You are under my control. You——"

"Don't get excited!" counselled Hugo Bertrand, gravely. His skull cap and wig set rakishly over one eye gave him a grotesque appearance, but he was quite serious.

"I knew my nephew here was in love with your pretty step-daughter. I knew also you would permit no suitor of hers to enter your house, so strong," smiling satirically—"was your desire to keep her. As he is my nearest relative, and will be my heir, I decided to find out for myself what kind of a girl she was, and so took this house near you."

He crossed the room and took a hand of Ida and of Frank.

"I've found out," he said. "She is sweet and good and patient. She watered my flowers when I was ill last summer—every evening! Oh, I knew! And if I had known that the ladder was lifted to-night that she might leave your house forever, Jasper Rayforth, I—I——" The old voice quivering—"I'd have held it—yes, sir!"

The police withdrew, Mrs. Rayforth, pleased and secretly rejoicing, kissed her daughter and Frank. Rayforth gasped out apologies to the eccentric old millionaire whom he would fain conciliate.

"We will have a grand wedding," began Bertrand, "and——"

"A wedding reception if you will," faltered Ida. "But—but Frank and I were married this afternoon!"

"What! You sly young rascals! Well, so much the better! And now you'll live with me; I'm all alone except for the servants. You'll be mistress here, and you'll brighten an old man's life—eh, little girl?"

For answer the bride lifted her pretty lips to the kind old face bent down to kiss hers.

W. T. Miller.

Digitized by Google

CONCERNING TUCKS.

The Story of a Girl who Wasn't Allowed to "Grow Up."

"Netta, are you ever going to grow up?"

The question was asked in a bantering tone, but the eyes of the man who asked it were serious and searching. They were met by one swift, questioning glance in return.

"I am thinking of letting out a few tucks for my birthday," Netta said, with an exaggerated sigh and surveying the pair of slender black legs swinging from the low bough of the apple-tree upon which she was perched.

"Oh! So tucks do it, do they?" Harold Longden said, smiling up at her from his horizontal position on the grass.

Netta looked down into the bronzed face with a curious intentness. It was a good face to look into, not particularly handsome, but a face to trust instinctively, with kind eyes and a firm mouth.

"Tucks and hair," she replied, see-sawing the bough by kicking her foot against the trunk.

"I see. Down with the tucks and up with the hair. A sort of pulling-out-at-both-ends business."

Netta nodded.

"Then on Thursday we shall expect an elongated edition to dinner?"

"Don't be too sure," Netta retorted, see-sawing violently. "No tucks mean no football, no tree-climbing, no fun of any sort."

"You will be eighteen on Thursday," Harold reminded her with a frown.

Netta suddenly stopped see-sawing.

"Harold, do you want me to grow up?" she asked.

"Yes," Harold replied, raising himself on his elbow.

For a long, sweet second through the golden-green twilight of the orchard the blue eyes looked up into the brown. Then the bough bent with a creek and a jerk, and Netta's black legs began to vanish up the tree.

"I can get to the very top, Harold!" she cried in a curiously high-pitched shaky voice.

"Come down!" Harold exclaimed almost roughly, raising himself with a quick movement which was checked by a sudden painful contraction of his mouth. "You know I can't come after you with this lame leg."

"'Nobody asked you, sir, she said,'" Netta cried shrilly, waving a hand from between the topmost branches.

A hurt expression came into Harold's eyes.

"Aren't you coming down?" he asked in a stern voice.

"'We won't go home till morning,'" Netta sang, shaking the branches, but keeping her face hidden.

Harold limped silently away to the sound of the mocking song. He did not see a tragic, tear-stained face thrust from between the leaves to watch him out of sight even when the song was at its shrillest, nor that Netta swung herself swiftly from the tree and knelt to kiss the mossy mound which had been his pillow.

"I'll do it! Those tucks shall come out!" she exclaimed, hurriedly wiping away her tears.

Harold Longden closed the gate of the orchard behind him, cut across a corner of the huge kitchen-garden and through an arched door in the high, grey wall, reached the west terrace of Winstone Manor, his beautiful old home.

A lady sat in the shadow of the long, low house with some needlework in her hand and a book on her knee. She looked up at the sound of Harold's halting step on the stone flags and a spasm of pain passed swiftly across her stern, handsome face. As the daughter, wife and mother of soldiers, Mrs. Longden knew as much as most British women of the cost of serving Britain, and had paid it bravely, but the maiming of this, her youngest, last, and dearest cut her to the quick. She was smiling, however, when Harold dropped listlessly into a wicker chair at her side.

"What have you done with Netta?" she asked, when she saw that her son was alone.

"Netta is at the top of an apple-tree singing 'We won't go home till morning,'" Harold replied in a studiously level voice.

"What is worrying you? Can I help?" Mrs. Longden asked quickly.

"You are too sharp, mother," Harold said, smiling.

"What is it?" Mrs. Longden asked.

"Is eighteen and thirty-five a ludicrous combination? I want to marry Netta. She loves me, perhaps only with a child's love, though. Do you think that it would be taking an unfair advantage to marry her?" Harold asked slowly.

Mrs. Longden looked a little startled, and then laughed a little.

"I am so relieved. I feared it might be the mother!" she said.

"Mrs. Carylon? Oh, no! She is a very fascinating little woman, but I don't want to marry her," Harold replied, with some surprise.

"Have you been saying something to Netta this afternoon, then?" Mrs. Longden asked.

"N—no—er—I said nothing, but she is perhaps going to let out a few tucks for Thursday."

"I shall be much astonished if her mother allows any tucks to be let out," Mrs. Longden said quietly.

"But Mrs. Carylon has often assured me that Netta simply won't grow up," Harold objected.

"Mrs. Carylon is uncommonly fond of assuring people that Netta simply won't grow up," Mrs. Longden replied shortly.

"You have always been prejudiced against Mrs. Carylon, mother," Harold said, smiling. "Surely you cannot imagine that she does not want Netta to grow up."

"That is just what I do imagine," Mrs. Longden said calmly. "I think you must be mistaken."

Mrs. Longden was silent.

"Sometimes when Netta is in a serious mood," Harold continued, after a brief silence, "she seems almost a woman in her thoughts. There have been times when I could have told her—everything. But how can one make love to a child in short frocks? It seems—well, brutal. Have you noticed how like she is growing to poor Carylon?"

"Yes. She is very like her father. I am glad."

"Would you be glad to have Netta for a daughter, mother?" Harold asked wistfully.

"There is no one whom I should like you to marry more than Netta. I have grown to love the child very dearly during your absence. Mail days always found her here on some excuse or other. She has adored you all her life," Mrs. Longden said, rising and folding up her work.

Harold knew that his mother never said what she did not mean, and was satisfied, all unconscious of the agony of renunciation which so many mothers bear in smiling silence.

* * * * * *

"Netta, what can you be doing?"

Mrs. Carylon stood on the threshold of Netta's bedroom, her small, dainty figure suddenly rigid with anger and a steely look in her pale blue eyes.

Digitized by Google

"I know that it is mean and horrid of me, mother, to be altering this on the sly," Netta said, holding up the blue dress at which she was sewing, "but you know how I begged and prayed to be allowed a longer dress for my eighteenth birthday, and you would order me this just as short as ever. Fortunately, it has endless tucks, so I have let a few out and run ribbon over them to hide the stitching."

"How dared you!" Mrs. Carylon exclaimed furiously.

"Mother," Netta said, with trembling lips, "you cannot keep me pretending to be a child any longer. I have romped and played when I hated it just to seem what you tell everybody I am, but I won't do it any more. There are many people here who know my real age, if I am so small."

"Really, Netta, are you mad?" Mrs. Carylon exclaimed angrily, but with scarlet face. "And it is unpardonable of you to spoil this entirely new dress," she continued. "Give it to me. The tucks must be run in again carefully by hand."

"Oh, mother, I want to wear it to-night," Netta cried, clutching the dress to her breast.

"To-night! And why to-night, pray? There will be no one at the Longdens' save ourselves. It is only Harold's usual whim that you should go to dinner on your birthday."

Netta's face crimsoned and she held the frock tightly.

"And are you going to do up your hair to-night?" Mrs. Carylon asked, her eyes gleaming with a hard, fierce light.

"Yes," Netta replied, shrinking away from her mother. "It won't really make you look any older, mother, if I am grown up."

Mrs. Carylon suddenly bore down on Netta and snatched the dress from her clasp.

"If you act the naughty child, you must be treated as such," she said vindictively, turning to the door with the dress in her hand, furious that Netta had fathomed her selfish dread.

"Oh, mother, you can't love me a bit! I don't believe you ever have loved me. You have always thought me a nuisance," Netta wailed, the tragedy of her short life at last breaking into speech.

A few minutes later Harold Longden with a fat parcel under his arm crossed the road from his own park-gates to Mrs. Carylon's cottage, also his, and let at a merely nominal rent to the widow of his old friend, Dick Carylon, who had died on a far-off frontier battlefield, begging Harold to look after his girl-wife and baby child. Harold had almost reached the house when Netta cannoned wildly against him in her headlong career along the winding path.

"Why, Netta!" he exclaimed, at the sight of her tear-stained face. "What is the matter?"

"I—I simply can't grow up. There will be no tucks let out!" Netta sobbed, breaking away from him and rushing to the gate.

Harold was on the point of limping after her, when Mrs. Carylon's gay voice called him from an open window.

"Are you wondering if Netta has suddenly taken leave of her senses?" she asked, as Harold approached. "It is only the result of a little argument concerning tucks. The funny child simply will not grow up, but I don't suppose a mere man can connect tucks with growing up, can he?" and Mrs. Carylon smiled bewitchingly upon Harold, who, for once, responded but feebly to her chatter. He was intent upon following Netta and getting to the bottom of this tuck mystery, but Mrs. Carylon had not done with him yet.

"I am thinking of ceasing to be your grateful tenant shortly, and going abroad," she said, watching Harold covertly.

"Indeed! We shall be sorry to lose you," he said quietly, making up his mind that Netta should not accompany her mother, if he could help it.

Mrs. Carylon's face hardened, and the hopes which she had never quite ceased to entertain of remaining as mistress of Winstone Manor, finally vanished. Harold left his parcel for Netta, and took a speedy departure. Two hours later he reached home tired and aching after a long, vain hunt. None of Netta's usual haunts contained her, and it had begun to rain heavily. Harold felt anxious, and waited impatiently for the evening, after describing to his mother his encounter with Netta in the cottage garden.

Mrs. Longden had an appointment with her dressmaker, and drove into the neighbouring large town during the afternoon. As the carriage splashed along a muddy country road on its return, the two fat, grey horses came up with a little, dripping figure plodding wearily along by the hedge. Mrs. Longden pulled the check-string sharply, and put her head out of the window.

"Netta, what are you doing here? Get in at once," she said.

Netta obeyed meekly. She was worn out by this time by sheer physical fatigue. Slow, heavy tears rolled down her cheeks, but she said nothing, nor did Mrs. Longden question her. The carriage entered the park on the side furthest from Mrs. Carylon's cottage.

"You had better stay on for the evening," Mrs. Carylon said, when they stopped. "I will send a note to your mother."

Netta got out obediently, too limp and miserable to care what happened. But an hour later, after a hot bath and tea, when she lay on the sofa before the small, bright fire in Mrs. Longden's bedroom, a sudden burst of laughter escaped her.

"Oh, Mrs. Longden, do you think me quite demented?" she cried.

"No, my dear. I have tried to literally tramp out of worries myself," Mrs. Longden replied tranquilly from the depths of her deep, soft chair.

"Oh, then, you know how it hurts," Netta said tremulously.

Mrs. Longden suddenly slipped to the floor and took the girl in her arms.

"I don't believe you are half as stern as you look," Netta whispered, clinging to her wildly.

"Harold didn't see me looking like a drowned rat, did he?" she asked presently.

"No, I don't suppose that he knows you are here. I merely sent word that I was having tea in my room," Mrs. Longden replied smiling.

"I expect mother will send me some clothes," Netta said, with a heavy sigh.

"Suppose I lend you some old finery of my young days. Girls usually like to dress up," Mrs. Longden said, going to a high, oak press. A brilliant flash of hope filled Netta's eyes.

"Oh, Mrs. Longden, how lovely! Please let me get dressed at once! What fun it will be!" Netta cried excitedly, springing from the sofa.

Mrs. Longden laughed softly, as she bent over the drawer and raised a fold of rustling tissue paper. A faint fragrance of lavender stole through the room.

* * * * *

Harold went into the library before dinner, intending to read until his visitors arrived. A small fire had been lit here as elsewhere on account of the rain, and there was somebody standing before it on the hearth-rug, her head and shoulders indistinct in the dusk.

The firelight played upon a faded purple skirt with a flowery pattern running over it. The figure was far too slender for his mother. Who could it be? Harold paused in surprise. A burst of merry laughter made him tingle from head to foot. Whose laughter save Netta's had that peculiar thrilling note?

"I don't believe you know me, Harold. What fun! Your mother found me out for a walk wet through, and brought me home by the south gate? This is one of her old gowns. Isn't it a beauty? And Betsy has done up my hair in a quaint fashion to match. How do I look? I am quite grown up and without letting tucks out either, but the tucks have done it after all," Netta wound up incoherently.

Harold was striking a match. What he saw by the candle-light made him suddenly shy and dumb. Such a dainty

(*Concluded at foot of next page.*)

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Starts next Tuesday.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

25 Splendid Gramophones.

An entirely new competition will be placed before the public for the first time in "Short Stories" dated March 28th, which will be on sale next Tuesday. It will be exceedingly simple, and will be open to every person who reads "Short Stories."

WHAT YOU WILL HAVE TO DO.

The competition will consist of paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom. You will have to write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or No. 8 Room, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of Railway Stations under the conditions stated.

The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

THE FIRST PARAGRAPHS WILL APPEAR IN *SHORT STORIES* ON SALE NEXT TUESDAY. ORDER YOUR COPY NOW.

old-time figure stood revealed, with such a delicate, quaint charm about it, a woman where he had looked for a child. A brilliant colour flooded the thin, young face, and the dark eyes were starry with the hint of recent tears.

"I suppose you are not really grown up. It is only a mere frolic," Harold said hesitatingly at last.

Netta's lips opened, then closed again. She looked away from Harold restlessly, and seemed more than once on the point of speaking. A fierce battle between love and loyalty was going on within her.

"Tell me why you want me to grow up," she said at last with a crimson face.

"Dear, I want to ask you to marry me. I'm thirty-five and a broken-down old soldier, but——"

"Don't! I won't hear such rubbish! That is, I mean the 'broken-down old soldier' is all rubbish!" Netta cried, throwing her arms round Harold's neck. "And I am grown up if you want me to be," she whispered a few minutes later.

* * * * *

"And so you found my little, lost birdie out in the rain, dear Mrs. Longden. Was it not foolish of the funny darling to go for a walk on such a day? But I am never anxious about her. She is such a Wandering Jew. It is so good of you to have kept her, and thank you so much for sending the carriage for me. And where is the truant now?" Mrs. Carylon asked, looking round the long south drawing-room as she greeted her hostess.

"In the library with Harold, I believe. Here they are!"

"Netta!" And Mrs. Carylon's silvery-sweet voice acquired suddenly a harsh, angry note, which made Harold give the hand he held a close grip.

"Doesn't she look nice?" Mrs. Longden said. "We had just dressed her up when her own clothes came, and we were too charmed to undress her."

"Will you give me Netta for my wife, Mrs. Carylon?" Harold asked with soldierly promptness, holding Netta's hand fast.

"My dear Harold," Mrs. Carylon exclaimed *staccato* fashion, "to-morrow she will be a romping tomboy again."

"I don't think so, but I am quite willing to risk it," Harold replied.

"The child does not possess a single long frock! The thing is preposterous," Mrs. Carylon continued, with a violent attempt at laughter.

"Let a few tucks out," Mrs. Longden suggested, with secret malice, and Mrs. Carylon's face flamed.

"Ah, Netta, you won't quarrel with me about tucks again!" she exclaimed boldly, confident of Netta's loyalty.

"No, mother," Netta murmured, shrinking towards Harold.

H. Ward.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES. **YOU CAN BEGIN HERE.**

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

MY HEART'S DESIRE.

I AM a native of a seaside village in Cornwall. As I grew up I began to tire of the monotony of the life and determined to go out into the world and make a name for myself.

One day when I was in the ruins of the Old Keep, which is on the cliffs, meditating upon what I should do were I free to carve out my own destiny, two strangers appeared—evidently tourists, I thought. They told me they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood for a few days, and asked if I knew of any lodgings. I said that my father would be glad to put them up at the farm, and accordingly they came home with me.

Their names were the Honourable Robert Lestrange (commonly called Bobbie) and Di Northcote.

I told these two Londoners of my desire to see the world. Bobbie encouraged me in my ambitions, but Di advised me to stay at home. This, however, was not at all in my line, as I told him, and when he saw that nothing would shake me from my resolve, he promised to try to find something for me to do when I arrived in the great city. I made up my mind that I would do marvellous things, and become a great lady of the land—a duchess if possible.

There was a thick fog in London the day I arrived. Bobbie met me, and we started off in a hansom to my lodgings in Bloomsbury. On the way we encountered a dray drawn by some restive horses. Bobbie alighted to give what assistance he could. In the meantime I got frightened and left the cab, of which I soon lost sight in the fog, which was getting thicker.

While I stood on the steps of a house I heard a man's voice asking me to come inside and wait until the fog cleared. Feeling that I couldn't find Bobbie again I accepted the invitation.

We had tea, after which the man became rather familiar, and I had had about enough of him when Di came in, looking very surprised to find me there. He took me to my lodgings, where Bobbie was waiting, and the latter told me that the man in whose rooms I had been was Lord Cecil Trevor, one of the worst "men about town."

MY FIRST SITUATION.

AT eleven o'clock the next morning I was all ready for Di. By a most ingenious arrangement of screens and art serge, the fireplace end of my apartment was easily transformed into a sitting-room, and on the whole I was rather pleased with it.

True the window looked out on to a backyard, and a hideous grey building effectually blocked all chance of seeing the sky, except by flattening your nose against the glass; but I could easily rise above such drawbacks at that period, by the simple process of listening to the distant rumble of vehicles, that hummed "London, London, London," to my enchanted ears.

The pictures and books in the room also, I remember, left a good deal to be desired; and one of the former particularly—a large portrait of an eminent divine—had a most annoying habit of following all my movements, with a pair of condemning eyes.

I hated that picture, yet I never had the courage throughout my stay to ask the landlady to remove it.

The expression gave me a feeling that he spent the time cheerfully consigning me to a certain hot region, along with all the rest of humanity except a few favoured saints of whom he was the honoured head.

Bobbie, on the other hand, was fascinated by him. He would even stand and look at him with a familiar smile, and once he remarked, with a nod: "I say, old chappie, mind that fire doesn't get too low."

Well, to proceed, by a somewhat grotesque ordering of events, it was with the little backyard behind, and this hated picture, which was supported by a fearful and wonderful copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress," that I, the ambitious worldling, stood to receive Di Northcote.

He came into the room, leaving the door wide open, just the quiet, deliberate, business-like man he had always shown himself. It was a manner, that to me, in those days, was most irritating.

I fancied he was patronising, that he regarded me as a little country girl full of ridiculous notions only to be cured by experience; and I went very near to hating him. For, as you have probably observed, I am a young person with a very high opinion of myself, and not in the least addicted to crying small.

"How do you do?" he replied to my greeting. "I hope you are rested, and none the worse for your adventures yesterday."

I thanked him, and remarked that they had not been very

Digitized by Google

serious, then took the seat opposite to him. He got to business immediately.

"As I daresay you can imagine," he began, "it is anything but easy for a young stranger to come up to London and find occupation at once. As a matter of fact, it is exceedingly hard."

He paused a moment; but, as I had nothing to say, he went on:

"Of course influence is the great thing in this, as in all else, and because I have a particular weakness for our friend Bobbie, I have promised to exert mine on your behalf."

I thought he need not have been so impressive about his help being for Bobbie's sake; but I had the sense to realise that it mattered little enough so long as he exerted it for me.

"I have, in consequence," he continued, "managed to secure you a post as 'trier on,' I think that's what they call it, at Philips and Philips."

"Trier on!" I repeated vaguely, no doubt looking my astonishment. I don't know what I expected him to get for me, possibly I imagined myself private secretary to the Queen already, but I know the idea of being a 'trier on,' came as a considerable shock.

"Yes," he said, without moving a muscle of his face. "You try on mantles, and jackets, and those kinds of things, to show customers how they look."

I gazed at the fire for a few moments and wondered whether he was teasing me.

"Does a post like that require much influence?" I asked at last, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I secured this one through a Duchess," he replied.

Again there was a pause, then I said:

"Is the shop hers?"

"No," he told me, "but it is quite a usual thing for a good customer to be able to get these posts for girls at the best shops." He regarded me coolly in that slow way of his. "You don't much fancy it?" he said.

"I should not imagine it gives much scope," I replied, and doubtless my lips curled a little as they will at times.

"Scope for what?"

"Anything."

"There I think you are wrong. It will probably prove a useful means of discovering in what particular direction your talent lies. Meanwhile it is good pay. You begin in a fortnight, and it will be best for you to live in."

"Live in?" I repeated. "What does that mean?"

"Live on the premises. It is always usual for girls holding these posts to live in, but if you like to try to make your salary enough to live out, I believe it is possible to get permission. As I said before, I strongly advise your doing as the rest do."

"I should prefer to remain here," I said promptly. "How much salary am I to have?"

"Two pounds a week. Why do you wish to stay here?"

I found myself confronting Di Northcote, with an angry gleam in his face such as I had never seen before.

"I like to feel independent and I can manage quite well on that. Thank you very much indeed for being at so much trouble on my account."

"Not at all," he answered, rising to go. "I hope you will like your new post." Before leaving he stood for a few moments and looked at me hard. "I hope you will be very careful," he said, "where you go and with whom you associate in London. A young girl living alone cannot be too careful."

I bit my lips and made no reply.

"And don't do just whatever Bobbie wants you to," he went on in the same cool manner. "He's very hot-headed and foolish sometimes."

I glanced up indignantly. I could not let anyone slander Bobbie. At that moment my landlady passed the open door.

"He is just splendid!" I said shortly.

"You are quite right, he is," he answered, with perfect equanimity, "but he is also very young, and all young men are foolish. If you will let him, he will spend a great deal of money on you, but at the same time he cannot afford it."

"Really, Mr. Northcote!" I exclaimed hotly, "I cannot understand your speaking to me like this. I do not want Mr. Lestrange to spend sixpence on me, or indeed anything. Your advice borders upon insult."

He shrugged his shoulders in a way that made one want to shake him.

"My dear Miss Cardew," he said, "as I only know you so very slightly, circumstances compel me to judge you at present according to my knowledge of your sex generally. If my warning proves to have been unnecessary, I can only say that I shall be extremely glad."

"Then you may be glad now," I said haughtily, and, half-turning away, stared at the wall in front of me.

Unfortunately I hit just the right angle to catch the eye of that horrid divine, and if I had not been so indignant I must have smiled, and spoilt my admirable pose. For it seemed to me that he winked deliberately, then rubbed his hands together with a grin of anticipation.

"Good-morning," said Di cheerfully, taking up his hat.

"Good-morning," I replied, just glancing at him. For one second as our eyes met, I saw a gleam of admiration pass through his; then it was gone again almost instantly, and he bowed himself out, the careless, apathetic man of the world.

When Bobbie came a little later, I was still feeling very sore.

"Why," I said, "does your friend, Mr. Northcote, seem to make a special point of insulting me?"

"What's he been saying now?" he asked, looking amused.

"He took upon himself to give me advice concerning you. Told me not to do just what you wanted, and said that you

Digitized by Google

would spend a lot of money on me, if I let you. Ridiculous! As if I should dream of such a thing! Why, how could you spend a lot of money on me in a few days, as he seemed to imply."

Bobbie put his head on one side whimsically, and looked plaintive.

"There was one girl," he said slowly, "who got through one thousand, three hundred pounds, eighteen shillings and sixpence in five weeks."

"Impossible!" I ejaculated. "Were you very much in love with her?" I added.

"I suppose I thought I was," he said, with that same whimsical air. "She had beautiful auburn locks, which took off, only I didn't know it then, and big blue eyes and tiny little feet, and—well—and—anyhow, that's what she got out of me."

"You must be very rich, Bobbie," I said wonderingly.

"It just depends," he answered, with a solemn air. "Some weeks I'm not badly off at all; and others I'm obliged to be very polite and nice to anyone who would be likely to lend me a 'pony' in a needy moment."

"A pony!" I asked in surprise. "Do you mean to run away on?"

Bobbie shouted at that.

"Oh, you little innocent!" he cried, enjoying it immensely, "what a lot I shall have to teach you. I'll tell you what, we'll go and spend one now as I happen to be pretty flush, and then you'll understand all about it."

I put on my hat, and then he called a hansom and directed the driver to the Savoy Hotel, where he ordered a reckless lunch, including some expensive champagne and liqueurs. I enjoyed it immensely, for Bobbie was always good company, and I quite forgot Di Northcote's injunctions.

What that day cost Bobbie, I am afraid to think in the light of my present knowledge, but at the time ignorance was bliss, and I agreed to all his extravagant proposals without a word.

The people everywhere interested me immensely, but I did not like the way the men stared. My first impulse was to stare them out, but when I communicated this to Bobbie, he seemed highly tickled, and told me it would be most unwise.

I asked him why they stared so, and he said they always did at beautiful girls. Personally, I was more conscious of my countrified, ill-fitting costume than anything, and fancied they were criticising that, for I was convinced I did not look at all nice.

"My dear girl," Bobbie remarked, when I mentioned the fact, "if *you* went about dressed in sackcloth the men would still stare at you. Nothing, in fact, short of a mask, could prevent it."

I am disposed to think if anyone went about dressed in sackcloth, be their faces what they may, they would get stared at; but evidently that escaped Bobbie's observation at the moment.

After lunch we went to a *matinée*, and that was my first introduction to a London theatre. We sat in the stalls, and before we had been seated many minutes, someone suddenly tapped Bobbie on the back, and said in tones of huge enjoyment:

"What ho, Bobbie! At it again!"

Bobbie turned sharply, looking a little annoyed, but immediately his face broke into smiles, and he grasped the other man's hand.

"Harcourt! By Jove!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens are you doing in London? I thought you were in India."

"I'm home on sick leave," said the other man. "Had malaria, and was packed off on the *Victoria*. Bobbie," he added solemnly, with a twinkle as irrepressible as Bobbie's own—"The Wednesday before I sailed you were at a *matinée*, and that time it was very small, and dainty, and dark."

"Yes," said Bobbie sadly, "and very expensive."

Then he turned to me.

"Miss Cardew," he said, "let me introduce you to the bravest soldier in the British Army, and the biggest scoundrel out of it. He stands—or I should say, sits here—and his name is Nelson Harcourt.

"We were boys together," he went on sentimentally—"when we were young we loved the same girl, ate the same sweets, were ill over the same first cigar, and were generally caned for the same reason.

"Since then we have cut our wisdom teeth, and now we love different girls, drink each other's wines, smoke each other's cigars, and can give David and Jonathan points in loving. If Nelson, or Flip, as I always call him, has a fault, it's turning up when he isn't wanted; but he's a good chap to take a hint." And he winked in the most bare-faced manner.

I shook hands with Captain Harcourt, and from that moment until years later he fell trying to save a wounded trooper at Spion Kop, we were the greatest of friends. Indeed, all my life I must ever have in my heart a specially tender spot for those two handsome, careless-hearted boys. As a matter of fact, they were about my own age, but they were such thorough children by nature, I could never help mothering them.

All they did for me, and for each other, and for anyone they cared about who happened to be down on his luck, would fill a book, although one young life was cut short so early gloriously winning his V.C.

Whenever I think of Flip, there is something in my heart that seems to snap, and the tears fall inwardly. He was so brave, so beautiful, so lovable.

I do not know if his mother broke her heart when she heard he would never come back to us again, but I know that she wears the Victoria Cross awarded by a gracious sovereign to his memory tied round her throat, although it bruises and scars her delicate flesh.

After the *matinée* we went to Bobbie's club to tea, and then, because he wanted to make a day of it, nothing would do but he must buy me an evening blouse to go to the theatre in at night.

Flip did not come with us this time, as he had another engagement, and Bobbie frankly confessed that he was not sorry.

During the next few days I went out with the two of them several times, and we all enjoyed ourselves immensely. Then they went away together to Bobbie's country home, and I had two days alone, before going to Philips and Philips.

My first day was not a happy one. I was hopelessly at sea, and the other girls, instead of trying to help me, regarded me with a cold, quizzing air. The head of the department did her best, but I was never cut out for a saleswoman, and she began to grow impatient before the day was over.

I remember there was one mantle she particularly wanted to get rid of, a hideous, gaudy thing, with a lot of gold beads on it, and when a dressy, common little woman came to buy, she said to me: "Sell her that."

I put it on and thought what a sight I looked, and when the little woman asked me if I thought it would suit her, I said frankly that I thought not. However, she put it on and seemed rather to like it, turning and twisting about before the glass in order to see it on all sides.

"It is rather nice," she said. "Do you really think it doesn't suit me?"

"I think you would much prefer this," was my answer, and put on one of the newest and prettiest we had.

Digitized by Google

She exclaimed with delight, and bought it on the spot; and I got into trouble with the principal.

"What does it matter what a person like that wears?" she answered to my attempted explanation. "You could easily have persuaded her to take the beaded thing; she was the very customer for it; and now you have let an article go that would have satisfied someone who knew how to dress."

After a few days I understood that the cleverest saleswoman was the one who succeeded in persuading customers to buy the things least likely to sell.

Not that I ever became a success in the slightest degree; and after a little I was specially reserved for the few tall, exacting young ladies who knew just what suited them and were totally deaf to persuasion.

To my surprise Di Northcote met me that first evening when the day's work was over.

"How do you do?" he said simply, accosting me as I stood a moment wondering which 'bus to take.

A little fat man near by, who had been watching me closely, was just advancing as if to speak, so I was very relieved at the sound of Di's voice.

"I'm very well, thanks," I answered, "which 'bus ought I to take?"

He pulled out his watch.

"I have an hour to spare," he said, "will you come with me and have some dinner?"

I went at once, feeling rather pleased, for it was the first time he had suggested taking me anywhere.

At first we talked about my work, and I think he was a good deal amused at my description of my own selling experiences. I told him that I had made friends with one of the girls—a new girl—who had agreed to share rooms with me.

"Why did you make up your mind to live out?" he asked at last, going suddenly to the point.

"How did you know that I had done so?" I retorted.

Something about Di's way of questioning always made me put my back up and feel prickly, so to speak.

"Bobbie told me," he answered, adding: "I was sorry to hear it."

"Why?" I asked.

"Oh, various reasons. For one thing you will probably meet with a good deal of unpleasantness when you start home in the evening. That is partly why I met you to-night."

I remembered the little fat man, and asked: "What kind of unpleasantness?"

"There are a great many men," he replied, "who wait about near the big shops for the girls like yourself to come out in the evening. They are a class of men that you will do well to systematically avoid."

"And do you think I should be inclined to do anything else?" I asked, looking straight into his eyes.

He looked straight back at me. "That is what I have to learn," he said.

I felt angry, but it was no use losing my temper, for already I began to realise nothing would make the slightest impression upon him, and he would only preserve the same unruffled calm. Instead I determined to try to meet him on his own ground, so to speak.

"It is good of you to take so much interest in me," I said sarcastically.

"Not at all," he replied. "I am doing it entirely for my own amusement."

I could have shaken him for that, but instead I bit my lip and went on with my dinner in silence.

I felt he was watching me closely, and when at last I looked up that odd gleam of admiration shot through his eyes again. At the same time I think he annoyed me purposely.

"Don't ever go to dinner with any man unless you know who he is," he said, "and it is better not to dine alone at a restaurant in the evening. If you have made up your mind not to remain in, go straight home to your room, or else join another girl who is above cheapening herself by dining with a stranger. It is a sensible plan to share rooms with another girl."

I still went on with my dinner in silent disapproval, feeling, in spite of myself, like a schoolgirl being lectured.

"And be on your guard," he continued with emphasis, "against any such men as Lord Cecil Trevor, otherwise you run a serious risk of a soiled reputation, however groundless. It is very likely he will attempt to meet you again; but if he does have nothing whatever to do with him."

"I did not know he was a lord," I said with interest.

"It is a mere detail," Di answered. "What need concern you most is that he is a scoundrel."

We had finished dinner then, and the subject dropped; but in spite of my own experience and Di's warning I could not resist a certain curiosity about Lord Cecil Trevor. I felt as if I should like to meet him again just to see how he would treat me now.

The opportunity occurred in a most unlooked-for manner. A week after I went to Philips and Philips, a ball was arranged by the employees in the large recreation room.

These balls took place often, and were usually very good fun. We gave sixpence each towards the refreshments, which consisted of cakes, coffee, and lemonade, and provided our own music; in fact, the whole thing was got up entirely among ourselves, and we usually spent the evening before waxing the floor and getting the room ready.

Although I scarcely knew any of the men at the first one I attended, I had no lack of partners, for there was not much ceremony of introduction, and a pretty face needed no other advancement. At about ten o'clock Lizzie Brown—my friend—told me she felt tired and was going home. I told her I would follow as soon as the dance was over.

When the evening was nearly over I sat for a short time alone in a little alcove watching, rather glad of a rest, and not anxious for a partner. The dancers looked very pretty, and I was too engrossed in them to notice that a tall new-comer had made his way to the alcove, and now stood beside me.

In consequence, when he suddenly remarked, "This is a most unexpected pleasure, Miss Cardew," I started violently, and on turning to face Lord Cecil Trevor, much to my annoyance coloured to the roots of my hair. I felt that it rather pleased him, and was furious with myself.

"May I sit down?" he said, and without waiting for me to speak took the vacant chair beside me. "You are looking extremely well," he next remarked. "London evidently suits you."

By this time I had regained my composure, and I now turned to him carelessly and asked, hoping to annoy him—

"Do you serve in Philips and Philips too, then?"

"Well no, not exactly," he answered, looking amused. "Not that I should mind," he added, "if my counter were opposite yours; but I should certainly have neither ears nor eyes for customers."

"Hooks and eyes, I suppose you mean?" I put in.

"Good!" he remarked. "You're evidently a smart little girl."

I suddenly became engrossed in the dancers, but at the same time was most curious to know how he came to be there.

"You did not expect to see me here to-night, I daresay," he said next.

"I did not think about it," I answered.

"Probably not. I however, knew I should in all likelihood see you."

Digitized by Google

"How did you know?" I inquired, unable to conceal my curiosity.

"Oh, it was simple enough. You told me your address, you know, and I easily discovered you were going to Philips and Philips. Young Fred Philips was at Oxford with me, and I know him well, so I asked him to send me word when the next dance was on. I have been to several before with him.

"I got a line this morning, but I had to show myself at a big 'At Home' at the Duchess of Rowney's to-night, and that made me late. Otherwise I should have come early, and tried to fill up your programme."

"And supposing I had objected?" I said.

"But you wouldn't. I'd soon have talked you round. Did you think I behaved very badly the other afternoon?"

"Yes," I said coolly. "Very."

"Well, I'm awfully sorry," he answered at once. "You're not quite like the ordinary run of girls, and I ought to have seen it sooner. A man can't do more than apologise. Will you be friends?"

"I don't know," I replied warily, leaning back and assuming a somewhat grand, indifferent air.

"Why don't you know? I suppose Northcote has been painting me very black. It's a favourite trick of his, and he's no saint himself, either. I shouldn't take you for the kind of girl to believe just what she is told about a fellow without finding out for herself."

Now had it been anyone but Di who had warned me I should probably have held my ground; but because it was he, and I had in my heart a perpetual antagonism against his domineering sway, I decided to act for myself and risk the consequences.

"I don't mind being friends," I said at last, "so long as you treat me properly; but if you transgress in any way I shall drop you at once."

He promised, and we had the next two dances together, and I am bound to confess I thoroughly enjoyed them. He was a perfect waltzer, and knew how to be a pleasant companion; and although he still persisted in looking at me in a way that made me feel embarrassed, I was sure Di had judged him too harshly. They were the last dances, and when the music stopped he asked me if I had anyone to see me home.

I told him I did not need anyone, but he insisted upon coming.

We went out together, and there being no vacant hansom about we walked a short distance in search of one.

At the corner of Oxford Circus we stood a moment under a gas lamp waiting. A hansom came in sight, and Lord Cecil had just hailed it, when someone touched my arm, and remarked in most cutting tones—

"What a fortunate circumstance, Miss Cardew. I am just in time to see you home."

I turned sharply, and found myself fronting Di Northcote, with an angry gloam in his face such as I had never seen before.

(Next Tuesday I will tell you of my interview with a theatrical manager.)

Result of the "Same Letter" Competition.

A Gramophone has been sent to the following competitors:

A. Earney, Earldoms, near Whiteparish, Salisbury, Wilts; Miss F. Selby, 137 Queen's Park Road, Brighton; A. J. Wilson, Manchester Stores, Main Street, Kimberley, Notts; H. Gale, 54 Elder Road, Bramley, Leeds; G. H. Wilshire, Fore Street, Newquay, Cornwall; A. Mitchell, 131 Easter Road, Leith; Miss M. Davies, 107 Camden Street, Birkenhead; E. Payne, 1 Hilsea Terrace, Lower Clapton, N.E.; W. Powell, 35 Church Street, Blaina, Mon.; E. C. Rudge, Abbey Manor, Evesham.

His Last Request.

The Tale of a Man, a Woman, and a Kiss.

"George Ferguson, you have gone a little too far."

Pale with indignation and outraged pride, the young woman looked him sternly in the face.

"Why, Laura," he stammered, in a helpless confusion, "I—I—ah—er—I didn't think you would care."

"Didn't think I should care!" she echoed, with freezing mockery. "Did you think, sir, that an acquaintance of ten or twelve months entitles you to a privilege unasked, that my most intimate friends of many years' standing would not have dared to claim? Have you no conception of the meaning of the word presumption?"

What had this young man done? Intoxicated by her beauty, and fancying he saw in her glorious dark eyes a challenge, half coy, half saucy, he had rapturously kissed her.

Dumb with astonishment, George Ferguson now quailed before the lightning-like indignation of the high-spirited girl.

He saw he had made a fatal mistake.

"This must end our acquaintance, Mr. Ferguson," she said.

"In many respects it has been a pleasant one. I had come to esteem you highly—to regard you as a young man of high and noble impulses, free from the trivialities and weaknesses, the inordinate self-conceit and assurance that the spirit of the age seems to infuse into the mental constitutions of the young men of modern society.

"You have thrown yourself down from the pedestal upon which I had mistakenly placed you. Mr. Ferguson," she continued sadly, "hereafter we meet as strangers."

"Be it so, Laura Jones," replied he, with recovered self-possession. "I shall not presume to question your right to dismiss me thus summarily, however strongly I might feel inclined to protest against the injustice of your act in so doing. I bow to your mandate.

"Henceforth we are strangers. But before I take my last farewell of you, as I am now about to do, and go out into the world to struggle with it as only a sorrowing, lonely man, deprived of his last earthly hope, must struggle to keep bitter despair from knawing his heart-strings asunder.

"Before I leave for ever the presence of one with whom I have passed so many pleasant hours, whose memory will cling to me through all the cheerless years that may yet drag their weary length over my head, I have one last request to make of you."

"What is it, sir?"

"Please get off my lap."

Audrey Wrexford.

She: "If you could have one wish, what would it be?" He: "It would be that—that—oh, if I only dared to tell you what it would be!" She: "Well, go on. Why do you suppose I brought up the wishing subject?"

Digitized by Google

A FALLEN IDOL.

The Tale of a Love that was Lasting.

"Shall I write now or wait till to-morrow?" Miss Irene Meredith's maturely beautiful face assumed a more thoughtful expression. "I shall see *him* to-night, and——"

Another pause.

"Is it true that there is still an open door at the back of my heart to admit that which I thought was shut out for ever? I scarcely know; I do not like to admit, yet why have I waited all these years, why have I persistently refused for months to give Cyril his answer? I will wait! So Cyril must be patient yet another day, and this evening I shall see and talk with Randall Atherton!"

She replaced the addressed envelope and the blank sheet of notepaper in her writing-case, and gave herself up to reminiscent meditation till her maid warned her that it was time to dress for the grand reception and private theatricals at Lady Hindford's.

Irene Meredith was a woman of thirty, with a maturely beautiful face and the sedate, almost queenly bearing of one who has left the lightness of girlhood far behind but yet possesses youth; a strange admixture that makes a charming whole.

The face, if studied, would have revealed to the student a character ennobled and rendered more attractive by suffering.

She moved about among the other guests of Lady Hindford with an easy manner that delighted all; the younger members of the party discovered that she could be as youthful as they, and they marvelled at the merry twinkle that passed over those usually serious eyes, while the older ones enjoyed her society just as much and found that she could converse entertainingly on subjects fitted for riper years.

Men and women alike admitted that she was a charming woman, and rather lazily wondered why she had not secured an eligible partner long ago.

"Miss Meredith!"

The name was uttered in a tone of surprise.

"Mr. Atherton!"

In this case the tone was slightly sarcastic, and a malicious gleam appeared in Miss Meredith's eyes. A mocking glance was directed at him.

"How strange that we should meet again here, is it not?" she asked. "This was where we last met, you remember, Mr. Atherton; or perhaps you do not remember? It is so long ago!"

"Was it really here?" he asked, his eyebrows slightly lifted in surprise. Then, as he observed the curl of the lips, he hastened to add: "Yes, of course it was!"

He was nettled at having betrayed his forgetfulness, and he fancied that he had easily undone the blunder by his last remark.

She laughed.

"I ought to feel flattered by your recollecting anything about me! And you really did recognise me after a round dozen of years, Mr. Atherton? Eighteen plus twelve, that is thirty! Yet there was no good reason why you should remember me, was there?"

He avoided the question.

"Oh, it all comes back to me very vividly now!" he rejoined uneasily. "We talked and walked about, and you wore something white and—and—yes, you had a flower in your hair!" He looked relieved; this woman was so entrancingly beautiful and he was glad to retrieve his character by remembering something.

"That is a very graphic description of me and of our doings," she laughed. "I recollect more than that about that evening, and about other occasions, but that is probably because I was young—eighteen, you see!—and impressions sink deeper into one's inner consciousness at eighteen than at twenty-seven.

"You were half as old again as I was then, but twelve years added to both totals make a difference in the disparity of age, do they not?

"Yes, I was eighteen, and I wore a rose in my hair; now I am thirty and the rose has given place to gold and that is worn on my dress, not in my hair. Very symbolical, is it not? Youth and rose-colour—youth sees everything rose-coloured! Age and pale-gold; that is expressive of more sober and more solid ideas!"

They had walked unconsciously together to an ottoman and he had listened uncomfortably to this speech without daring to interrupt. Memory was asserting itself, and the "other occasions" became more clear; he compared the other occasions with that evening when they last met, and he felt awkward.

"It is so pleasant to recall old times, Mr. Atherton, that you ought to be ever so grateful to me for giving you the opportunity!" she said with pretended earnestness. "I should like to hear your version of that far-away evening, to see if it coincides with mine!"

He was doubtful about the earnestness of the first portion of this remark, but there was a suspicious wavering about the concluding words that made him catch at the chance they offered.

"Youthful impressions are not always correct, Miss Meredith, and things are not invariably what they seem! If, as I fancy, there was something during that evening which—which seemed to jar, it may have been a wrong impression!"

He was conscious that his pleading was not clever; it might even have damaged his case; yet he cherished the hope that it had been successful.

"Come now! I fear your recollection is not so vivid as you suppose it to be, Mr. Atherton!" she retorted with a quiet smile. "Was it with me or with someone else that you 'walked and talked' so much on that occasion?"

He leant back to hide the embarrassment that was showing plainly in his face. He wanted to get away, but the old fascination had been reawakened and intensified by the meeting with this superb woman and he could not move. Nay, he was irresistibly drawn nearer to her, as the moth to the flame.

"Shall we saunter through the rooms, Miss Meredith?" he asked, again ignoring her question.

"No, it is pleasant here!" she responded, and the sarcastic tone gave place to one of yearning for a moment. "Let me beguile the time by telling a story. I used to be a dreamer in the old days and fond of weaving such fabrics. Those had reference to the future—castles in the air, they might have been called. This one will have reference to past time."

It was a cosy corner and they were not likely to be disturbed. She sat with her hands in her lap, toying—sometimes idly, sometimes nervously—with her fan; her head was inclined and her eyes fixed with a distant expression on the floor a yard or so in front, as though studying the pattern and trying to compare it with another that she had seen.

"There was a girl," she began in a soft voice, full of sad tenderness—"a girl of eighteen. She was of a warm, not to say passionate disposition; sensitive to a degree and full of trust and confidence in her fellow-creatures.

Digitized by Google

"At eighteen a girl is susceptible to the tender passion to a far greater degree than a youth, despite the fact that we hear of 'lad's love.' This girl 'came out,' and, being pretty, was the object of much admiration.

"Being of a simple, trustful nature, she failed to understand some of this attention; she was a devotee of the cult called hero-worship; she admired the noble and was ready to fall down, figuratively, and worship the man who should nearest resemble her ideal. She was foolish, of course!"

The tone changed to one of flippancy and Atherton started. Before he could speak, Irene Meredith continued:

"One day she met this man. He was older than her by nine years, as she afterwards discovered, but that was a matter of small moment. He seemed to her to be the man for whom her young soul had been longing; he appeared to represent all that was good and noble. He was her ideal, her hero, come at last.

"She worshipped him from afar, and then he approached her. It was like the sun drawing near and dazzling her; all the secret fear of expectancy was melted, her heart grew light—so light that it tried to lift the girl above earth. She was glad, happy, for *he*, her hero, had come to her!

"This hero spoke soft words to her, and the trustful girl believed that they came from his soul. They entered *her* soul, and her love was satisfied. She gave her whole being to him; he loved her, for did he not continually seek her and say those sweet things to her—the sweet things that are so dear to a woman in love?

"So she believed, and was enchanted; she lived in a fool's paradise, for she did not understand the ways of some men, who can amuse themselves with a girl's heart and then throw it aside."

"Perhaps the girl was mistaken!" interrupted Atherton eagerly. "She may have thought that a few commonplaces were intended for love speeches."

"She was not mistaken in that!" returned Irene Meredith bitterly. "There are men and women who will deal with the hearts of others as though they were senseless toys. He spoke words of love to the girl, I say! And she suffered.

"So the days passed, and then came the evening of Lady Hindford's great social function. The girl looked forward to it with a pleasure so keen that it resembled pain. She felt her breath coming in quick gasps as he approached her; but oh, the misery that enshrouded her a few seconds later!

"He muttered some commonplaces and left her. She knew the differences between commonplaces and the honeyed words he had spoken before!

"With a pain at her heart that seemed like to kill her, she watched him by the side of the lovely Sybil Barran; she saw him whispering to Sybil as he had whispered to her, but probably Sybil was not a hero worshipper, and she did not care!

"The girl waited, waited for him to return, but he did not seek her again. With a sentiment of numbness the girl went home and——"

Irene Meredith drew a deep breath.

"That part of the story is vague. I know that the girl passed the night kneeling by the side of her bed, her face buried in her hands on the coverlet, sobbing, sobbing!"

"As you—I mean the girl—did not know exactly what happened," said Atherton slowly, his face white and haggard, "it is possible that she did not suffer like that!"

"She did!" cried Irene fiercely, and Atherton shrank before this vehemence. "I think," continued Irene more calmly, after a pause, "that the girl died that night.

"The next scene in the story shows a figure that is girlish, but with a face that indicates the woman, and behind that face were the feelings of a woman.

"The girl had passed through the experience that changes from one state to another; she had learnt that her hero was only mere clay, after all, and worse clay than many, for he amused himself by toying with a heart and then threw it away.

"The experience embittered her, but she gradually recovered. In spite of herself, she——" Irene stopped abruptly; she had said more than she intended. "This is the story; what do you think of it?" she asked, half defiantly.

Atherton drew a deep breath.

"Perhaps the man was in reality more than mere clay. Perhaps he suffered more than, or as much as, the girl did. Suppose that he was dazzled by another light, a light which, like the will-o'-the-wisp, led him astray without his knowing it. Suppose——"

"That is rather difficult to imagine, is it not?" she inquired scornfully. "The marsh light does not dazzle, and a man would hardly leave a bright light to follow that. It demonstrates the truth of the girl's notion; he was playing, and——"

It was his turn to interrupt now.

"Hear my story," he pleaded, and she let him go on.

"Suppose that the man was as the girl thought, let us go even so far as that. Imagine his feelings when, years afterwards, he realised what he had lost!

"He met the girl, and found her more lovely, more worthy to be loved than she had ever been before, and there arose within him an awakened love, a flame that developed from a spark of recollection into a fierce flame of present love, all-consuming, all-absorbing! How he hated himself for having been so blind in the past, and now he begged for forgiveness!

"With the fuller knowledge gained in those twelve years he recognised how priceless is the love of a good woman, and he would have done everthing to win it. The man wonders whether there is any hope for him?"

It was a passionate appeal. He waited breathlessly for the answer. Irene maintained the fiction of the story, which she had adopted and he had followed. A great struggle had been going on within her while he was speaking; her bosom heaved and her breath came hard, but she was calmer now.

"The girl says it is impossible to alter the past," she said decisively. "The love which the man offers is a sudden impulse, and may die out as rapidly as it arose.

"All these years he has not thought of her or he would have sought her and have tried to make amends. Yet she has all through retained a faint hope that her hero was a hero after all, although she knew not how the fact could be demonstrated.

"Yes, she will admit it! She has lived with an undefined, secret hope that she was mistaken. They met, and the man proved that he retained nothing of the past, and so her faint spark went out! The man offered the love of to-day, whereas the girl was looking for the love of yesterday, only to find that it had never existed, and that her worst fears were correct!"

Irene Meredith rose. She was smiling with the mocking expression of a few minutes previous.

"Come," she said, jestingly, "we have had our own private theatricals; we must now go to witness those provided by others for our edification!"

"I cannot go without one final appeal!" cried Randall Atherton desperately. "I was a fool, but should a man's folly be punished all through his life, even when he sees and admits the fault? Irene, tell me that you will try to love me! Do not send me away from you, for I cannot be happy now without you! Do not be hard! As you are beautiful, enchanting, so be merciful! May I not hope?"

Oh, the irony of Fate! The man who has trifled with her young heart was now pleading for the love that was given to him so freely years before and cast aside! Irene shook her head.

"The idol is shattered!" she said coldly. "Let it rest, let us both forget! The man I loved was twelve years younger than you are! I could not love you! That man is dead, as is the girl! Come, or we shall be late!"

On the following morning Irene Meredith sat at the table with her writing case in front of her. She had arrived home late, but she had slept well, and her face was tranquil in its expression.

"Yes, I can give Cyril his answer now!" she murmured. "I feared that something of the past might remain to make us both unhappy, but that is gone now. I can honestly tell Cyril that he may marry me whenever he likes!"

F. Brewster.

Digitized by Google

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS. A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

BELINDA NORTH. The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

DUKE OF EASTACRES. A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

DAVID CARR. A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

LADY HONORIA. Sister of the Duke of Eastacres.

STANLEY FORBES. A famous barrister.

ALPHONSE HERVE. An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

CRAWLEY DAVENANT. An old friend of Lady Peggy.

I Make My Last Bid for £20,000.

It was no use wasting time in anger on Honoria; that could come later. I turned my attention to Belinda, who was gazing with horror-stricken eyes at the Duke.

"My pearls!" she cried suddenly, lifting her hand to her throat. "My pearls! I have lost them, my father's gift, *here*"—she glanced round the salon with a shudder—"to that man!"

"Here are your pearls, Belinda," I said, snatching them from the table. "The Duke was only in fun, he did not mean to keep them. There is nothing to make a fuss about!"

"*Nothing!*" she repeated dully.

Then, with a sudden flush of passion, she threw the pearls upon the floor, and stamped upon them viciously.

"I can never wear them again," she said. "He has touched them, they have become vile!" and she ground the pearls into powder under her feet.

"What I have done with my necklace, you have tried to do with me," she said. "You would have destroyed all truth, all purity of mind and purpose in me. You would have staked my soul as carelessly, as callously as I my beads. You would have given me into the possession of that man, have set me in the mud for him to trample under foot.

"Why should you wish to wrong me, why should you try to wreck my life, to break my heart, to perjure my soul? Have you no pity, no softness?" She came close to me, her eyes, unnaturally bright, burnt into mine, her hands, hot and feverish, grasped my own.

"You have parted me from the man I love!" she cried. "You have taken the brightness from my life, you have weakened my will, you have taken my strength. But, while I live, I swear—*I swear* that man shall never touch me!"

For a moment she stood tall, strong, defiant in her youth and beauty; the next she weakened, raised her hands to her head, gazed round bewildered, with a little helpless cry.

"My head," she said, "I—I——" She glanced round as if to seek protection. I hastened to her side, but, with an unlooked-for courage, Honoria stepped between me and my charge.

Winding her thin arms about the girl, she drew her close, and murmured loving words. Think of it! This weak, this most contemptible of creatures, gathered Belinda to her heart like a frightened child and stood defiant—she, who had never dared call her soul her own!

Never shall I forget the scene. The salon, brilliantly lit, gorgeous with gleaming marbles and rich hangings, and, in the midst of all the luxury, the centre of the feverish excitement, stood Belinda, beautiful exceedingly, her fair hair dishevelled, her young face distressed, clinging, aye, clinging, to the woman with the lean figure, the ill-fitting gown, the foolish face—to Honoria!

I motioned to Eastacres to leave the place; with a struggle he accepted the inevitable and disappeared. Honoria and I—chiefly Honoria—induced Belinda to come from the Casino to the hotel. She was in a high state of fever, and I had to administer a double dose of opium before I got her quiet. I left her sleeping soundly, and turned my attention to Honoria.

Before I could open upon her she commenced to weep in her old, abject, disjointed sort of fashion. Would I forgive her this once? She had obeyed me implicitly, carried out all my instructions in regard to Belinda, had posted no letters without bringing them to me, sent no telegrams without my permission.

"Look," she added, "here are three letters Belinda gave me two days ago—to Stanley Forbes, her father, and to Lady Farringdon." I took them from her eagerly, and glanced, half relenting, at her face, red and disfigured from her tears.

"So long as Eastacres isn't here or anywhere near, I will do all you tell me, Lady Peggy. I know you are fond of Belinda and wish to make her happy. But Eastacres," she shuddered, "he is a bad man, a cruel man, worse than anyone I know, worse even than Mark!" She clenched her hands and her features worked convulsively.

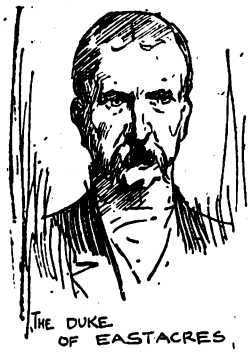
"Keep Eastacres away, Lady Peggy," she repeated, "and I'll do all you wish. I'll watch over Belinda, keep her quiet, give her medicine, bring you her letters. *Everything*, but," she clutched my arm, "don't send me away," she moaned, "*don't*, don't send me away."

Truth to tell, I could not, at that moment, have well spared her.

Belinda had of late evinced a strange dislike for me. She had refused on more than one occasion to take her sleeping draught, and I had had to rely on Honoria to induce her to do so.

That Honoria was in the main faithful to the trust I reposed in her was proved by her bringing me the letters Belinda had given to be posted. There was nothing much in any of the letters. She said she was not well, and that she longed for

Digitized by Google


THE DUKE OF EASTACRES.

the spring. No more; but Honoria was not to know that. Her intentions were perfectly good.

As matters stood, it was evident that if I could assure her that I had no desire to force Belinda into marriage with Eastacres, convince her, in fact, that I wished to get rid of him, Honoria would be a safe ally.

I decided to take her apparently into my confidence.

"Honoria," I said, "can I trust you?

"If I tell you of my hopes and plans for Belinda, will you swear not to break confidence; will you swear not to let out a word?"

She nodded, dried her tears, and tried to look sensible.

"Very well," I said. "I believe you, and I will trust you. I don't want Belinda to marry your brother, I gave up that idea a long time ago. I only want her to be happy. But Eastacres, as you know, is a very determined man. He has made up his mind that, come what may, he will win Belinda for his wife.

"Her father, as you know, sanctions the match, and Belinda, at one time, was not averse to it. I cannot break with Eastacres openly. At one time I was his friend, and if I seem to turn against him he will not forgive me. You know what an enemy he can be?"

She shuddered and hid her face.

"As I tell you, I don't mean him to marry Belinda, but he must not suspect it. I shall tell him we are leaving here for Mentone, and that he had better precede us. In reality, as you know, we are going to Rome, where I shall hand over Belinda to her father's care. He, not I, will have the responsibility of settling her love affairs in future."

"Do you really mean it, Lady Peggy, do you really mean it?" she gasped.

"Of course I do. I shall be only too glad to get her off my hands. She's been a terrible care to me. Meantime, you must not say a word of this to Belinda. She's so impulsive that she will tell somebody or other that I have sent Eastacres away, it will gradually work back to him, and then——" I gave a little shiver and looked tragic.

"Belinda shan't hear a word from me," she said. "So long as Eastacres doesn't worry her, she won't ask any questions. I'll do just as you tell me, Lady Peggy, and thank you very much."

I dismissed her much relieved, and lay down for an hour or two's sleep. There was much to be done in the morning. I should have to be up betimes.

I was up and dressed by nine o'clock next day waiting to see the Duke. He came in answer to my note at once, and remained till after eleven.

We had many things to discuss, much to arrange. I was mapping out the details of the scheme by which I should make sure of the £20,000 promised to me on Belinda's marriage. It was a bold scheme, and, with care and caution, must succeed.

"Eastacres," I said gravely, "before we go further into this business, you must assure me of your good faith. Will you bind yourself to act as we decide this morning, not to run foolish and unnecessary risks such as last night? Above all, will you promise not to approach Belinda till I give the word? The whole success of the scheme depends on this, that you disappear from view, and neither speak to her, nor see her, until"—I paused—"until the moment when you claim her as your wife. Only on these conditions do I carry the matter through."

"I agree," he said sullenly. "I can't manage the thing by myself, that's evident, at any rate while that confounded Honoria is about. Why don't you send the woman off, confound her?"

"I can't manage Belinda without her assistance. I have explained that already."

He laughed in a sneering, contemptuous sort of fashion that made my blood boil.

"Stop that," I cried indignantly. "Stop, I say, or I will——"

"What will you do?" he said. "What can you do? You're at your last gasp, fighting for dear life to keep your head up in the world. Do you suppose I haven't made myself acquainted with your circumstances? That old fool Crawley let it all out to me one night. He told me that you hadn't a penny, and that unless you got Belinda off your hands you'd be in the workhouse, or—or prison," he added malignantly, "it's a toss up which."

For a moment I could not speak, rage and indignation choked me. That I—*that I* should be spoken to like this!

"Go!" I said, storming at him. "Go at once! I will have no more to do with you. I——"

He cut me short with a gesture of contempt.

"You can do nothing," he said, "*nothing*. If you back out of this affair, I shall cable to Hardy North, and I shall tell him enough of you and your history to make him fetch his daughter home at once. You've one chance, and one only, of winning this deal. I'm that chance, you know it, without me you're lost. And so," he scowled, "keep a civil tongue or I'll cry off the business altogether."

I could not contend with him. I was not so strong as I had been, and his insolence seemed to shatter my nerves. I collapsed into a chair and pointed to the bell.

"Brandy," I said feebly, and waited like a dead thing till the *garçon* reappeared with the stimulant.

When I had swallowed the cognac I felt better.

"Now," I said calmly, "if you can speak without sneering and insulting me, I will hear what you have to say. Do you promise to keep out of Belinda's way?"

He nodded.

"Yes," he said, "that's settled, now get to business."

Long and earnestly we discussed, and at last we had arranged the scheme that was to bring about such great results.

"We leave Monte Carlo in a few days," I said, "arriving in Rome the beginning of December. Belinda will go for a drive most afternoons in the Corso. She will, as a rule, be accompanied by Honoria. On the afternoon that you see *me* lean from the carriage and drop a bunch of violets on the ground, you will know that is the day appointed, and," I glanced at him fixedly, "you will have everything in readiness."

He nodded, and turned towards the window.

"I cannot say how soon it will be after we arrive in Rome," I said, dropping my voice. "It will, as you know, depend on circumstances. But remember this. You must be prepared on any day to—to——"

"Pick up the bunch of violets, Lady Peggy?" he said grimly.

He turned as he spoke and made me a low bow and left the apartment.

We did not leave Monte Carlo so soon as I anticipated. Belinda fell into a sort of low fever and had to remain in bed. I did not send for a doctor. I had reliance on the remedies prescribed by the old man in Russia, and in a week or so she rallied.

We arrived in Rome on a clear, beautiful afternoon. The air was crisp and held a touch of winter, but it was fresh and exhilarating on the Campagna.

I had arranged to stay in the palace where in the old days I had a suite of rooms ready at any moment for my occupation. Belinda seemed brighter than I had known her for some time, and insisted on a tour of inspection the next day.

Willing to humour her, I ordered the carriage—the Duc di Rocca had placed his stables at our disposal—and to her great delight we set out to see the City of the Seven Hills. It was an exquisite morning. The Corso—Rome's fashionable thoroughfare—was crowded with pedestrians, elegant equipages, whose occupants shook hands with the promenaders on either side.

Digitized by Google

So great was the number of vehicles that both lines were absolutely unbroken; the coachmen could do no more than walk their horses. All Rome—worth knowing—gathered together in the smallest possible space—the Corso is not so wide as Bond Street—talking, laughing, chatting, as in a friendly drawing-room.

Belinda created a stir with her big eyes and exquisite pallor, but she was too cold for the taste of the Romans. They like a more volcanic beauty—poor Vera they worshipped.

From the Corso we passed through Piazza del Popolo—the square of the people—white and dazzling in the sunshine. Everything amused and interested the girl, and she cried out like a child at the sight of the gigantic shaft of marble gilt with the sun's rays—the Column of Trajan.

The Romans themselves—I speak of the old families—regard the enthusiasm of the English and the foreigners generally for the city as a little childish. For them the Corso, with its scandals, intrigues, and pretty women, and for all in it they search, is the only Rome worth knowing.

One gets into their way of regarding things. During the many months I had spent in Rome I had seen less than Belinda in her youthful enthusiasm got through in a week.

Her enthusiasm left her as suddenly as it had kindled. She became moody, depressed, not even the approach of Christmas could rouse her. Worse than any of these things, she became more and more irritable, and her dislike of me came back in full force.

I increased the opium daily—I had been decreasing it of late—and waited anxiously for results. Each afternoon we drove through the Corso. Sometimes the three of us, at others Belinda and Honoria—never Belinda and I alone. Things were not yet ripe for that. Each day I cast a furtive glance to where, hidden in an angle of the Palazza Brandini, a fair, slight man watched and waited for our coming.

One afternoon he was not there. It wanted but a week to Christmas, and I was excessively anxious. Hardy North had shown signs of relenting, and had written that he would be with us at the New Year. By that time I hoped to be in possession of his cheque and have Belinda off my hands.

That night Eastacres came to the Palace. I saw him from the window and stole down to meet him in the great courtyard.

"How much longer?" he said impatiently.

"I like delay as little as you, Eastacres."

"Well," he said roughly, "I can wait no longer. The third day from now, that is the last minute!" And despite myself I shuddered.

"You remember the route?" I asked. "You meet the carriage outside Rome, at the little inn where you and I and Carstairs used to breakfast—how long ago!"

He nodded, and drew closer; the shadow of the night enveloped us.

"You change horses and coachman there," he whispered, "and take the road that leads to Acqueto. Three hours' drive will bring you to the Chapel. I shall be there."

"I cannot say which day, Eastacres, but one of the next three—we shall also be there," I murmured.

As I passed up the staircase it seemed to me I heard the rustle of skirts entering the room above—my own. When I looked in no one was there, however, but the two girls. Belinda was asleep, and Honoria the picture of misery with a bad headache.

The incident disquieted me as did something else the following day. I met Honoria creeping up the Palace stairs early—before eight.

"I've been to get some flowers," she stammered, and held up a bunch of violets.

I glanced at her sharply, I could have vowed I saw a letter in her hand; but the vacant stare with which she regarded me caused me such irritation that I angrily dismissed her.

That afternoon I received a telegram I had been waiting for. It ran as follows:

"I shall be in Rome to-morrow as arranged.—Mark Striven."

I gave a sigh of relief, and calling my dear Honoria, propounded my scheme to give her pleasure and Belinda joy!

"Belinda's father is coming to-morrow, dear," I said. "I've just had a wire from him. I fancy," I smiled facetiously, "that someone else is likely to arrive to-morrow also—a friend, a dear friend of Belinda's."

To my astonishment Honoria's face grew ghastly. For a moment I thought that she was going to faint.

"Do you mean David Carr?" she asked, with a terrified glance at the door.

"We won't mention names, Honoria, for fear of disappointment. Anyway, in case the friend should come I want you to be here to receive him. Belinda and I will be gone to the station to meet Mr. North at the time he may be here. I shall trust to you to entertain him till we return."

"To-morrow!" she repeated. "I—I——" And then to my astonishment the foolish woman broke into tears. "It's my head," she said—"my head. I think I'll go and rest a bit."

She went out of the room crying and, I could see, distressed. Now what could it matter to Honoria whether Belinda's father—and the friend—arrived the next day or the day after? I puzzled over the problem, but dismissed it as too trivial. That is the worst of dealing with an idiot like Honoria, you never know when to suspect them.

In the course of the day, however, her ladyship recovered her spirits. She was under a solemn promise to reveal nothing to Belinda, but had not the girl been very dazed and sleepy from the drug she would, I am sure, have guessed something was in the air.

Honoria laughed and joked—rather tried to joke—in a way that was absurd to witness. The poor fool imagined that that time to-morrow she would be entertaining Carr, and that Belinda, her beloved Belinda, would be clasped in her father's arms.

If she had only known that Mark Striven was the man she had to entertain the following afternoon—Mark, who was to take her then and there to Paris, to that house in the Rue Burgoyne, safely out of the way.

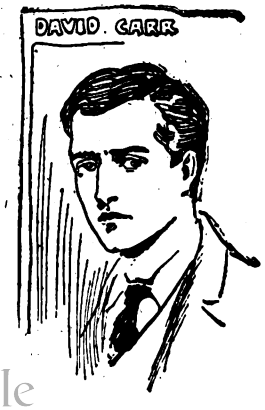
The next morning Belinda slept late; we roused her with difficulty at lunch-time and induced her to take a little food. She was quite dull and apathetic; wanted to go to sleep and feebly resisted Honoria's efforts to dress her. Time was going on, and, feverishly impatient, I came to offer my assistance. At the sight of me the girl commenced to cry in a whimpering sort of fashion that maddened me.

"Go downstairs, Honoria," I said. "I'll dress Belinda."

She screamed out as Honoria left the room, but I cared little for her screams. I had a long account to settle with Belinda; she should learn once and for all I was to be obeyed.

I stopped her cries, shook her into acquiescence, and hurried on her clothes. A long, dark cloak was the first thing I laid my hands on in the way of an outdoor garment; that, and a black hat pulled low over her eyes, and a thick veil, completed her costume. The girl looked ghastly indeed, and I did not care for her to be remarked on.

As a last thought I wound a fleecy shawl about her neck and shoulders.



She sat, a strange, dull-looking figure in the chair where I had placed her. Something—what, I can't say—conjured before my eyes the vision of Belinda as I'd seen her first. A tall, straight slip of a girl, with the face of a Greek goddess and the figure of a wood nymph; not much of the wood nymph in that apathetic face and figure!

I laughed as I looked at her—a hard, bitter laugh. She should not have set her will against mine, defied me, made light of me, *beggared* me of my future.

Digitized by Google

And yet——I went back to the figure and laid my hand upon her shoulder.

"Belinda," I said, her listlessness frightened me.

Through the dark veil her eyes stared at me, dull, apathetic, indifferent. I turned from her room into Honoria's, a smaller chamber opening out of it.

"Belinda's not well to-day," I said to Honoria. "She seems to have a slight return of fever. I half think she ought to stay at home. Still, Mr. North will be so disappointed that I think I'll risk it. It's getting on for three o'clock." I glanced at my watch. "It's five minutes past," I said. "I had no idea it was so late."

Time had gone quicker than I thought; Belinda's obstinacy had hindered me. I could risk no further delay, it was imperative we should start at once.

"I'll get ready while you take Belinda down, Honoria. Just put her in the carriage, that's all, you needn't stop."

I laid emphasis on the last direction. It was possible Mark Striven, with his usual cunning, might put in an appearance before the hour named, in which case it was not advisable Honoria should meet him in the street. It might cause a scene and lead to unpleasant explanations.

"Very well, Lady Peggy," she answered. "I shall lie down when you're gone, my head's so bad!" She raised her face as she spoke. I could tell she was suffering, and felt a twinge of compunction at the thought of her forthcoming interview with Mark. Still, it was none of my business, I had always treated Honoria with kindness.

I went up to my room on the next floor and hurriedly commenced to dress for my journey. I could hear voices coming from the room beneath, and once I thought I heard Belinda cry. I judged it best to leave her to Honoria, however, and continued my preparations.

My boxes, corded and packed, stood in the corner, addressed to me at the Hotel du Nord, Paris. My jewellery and valuables were in my dressing-bag. I had dismissed my maid some few months back. Her presence would have rendered my scheme difficult to carry out.

With a last look round the apartment I went to the door.

My heart beat fast. I felt the blood rush through my veins with the force, the tumult of my triumph! At last, at last the goal was in sight, the prize at hand!

I had fought hard for the money that was to keep my old age free from poverty; again, and yet again, I had plotted and planned to win it, plotted and planned in vain. Now there was no chance of losing it.

To-morrow, to-morrow I should cable the news to Hardy North that would bring me £20,000! Within a week I should be back in Paris, dear, delightful Paris, my future assured, my troubles over, my days as a chaperon at an end, and Belinda—Belinda would be off my hands!

I looked in at Honoria's room as I came down. The shutters of the window were closed, and she was lying on the bed. I did not disturb her—the poor thing, I thought, might as well enjoy what peace she could. She'd have little enough when Mark Striven came.

Down the stairs and through the courtyard I went, murmured directions to the coachman, and took my seat beside Belinda. She had drawn the white shawl tightly round her and seemed very cold. I wrapped a rug about her knees and offered her brandy.

She shook her head, through the dark veil her face looked white and shadowy. Her eyes were closed, her features, blurred under the thick net, sharp and careworn. I turned my head away and looked out of the window.

We drove rapidly, past splendid buildings, side by side with mean hovels, stately palaces and churches within a stone's throw of mean streets and noisome slums. Past the Jesu Church, one of the most beautiful in Rome, past the wonderful gardens of the Quirinal—the King's palace, odorous with pines centuries old. Past St. Peter's, and the terrace where the band plays of an evening and the fashionable loiterers congregate to see the sunset.

As we turned up the Corso I grasped the bunch of violets that I carried, and with a nervous tremor I could not conquer flung them through the window on the road. A moment and the slight figure of the Duke stepped forward.

He lifted the flowers, glanced with a swift and evil smile towards the carriage, and disappeared in the crowd. From there until we reached the little inn some miles beyond Rome we drove in silence. Belinda, in her corner opposite me, slept, so still, so white she looked that I grew fearful and laid my fingers on her pulse. It beat quickly but distinctly. I sat back reassured.

We changed horses as arranged at the little hostelry, and I sent back Di Rocca's coachman with a bonus large enough to stop him asking inconvenient questions. All the time Belinda drowsed, curled up in the corner, dull, apathetic, motionless.

The Chapel where we were to meet the Duke was one of those wayside places of worship one constantly comes across in Italy. Mass was solemnised by an ignorant priest little better than a peasant, who lived in a cottage near the Chapel. Eastacres had arranged he should perform the marriage ceremony.

Eastacres was himself a Catholic, and the fact that Belinda was a Protestant could easily be got over. Under the influence of opium she would be sure to go through the ceremony, too apathetic to realise what was happening. The marriage would be legal. Against her will Belinda would be made Duchess of Eastacres, Hardy North would be triumphant—and I—I should have £20,000!

The road which led up to the mountains was uneven, we jolted over stones perpetually, and more than once I feared we were upset. We kept up our pace, however, and arrived without mishap at the Chapel just after six.

Eastacres had passed us on the road, he was talking to the priest as we drew up. I got out first and hastened to meet him.

"Is everything ready?" I asked.

"Nearly," he returned. "Bring Belinda into the sacristy. Then when the priest is ready to commence you can take her straight to the altar."

I motioned to the coachman and moved towards the Chapel. He paused close to a door in the wall that opened into the room that served for what we should call a vestry.

The evening was fine and light and the glory of the day still lingered in the sky; the white road up which we had just come stretched like a ribbon, winding in and out the hills. Immediately below us, the road dipped lying on a level for some way.

"Look, Eastacres," I cried, pointing to the straight stretch. "Look——" A horseman was urging his steed to the utmost along the road. His figure stood out against the background of the hills.

"It's—it's—*Carr!*" I screamed and clutched Eastacres tightly. "Ah, I see it now. Honoria, your sister, stole the medal, the bronze medal that David gave Belinda. She was to send it to him as a token when she was in danger and distress. I took it from her, meaning to throw it away, but in the night it was stolen from me, stolen by Honoria, and she has sent it to him, to David Carr, and he is here, *here!*" I shrieked, and pointed to the horseman rapidly drawing nearer.

"Calm yourself," said Eastacres, "he cannot reach here under twelve minutes. By then it will be too late."

He turned on his heel and entered the Chapel. Meanwhile, shaking Belinda by the arm, I tried to rouse her. She woke up after a while and followed me submissively into the sacristy. When there, however, she persisted in standing by the door, her back to me, her face turned to the white road, the road up which David was spurring for dear life.

I wrung my hands in an agony. Would that dull priest never have finished his droning? Would Eastacres never give the sign for us to come?

At last, pale and anxious, but composed, he appeared at the door which opened into the Chapel, and signed to us to enter.

"Come, Belinda," I said sharply, and turned to help her take off her veil.

She shook me off, fumbled over the fastening for a moment,

Digitized by Google

then; with a quick movement, turned round and faced us both.

And as I looked I felt the blood within me turn to ice. For it was not Belinda! My God! Not Belinda, but Honoria, who stood before me!

She, the idiot, the fool, had tricked me, tricked a clever woman of the world, who had held her in such utter and supreme contempt as something only to be tortured, harried, laughed at and despised.

Oh, my God! it was too much! She had placed Belinda in her bed, and muffling herself in the girl's clothes, had sat dazed and stupefied at her own courage, daring the journey, though she had heard my talk with Eastacres.

I could have killed her in my rage, and stepped forward, shaking with passion.

But Eastacres was before me. Lifting his arm, with his full strength he struck her face, her head, struck her again and yet again until she lay a quivering heap upon the floor.

"And now," he said, "there's you to settle with, you, the smart woman who was cheated by a fool."

God knows what he meant to do. There was murder in his face, murder in his heart. The priest long since had fled in terror from the place. There was no one——.

A tall figure strode between me and the Duke. A turn of the wrist, a movement of the powerful arm, and Eastacres was writhing in the grasp of David Carr.

He took him outside, and for the next ten minutes I listened to the shrieks of a man in horrible physical pain. David was flogging him. The lash of his riding whip sounded like a flail in the keen air. It was awful to hear—awful to see. The room grew misty before my eyes, my heart was galloping; somewhere, somewhere in the distance I seemed to hear the words "You'll never get the twenty thousand now. You'll never, never——" With a hoarse cry I threw up my arms. It was over, done with—I was beaten.

* * * * * *

I should like to have ended this series with these last words. The bitterness of failure is made yet more bitter knowing as I do that not one of you that read but will rejoice. I am compelled, however, in accordance with the conditions under which I wrote these articles to furnish the following facts.

Belinda recovered from the effects of the opium I had administered, and with her father's sanction married David some six months later. The young man is doing well in his profession, and I believe some hopes are entertained that in course of time he'll receive a title; so will Hardy North's ambition be partially gratified.

Honoria never went back to Mark Striven. That astute scoundrel made terms with North, and promised certain information—about me—in return for a lump sum, and gave an undertaking not to molest his wife. Honoria lives to this day with David and Belinda, as idiotic, foolish, and deceitful as ever. She was always ungrateful, and will doubtless serve Belinda as she served me.

Hardy North declined to pay me a penny for my care of his daughter, and threatened what he called "proceedings" if I ever broached the subject again.

Eastacres has left the country. Stanley Forbes gave him his choice of prosecution for forgery—he'd been imitating people's signatures—or voluntary exile.

He chose the latter. His mother, the old Duchess, still lives, and is doubtless as confirmed a kleptomaniac as when she stole Belinda's pearls. Crawley is the only one of the old set I ever see, and even he has forsaken me of late.

But I don't want them. I hate and despise them all. Not one among them but would have acted as I acted, struggled as I struggled, not one but would have welcomed and have fawned upon me had I been successful.

As it is I have my revenge. Of the people mentioned in this series all but two are living. You can identify—with very little trouble—the prototypes of the women and the men—their doings, their faults, their foibles and the dark secrets of their lives set forth in the account of

HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

Nearly a Tragedy.

A Story in Three Chapters.

CHAPTER I.

George Beswick, a young sailor on his Majesty's ship *Marquess of Hartington*, had served a long apprenticeship to the sea, and at length, after being in many climes and passing through many hardships, he found himself a full-blown A.B. He had set his heart upon this kind of life work, and got on very well until a blight fell on his career.

CHAPTER II.

One of his duties was to go aloft, and he began to find that when at the topmast head he would be attacked with dizziness, until he had a regular fear of climbing. When sailing in a high sea he had a peculiar swimming sensation in his head, and the vessel seemed to be spinning round. He also had an intense burning sensation in the stomach. It might have been thought that this was sea-sickness; but it was not. It was simply chronic biliousness.

The medicine chest was brought into requisition without any effect. The burning sensation in the stomach became gradually more severe, and lasted for longer spells. He had dreadful pains in his head, and also in his joints, and even on shore had attacks of faintness and blurred sight. His food seemed to do him no good, and after each meal he felt heavy and exhausted. Walking became painful, and, no matter how careful he was as to what he ate, he was subject to continuous constipation.

When he put into port he used to see doctors, but they were unable to do him good; until, in addition to the daily risks he was running when up aloft, he began to fear he would have to give up the sea altogether, which was a serious matter for him after having served his apprenticeship to it.

CHAPTER III.

Reduced to such a plight, he was considering what he would do to gain a livelihood ashore, when a friend insisted on his trying bile beans for biliousness. This friend told him that for biliousness, dizziness, headache, constipation and its accompaniments, there was nothing like bile beans; so he got a box. Soon after he began the dull, heavy feeling left him, and for the first time for eighteen months he found himself free from constipation. He began to enjoy his food; and now, thanks solely to bile beans, he is entirely cured, and able to do his work well and vigorously. Bile beans cost one and three-halfpence and two and nine a box, of all chemists, or from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C. Insist on seeing the name "Chas. Forde" on every box. In addition to the ailments mentioned above, they are a certain cure for indigestion, liver and kidney troubles, piles, anæmia, and all female ailments, colds, chill, rheumatism, and influenza. It was a London *Sun* reporter who gleaned this story, and he learned it from George Beswick himself.

Digitized by Google

Hard on the Artist.

She: "I wonder why they hung that picture?" He: "Perhaps they couldn't catch the artist."

Just as Easy.

She: "Do you think there is any reason why a young lady should not ride a bicycle as well as drive a horse?" He: "Not at all. It's just as easy to dodge a bicycle as a carriage."

She'd Tell All She Knew.

Lulu: "We girls are getting up a secret society of our own." George: "Indeed! What's the object?" Lulu: "I don't know yet, but I'll tell you all about it after I'm initiated."

His Proper Sphere.

Author: "Mary, I've made a mistake in my calling. I'm not an author, but a born chemist." Author's wife: "What makes you think that, Horace?" Author: "Well, every book I write becomes a drug in the market."

Couldn't Afford Such Extravagance.

"You are worth your weight in gold to me, darling!" he murmured. "Then do go home early, George, dear," she replied wearily. "I've lost ten pounds since we became engaged, just sitting up late with you. We can't afford such extravagance."

Her Love Explained.

He: "If you did not love me, why did you encourage me?" She: "Encourage you?" He: "For two seasons you have accepted every one of my invitations to the theatre and concerts." She: "That was not because I loved you; it was because I loved the theatre."

Wanted to Keep Him in the Family.

"Reginald," she said, to a wealthy young dandy, who had been paying his attentions to her, "I should like to ask you a very serious question." "What is it, my dear?" he replied. "Would you object to marry mamma if I refused you? You see, we really don't want to lose you."

Rural Ignorance.

"Your trip to Italy must have been very pleasant," said one of the most intelligent young ladies in a Wiltshire village to Simpson, who had just returned from foreign parts. "Very interesting indeed," answered he. "Now, tell me," said she, "does Italy look like a boot? You know that's the way it looks on the map."

What is Sisterly Love?

"Do I love George?" mused Clara softly, "or is it simply a sister's affection that I feel for——". Just then Bobby burst noisily into the room, and interrupted her sweet meditations. "Get out of here, you young ruffian!" she shouted, and, seizing him by the arm, she shot him through the door. "Ah, no!" she sighed, as she resumed her interrupted train of thought, "my love for George is not a sister's love. It is something sweeter, purer, higher, and holier!"

Very Probably He Would.

He (seriously): "Do you think your father would object to my marrying you?" She: "I don't know; if he's anything like me he would."

An Old Hand at it.

"Miss Swift is learning to ride a bicycle, she tells me." "But she rode one last year. Why does she have to learn again?" "Another fellow is teaching her."

The Meanings of Names.

Mother: "Every name means something—Harry, the bold; Charles, the brave; William, the good; Harold, the——" Helen (starting from a reverie): "Harold—oh, yes, Harold means business; he told me so last night."

Not a Good Place.

Captain Ardare: "Just one kiss before I go, just one to soften the bitterness of parting." Miss Prudence: "Captain Ardare, I am pained by your request. I thought you knew I never permitted such liberties—besides, this isn't a good place."

His Potent Virtue.

"Why does she consider her husband a model? He smokes, and is fond of wine?" "Yes." "Plays cards and scolds?" "So they say." "Never gets home till one?" "Yes, but——" "But what?" "He never gets a spot on the table-cloth when he carves."

Strong Circumstantial Evidence.

"Young man, what right have you to kiss my daughter on such short acquaintance?" "What proof, sir, have you that I have done any such thing?" "No positive proof, young man, but that hairpin in your moustache is strong circumstantial evidence."

Woman's Thoughtfulness.

"How lucky," said Mrs. Nuwed, "that I happened to pass that cigar sale this morning! These cigars are exactly the shade of George's new smoking jacket, and the smart little green bands round them will go with the lining beautifully. Men never think of these little things!"

The Difference Age Makes.

A girl's taste differs according to her age, says a cynic. At sixteen she wants a masher with toothpick shoes and microscopic moustache; at twenty a nobleman with a pile of gold; at twenty-five, she'll be satisfied with a Member of Parliament; at thirty a country doctor or a curate will do, and at thirty-five anything in the male line, from an editor down.

Waiting for Him to Go.

"Young man," said the stern parent, with the accent on the young, "do you intend to stay here all night holding my daughter's hand and looking her in the face like a sick calf?" "No, sir." "What do you intend to do, then?" "Well, I had thought when you did us the kindness to retire, I would put my arm round her waist, and if she did not object too forcibly, I might risk a kiss."

Instinct or Experience?

"Maud," he said, as the carriage entered the shadowy lane, "Maud, are you sure you—you never had any man's arm about your waist, as mine is?" "No, George, I never did," she murmured; "I never, never did! Why?" "Oh, nothing," he replied, "only I wondered whether it was instinct or experience that made you take the reins from my hand just as soon as we reached this secluded spot!"

He Wasn't Asleep.

Scene: Newly-married pair on bench in park. Old gentleman supposed to be asleep. She: "My darling!" He: "My dove!" She: "My dearest!" He: "My pussy!" She: "My duck!" He: "My pretty birdie!" She: "My goosie!" He: "My kitten!" She: "My chickee!" He: "My lambkin!" Old gentleman (interrupting brutally): "Can't you call each other Noah's Arks, and have done with it?"

Digitized by Google

ALFOSCO REGD

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Call or Write

ALFOSCO REGD

10/6

Design No. 743. 10/6.

Ladies' Costume Skirt in Grey Mixture **Tweed** — neat bird's-eye effect. Skirt is lined throughout and trimmed strappings of same material, nicely stitched. Price **10/6**; carriage 5d. This skirt can be ordered in black if desired. Ladies need have no hesitation in ordering one of these Skirts. Money returned if not approved.

Design No. 743 **10/6**

Design No. 443. 10/6. New Design for Spring.

One of ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s latest productions, and by far the cheapest and smartest Half-Guinea Costume on the market. Made in A. F. & Co.'s new **Zibeline Cloth** (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect) or in either their **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth**—all colours. The bodice is lined and made in the Russian style. New collar and cape tastefully trimmed braid. Well finished Skirt trimmed round hips with braid; very stylish. Price only **10/6**; carr. 6d. ex. Skirt alone **6/6**, carr. 5d.

Design No. 1019. 4/11.

Costume skirt in good wearing Black and Navy **Serge**, trimmed two flounces and braid. Price only **4/11**; car. 5d. In ordering give length of skirt in front and size of waist. Post orders receive prompt attention.

Write for our **SPRING SKETCH BOOK and CATALOGUE of BARGAINS.**

Hundreds of Illustrations of the Latest Novelties in Costumes and Jackets sent post free.

Design No. 760. 10/6.

Chesterfield Three-quarter Sacque Jacket. This Jacket is produced in Grey and Black **Vicuna Coating**; also in pretty Grey Tweeds. Price only **10/6**; carriage 6d. extra. This Jacket can also be ordered 33in. long, **11/6**; 36in., **12/6**; 39in. **13/6**; and 42in., **14/6**; carriage, 6d. extra. Patterns Free.

Design No. 443

10/6

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles**, and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY**.

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc.

The **QUALITY** is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6-0-0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN**, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 57 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walmall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas } Or from a
AND } Guinea
15 Guineas } per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.

TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.

4 & 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

"In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

. . . Conclusion. . . .

What the Cockatoo Said.

"These cigarettes are not so good as Hussein ul Mulk's," said Brett, producing his case.

"No, he has an exquisite taste in tobacco. But I nearly fooled him with the dummy diamonds. I would have done so if it had not been for you. Do you know, Mr. Brett, I have always underrated Englishmen's brains. You are really stupid as a nation"—here Talbot almost blushed—"but you are an exception. You ought to be a Frenchman."

"I suppose I may regard that as a compliment?" remarked Brett casually.

"Take it as you like," said Dubois. "And now that I have told you all that you want to know, I suppose, may I ask you a question of some interest to myself? What is to become of me? Am I to be hanged, or imprisoned, or passed on to the Sultan for treatment?"

Brett was silent for a few moments.

"How much of the five thousand pounds given you by the Turks remains in your possession?" he demanded.

The Frenchman hesitated before replying:

"There is no use lying to you. I have not yet expended the first thousand, although I had to pay pretty dearly for a good many things."

"Why did you come here?" asked the barrister.

"Because I would be safe for some months with a few hospitable gentlemen whom I know up in the hills."

"And then?"

"Then Marguerite and I were going to the Argentine, to dwell in rural felicity, and teach our children to bless the name of Mahomet and Abdul Hamid."

"Marguerite is Mademoiselle Beaucaire?"

"Yes, poor girl! I hear she is ill and in prison, together with her excellent father. Really, Mr. Brett, I cannot help liking you, but I ought to feel anxious to cut your throat."

"In that case you would certainly be hanged. Are you married to Mademoiselle Beaucaire?"

The Frenchman darted a quick and angry look at his inquisitor.

"What has that to do with you?" he snarled.

Dubois' future had already been determined. The rascal was more fortunate than he deserved to be. Owing to the lucky chance that his crime had a political significance he would escape punishment.

The slightest public reference to either the theft of the diamonds or the Sultan's original intentions with regard to them would create such a storm in the Mohammedan world that no man could prophesy the end.

Brett knew exactly how to deal with Dubois. But a fantastic project had arisen in his mind, and he determined to graft it upon the drastic expedient adopted by the authorities.

He abruptly broke off the conversation and told the Frenchman that he would call again during the afternoon.

True to his promise, Talbot and he visted the injured man some hours later. This time they were accompanied by a stout individual and a closely-veiled lady—Grosjean and his daughter.

The meeting between Henri and Marguerite was pathetic. It was at the same time exceedingly French, and somewhat trying to the nerves of the Englishmen.

At last the couple calmed their transports, and Brett promptly recalled them to a proportionate sense of their surroundings by reminding them that there was serious business to be discussed.

"I am commissioned to inform you," he said, addressing Dubois, "that if you proceed direct to the Argentine, never attempt to revisit France, and keep your mouth closed as to your attempt to purloin the Sultan's jewels, you will be set at liberty here, and no effort will be made by the French or British police to arrest you. The infringement of any of these conditions will lead to your extradition and a sentence of penal servitude for life."

"*Ma foi!*" cried the Frenchman, looking intently into the barrister's inscrutable face. "Why such tenderness?"

Brett would not give him time for prolonged reflection.

"I have not yet finished," he said drily. "I imagine that Mlle. Beaucaire cannot produce a marriage certificate. She will be supplied with one, to permit her to travel with you as your lawful wife."

The pair were startled. They somewhat relaxed the close embrace in which they sat. The man's handsome face flushed with anger.

La Belle Chasseuse sat mute and downcast. This personal development came as a complete surprise to her.

Dubois glanced at her covertly. He was still annoyed and defiant; but even he, hardened scoundrel and cynic though he was, could not find words to contest Brett's decision.

The barrister deemed the moment ripe for his final smashing argument. He came somewhat nearer to the bed, and said with exasperating coolness:

"There is a secret room in the Cabaret Noir, the contents of which have not yet been too closely examined by the police. It is in their charge. At my request, backed up by the British Foreign Office, they have thus far deferred a detailed scrutiny. Perhaps if the external influence is removed they may press their investigations to a point when it will be impossible to permit your contemplated voyage to the Argentine. You know best. I have nothing further to say."

Dubois looked at him in moody silence. The Argentine—with £4,000? Yes. But a wife!

In a few moments the Frenchman drew Marguerite closer to him, with his uninjured arm, and said—

"Let us get married, *ma p'tite*. It is essential."

And married they were forthwith, a priest and an official from the Mayor's office being in waiting at the hotel.

Whilst they were signing the register Grosjean motioned Brett to one side.

"Allow me to thank you, M'sieu', for the kindness you have shown," he murmured. "Touching that hidden room in the Cabaret, now. Do the police really know of it?"

"They do."

"Then, M'sieu', I accompany them to the Argentine," and he jerked his thumb towards Dubois and his wife.

Six months later, when the Earl and Countess of Fairholme returned from their wedding tour, Brett was invited to dinner.

Talbot was there, of course, and Daubeney, and Sir Hubert.

"Constantinople must be a queer place," observed Jack after the first rush of animated converse had exhausted itself.

"Surely there are no more diamond mysteries on foot!" cried his charming sister.

"Not exactly; but I made some inquiries through a friend of mine in the Legation. Hussein ul Mulk and his two Paris friends are quite important functionaries in the palace. The other pair of scoundrels came to a bad end.

"Is there any news of Monsieur and Madame Dubois, and the fat man Grosjean?" asked Edith.

"You will receive some in the drawing-room, Lady Fairholme," said Brett.

In the drawing-room her ladyship was delighted to find a splendid cockatoo.

"The happy couple in the Argentine sent him to me to be presented to you on your return," explained the barrister. "He is named 'Le Prophète,' and he talks beautifully—indeed, his language is most emphatic, but it is all French."

"What a darling!" cried Edith. "I do wish he would say something. *Cher Prophète, parlez avec moi!*"

And immediately the cockatoo stretched out his wings and screamed—

"*Vive Mahomet! Vive le Sultan! A bas les Grecs! à bas! à bas!*"

Finis.

Digitized by Google

Catarrh a Constant Cold in the Head.

The medical explanation of the causes and symptoms of catarrh is an interesting item of a quarterly medical Journal just at hand. The Editor is anxious that people should understand the serious consequences which may result from neglect of a cold or of a series of colds in the head. In fact, the beginning of many of the most obstinate forms of catarrh can be traced to what the patient thought a simple cold. This fact is emphasized by a series of cases taken from the records of the Drouet Institute. These cases also serve to illustrate the treatment of catarrh by the Drouet Method, which the Editor points out has been successful in a large proportion of instances after operations and other special procedures have failed. Names and addresses being given, this issue of the "Journal for the Deaf and Review of Diseases of the Nose, Throat and Ears" will be of use to everyone who has any form of catarrh. A free copy of the Journal can be obtained by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The "Journal" also contains a Special Report Form by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to treatment. The Editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination during the consultation hours, week-day mornings, 10 to 12, afternoons, 2 to 4. For personal consultations a fee of 5s. is charged.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM
(CLOTTED): absolutely pure: no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids: ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free. Supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.**

Sovereigns In your bank

ARE BETTER than in the pockets of ordinary retailers.
WRITE NOW FOR
H. SAMUEL'S Big Prize Guide,
200 Pages, 3,000 Engravings, Bargains in Watches 8/6, Clocks 1/6, Real Gold Gem Rings 3/6, Cutlery, Plate, &c.
This Grand Volume is Sent you Absolutely
FREE FOR A POSTCARD
Shews how by dealing direct at factory prices
YOU SAVE HALF YOUR USUAL OUTLAY.
VALUABLE FREE GIFTS TO BUYERS.
TEN LISTS TO CHOOSE FROM IN GUIDE.
DON'T DELAY! WRITE NOW!
H. SAMUEL, DEPT. 29, MARKET ST., MANCHESTER.

Order
E. & T.
PINK'S JAM
Undoubtedly the Best.
PURE.
No Artificial Colouring or Chemical Preservative.

Ten Days Free Trial
is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way.
1903 Models, fully warranted,
£3.10 to £6.10
New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.
200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10
Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.
Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample cycle at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44A,
MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

TOOTH-ACHE
CURED INSTANTLY BY
BUNTER'S NERVINE
Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.
Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.
"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

MERLIN CYCLES
MARVELLOUS VALUE
A HIGH GRADE £10 10 0 Cycle for £5 19 6. Free Wheel and Back-pedal Brake.
Brand New Guaranteed Pneumatic-tyred Cycles for £3 19 6
Merlin Cycles are always good, no matter what price you pay.
MERLIN CYCLE Co., Martineau St, Birmingham

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE
KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS
Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints etc.
For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.
Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box

GIVEN AWAY
with next week's
HOME NOTES
(No. 480)
PAPER PATTERN
of a
BLOUSE.
Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.
Price Twopence.

FREE TO YOU
To advertise S.L.S Records, we are giving away our noted Phonographs for a limited time. Write, giving full address and nearest railway station; enclose stamp.
Symonds' London Stores,
128, City Road, London.

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Trifling Toast.

FANNIE has known a man for some time, and been friendly with him. She likes him very much, but so far he has given no hint of having any deep feeling for her. The other day, before leaving their house, she offered him a glass of claret, and he drank it saying "My best love to you." Ever since that, FANNIE had been wondering whether it should be taken as a hint for her.

* * * * *

I fear such remarks as that over wine are only too frequent to be taken seriously. It was very likely just his nice little way of proposing your health. After all, "health" is a very overdone thing to wish people, and "respects" would have been formal. "Love" was the right thing to say, and he said it. Don't treat it too seriously. If he means it, he will want more of your claret, as it appears to be the only means by which he cares to express feelings at all.

❦❦❦

A Sudden Change.

X AND Y were engaged for five years. X, the man, suddenly drops Y, but Y still loves him. Is this explicable after five years of courtship?

* * * * *

It looks as though X has tired of Y. Give him a rest, and see if he comes back. Perhaps he thinks he is fonder of somebody else. He is probably wrong and will realise it. Five years is a long test, and few men could have continued so long unless there were a very real attachment between him and the girl. But I daresay he has got into a groove and wants a change. The engagement is altogether too long. Unless he repents very soon, try to get him out of your thoughts.

❦❦❦

An Unfair Advantage.

AILSA'S lover is going to Australia, and expects to be there ten years. AILSA is twenty. The young man wants to become engaged to her before he goes out. Would I recommend this course?

* * * * *

No, certainly not. It would be quite unfair to bind yourself to any such engagement. If you are really lovers, you should have a distinct understanding, but not a binding engagement. To expect you to wait until you are thirty before marrying is very unfair to you.

* * * * *

You may alter your mind about the young man in a year or so, and might quite easily meet someone at home who would attract you more. If the young man thinks there is a chance of your going out to him to become his wife within a certain time, you will consult your own inclinations in the matter of an engagement. I am assuming there is no likelihood of that.

Marrying Again.

"How soon after his wife's death should a man marry again?" F. G., who inquires this, has several children, and his home badly wants attention which he cannot give himself.

* * * * *

Under such circumstances, it is quite permissible to marry a year afterwards. Not so much because you have forgotten your first wife, as because on a mere common-sense basis a man must have somebody to manage his home. I advise somebody of your own age. A young and attractive woman who marries a man for the sake of becoming mistress of a home would probably be entering a fatal tangle.

❦❦❦

A Man's Column Proposed.

A MERE MAN is annoyed because there is no column dealing with men in *Short Stories*. He thinks men should be able to read of matters affecting them quite as much as women, including directions as to dress, manners, and general affairs.

* * * * *

I am always pleased to chat with men on any matters on which they may want a hint. A woman is often able to give hints, even in business matters, which, though inexperienced, may quite possibly hit the nail on the head. As to men's dress, I do not really believe there are many men who want to read about such things, excepting, of course, dandies.

* * * * *

The great test of a well-dressed man nowadays is neatness and the absence of display. Men who have the instinct to dress well cannot be improved by anything they may read, while those who have not that instinct are seldom able to learn. As to etiquette, there are certainly many points on which one has much to learn, and many of my male readers who are in doubt on such matters should drop me a line.

❦❦❦

The Language of Lilies.

WINNIE is a Sunday School teacher. Some time ago, one of the gentlemen teachers appeared with a bunch of lilies in his buttonhole, which WINNIE coveted. In a mischievous moment she asked him for them, and he at once handed the flowers over. Since that, every Sunday the young man has appeared with a bunch of lilies, and has each time presented them to WINNIE. Am I to read this as a sign that he is in love with her? His manners generally have not suggested anything of the kind.

* * * * *

I think you were a trifle forward, WINNIE. The young man could not, of course, refuse to comply with your request in the first instance, and being no doubt a bit of a courtier, thought it a happy idea to bring the flowers regularly. Perhaps he is a little bit of a flirt, and rather fancied the compliment you paid him by asking for his flowers. Don't place too much reliance on what you think is behind it. It is probably nothing more than a pretty compliment on his part.

❦❦❦

Introduction.

WILL many correspondents please remember what I have several times stated—that I cannot act as an agent for introducing couples to whom I have given advice. Neither can I announce anything in the nature of advertisements on this page. I hope those who continually ask me to do so will take this as final. If I agreed to do it once, I must consent to always, and the Editor of this paper does not want to become a matrimonial agent.

Cynthia.

Printed by HORACE COX, Breams Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

SICK MADE WELL WEAK MADE STRONG.

Marvellous Elixir of Life Discovered by Famous Doctor-Scientist That Cures Every Known Ailment.

Wonderful Cures are Effected That Seem Like Miracles Performed—The Secret of Long Life of Olden Times Revived.

The Remedy is Free to All Who Send Name and Address.

After years of patient study, and delving into the dusty record of the past, as well as following modern experiments in the realms of medical science, Dr. James W. Kidd, 522, First National Bank Building, Fort Wayne, Ind., U.S.A., makes the startling announcement that he has surely discovered the elixir of life. That he is

DR. JAMES WILLIAM KIDD.

able with the aid of a mysterious compound, known only to himself produced as a result of the years he has spent in searching for this precious life-giving boon, to cure any and every disease that is known to the human body. There is no doubt of the doctor's earnestness in making his claim and the remarkable cures that he is daily effecting seem to bear him out very strongly. His theory which he advances is one of reason and based on sound experience in a medical practice of many years. It costs nothing to try his remarkable "Elixir of Life," as he calls it, for he sends it free, to anyone who is a sufferer, in sufficient quantities to convince of its ability to cure, so there is absolutely no risk to run. Some of the cures cited are very remarkable, and but for reliable witnesses would hardly be credited. The lame have thrown away crutches and walked about after two or three trials of the remedy. The sick, given up by home doctors, have been restored to their families and friends in perfect health. Rheumatism, neuralgia, stomach, heart, liver, kidney, blood and skin diseases and bladder troubles disappear as by magic. Headaches, backaches, nervousness, fevers, consumption, coughs, colds, asthma, catarrh, bronchitis, and all affections of the throat, lungs or any vital organs are easily overcome in a space of time that is simply marvellous.

Partial paralysis, locomotor ataxia, dropsy, gout, scrofula, are quickly and permanently removed. It purifies the entire system, blood and tissues, restores normal nerve power, circulation and a state of perfect health is produced at once. To the doctor all systems are alike and equally affected by this great "Elixir of Life." Send for the remedy to-day. It is free to every sufferer. State what you want to be cured of and the sure remedy for it will be sent you free by return mail.

Remember a letter to America from the British Isles requires 2½d. postage. Write your name very plainly, and be sure to give your full address, so there can be no mistake in delivery.

10,000 RUGS GIVEN AWAY

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

This Phenomenal Offer is made to the readers of *Short Stories* (21/3/1903) only. On receipt of Postal Order for **5/-**, or **62** stamps, we will forward, DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS,** suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an Advertisement for our goods, *below the Actual Cost of production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our Looms, thus saving the purchasers all middle profits.

With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very Handsome Rug to match, or we will send Two Carpets and Two Rugs for **9/6.**

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED. THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

CALAXY ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, ETC., POST FREE,

if mentioning *Short Stories* (21/3/1903) while writing.
Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SONS (Dept. S.T.S.) Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,
WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR **HEADACHE** AND **Neuralgia.**

Cures In TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

The Editor of the "Family Doctor," the People's Medical Paper, IN ONE OF HIS COMMENTS, SAYS:

"After a careful examination of Kaputine, and learning its component parts, we should certainly recommend it as a Safe and Reliable Remedy for Headache."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,
of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from
KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield
for 12 stamps.

Digitized by Google

"G.P." ASK FOR "Government" Tea

Eighteenpence Everywhere.

RICH, RIPE, REFRESHING.

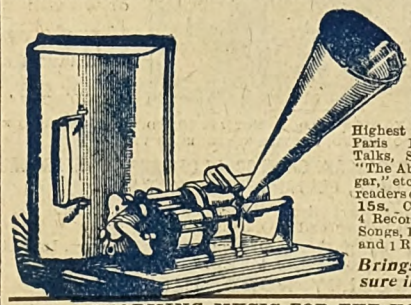
You May Know It by Its Red Tape and Seal.

WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE TO G.P. GOVERNMENT TEA CO., 16 AMERICA SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.

A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

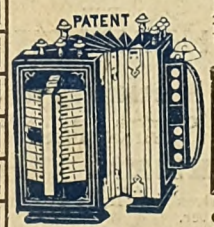


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. **No Home should be without one.** *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, „ 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, „ 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, „ 16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount

Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.

Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!

PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.

A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

REGULATION JACK TAR SUIT

ROYAL NAVAL WORSTED SERGES

ALL ONE PRICE 66 ALL SIZES

Postage 3d. Send post-card for illustrated catalogue of young gentlemen's clothing.

THE BON MARCHÉ LIVERPOOL.

Price 75/- 1/9 per week.

5/- SECURES THIS MAILCART

It is a hand-carved satin Walnut Convertible Car, hand polished, upholstered in Tan, Green or Electric Blue, with springs and wheels painted to match. It has sliding foot well and drop front, adapting it for use for one or two children, just as required. Price, with Twisted brass Rail and fringed hood, 75/-. Size of Wheels, 25 by 10 inch.

TERMS.—Send 5/- deposit, we then forward at once, carriage paid; the price is only 75/-, and you pay 3/6 fortnightly or 7/- monthly until paid for. If, however, you wish to pay Cash the price is but 65/-. Write for Catalogue. Good Agents wanted.

MAXEY & CO., Meadow St., SHEFFIELD.

BRITANNIA CLEANS HER HELMET WITH "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

AND EVERY BRITISH HOUSEWIFE SHOULD POLISH ALL METALS WITH IT, TOO.

Most foreign polishes set up acid, are *sticky* in use, and require much labour in cleaning. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is entirely made in England, and by using it you support British Trade.

Manufacturers: THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co. Ltd., LIVERPOOL.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW COMPETITION STARTS INSIDE.

Short Stories.

No. 743.] Week ending March 28, 1903. [Price One Penny.

Flinging one arm as far as she dared along the body of the stone dog, she dragged her own body forward towards the gargoyle's mouth. So much depended on her getting the letter! Would she be able to reach it? ✍ ✍

Digitized by Google

(A Dramatic Incident from our Story, "FOR HIS SAKE." See page 391.)

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 Brownie is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2½ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK Ltd., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

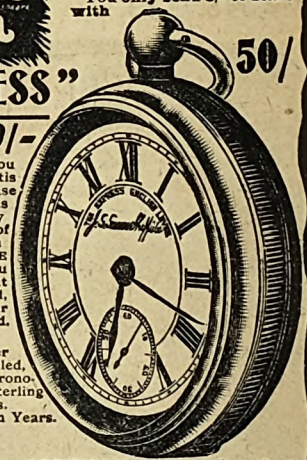
Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W., 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' System

On J. G. GRAVES' System you are absolutely certain of what you are buying before you pay for it.

You only send 5/- to start with

THE "EXPRESS"



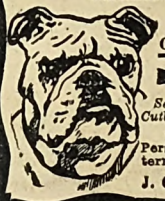
50/

ENGLISH LEVER, (Regd.) **50/-**

is then forwarded to you. You examine and test it, and, if satisfied, you complete the purchase in nine more monthly payments of 5/-; or, if you prefer to pay the balance in one payment of 45/- within seven days from receipt of goods, a HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT (which you choose yourself) will be sent you. If you are not satisfied, return the watch, and your deposit is instantly refunded.

SPECIFICATION.

First-grade English Lever Movement, Capped & Jewelled, Safety Winding Pinion, Chronometer Balance, Massive Sterling Silver (Hall Marked) Cases. Warranted Seven Years.



Guaranteed BRITISH Manufacture throughout.

THE LARGEST WATCH-SALES FIRM IN THE WORLD.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post Free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. Good Commission. No Risk.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

Carr. Paid.

For **Cash** or **12** Monthly Payments of

£8 8s. 15/10 | £9 10s 17/6
£9 16/8 | £105s. 19/3

Juno Motor Cycle £32 or **60/-** mo. Accessories at lower prices than any other house; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6. Write for New Season List, over 100 pages and 500 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S.S. De t.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PACES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

SPECIAL BARGAINS

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE £ d S

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER**, jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

POWERFUL FIELD GLASSES by celebrated optician (Le Gautier, Paris); 30 miles range; 8 achromatic lenses (guaranteed), nickel silver eyeshades, in leather sling case; sacrifice **10/6**.

GLADSTONE BAG, 24in., superior quality, real brown cowhide, strong leather straps, nickel silver fittings, &c.; in perfect condition; unsolicited; cost 4 guineas; accept **25/-**; approval.

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH**, extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6**.

MAGNIFICENT 5-ROW PEARL COLLARETTE; finest quality; mounted with four bars of lustrous Orient diamonds, in velvet-lined case, complete; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING**, 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6**.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument. 12-fold bellows (metal bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

FEATHER BOAS; bankrupt stock, special bargains, real Ostrich Feather Boas, beautifully curly, perfectly new, in box colours, grey and white, black and white, and natural. Prices **10/6** and **12/6**. Original price 30/- and 42/-; each approval willingly.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH**, jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-**.

A full list of **Special Bargains, New and Second-hand**, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, Pawnbroker and Jeweller, 284 Brixton Road, London, S.W.

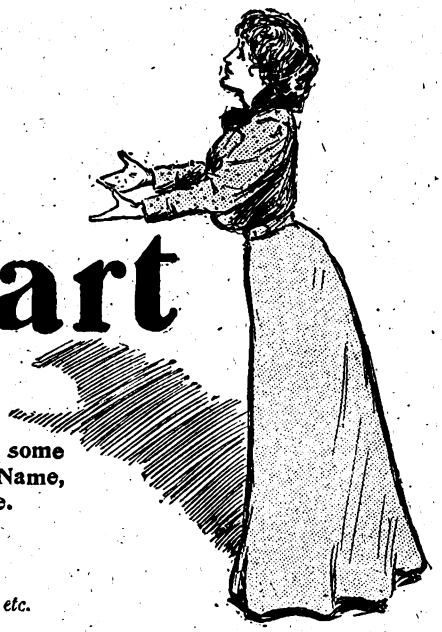
Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C

Short Stories.

No. 743.] Week Ending March 28th, 1903. [One Penny.

NEW SERIAL. **START TO-DAY.**

Held Apart



The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Moira Davenal is sitting in the little cottage on Groudle Quay busy with her ribbon work. Sir Guy Vanbrugh is talking to her.

"Moira, I love you so much," he says. "Won't you——"

He pauses. There is a heavy step in the hallway of the cottage, and a burly figure enters the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal. I'm off to London for the week-end and was just leaving a message for you with your daughter. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph?*"

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," says John Davenal, who is a diver engaged in raising Sir Guy's yacht. "She'll soon be afloat."

After Sir Guy has gone a sailor appears at the door singing in drunken tones the scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

The diver rises to his feet.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarks loudly. "Glad to see you. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

While Moira goes out on an errand a conversation takes place between the two men, from which it appears that Moira is really Hartigan's daughter.

The sailor—who is a ship's steward—sits back in his chair and begins to sing again the drunken chorus.

He halts abruptly, for the door slowly opens, and a blind woman comes in.

Dennis Hartigan recognises her as his sister Kate. She tells her brother that she heard the song he was singing—sung in just the same way—once when she was sitting on a breakwater at Groudle. She also adds that the man who was singing said, evidently to someone with him: "This is out far enough. In with it;" after which there was a splash.

Hannah Davenal (Hartigan's wife and the diver's sister) is maid to Lady Tarleton. She is possessed of a secret with which she continually blackmails her mistress.

One afternoon Lady Tarleton and Hannah Davenal go down to Groudle Tower, and together they make a mysterious journey at midnight.

Two mornings later Hannah is found dead in bed, a towel smelling of chloroform is on her face, and over that a pillow on which are some dirty finger marks.

The police are informed of the tragedy, and Detective-Sergeant Ussher is sent from Scotland Yard to investigate.

Edward Stormont, the owner of Groudle Tower, and Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law, now arrives at Groudle with his friend Paul Jerome, a war-correspondent, and the following day Irene Tarleton comes in response to her mother's summons.

Dennis Hartigan is arrested on suspicion of causing his wife's death, but is soon released. He has a mysterious conversation with Lady Tarleton regarding the whereabouts of a child.

"If—if the child were no longer in my path," Lady Tarleton murmurs, "I would give ten thousand pounds—to the man who told me so."

She hands Hartigan a note for one hundred pounds.

"Think it well over," she says.

"I will, my lady," Hartigan answers.

On his way back to Groudle Tower Hartigan encounters his sister Kate. She mentions the song he had sung. Hartigan's eyes flash. The brother and sister reach a level crossing and are part way over when Dennis sees a train rounding the curve. Loosing his hold of his sister's arm, he springs over the wooden flooring of the crossing, saying:

"Stand there, you are quite safe!"

The blind girl stands between the metals, extending her hands gropingly; the ground is shaken by the vibrations of the oncoming express.

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

NINTH CHAPTER.
Two Meetings and a Crossing.

Nearer and nearer came the thundering black mass of the locomotive, the afternoon sunlight glinting on its polished fittings and on the windows of the long train that swung behind it round the curve which opened to the level crossing. And the blind girl, frozen with terror, stood in its path, between the shining "metals" of the down line, aghast, shuddering, helpless.

The whistle of the locomotive shrieked—shrieked wildly, fiercely, in note after note of almost human warning, and the brakes ground on the flying wheels. She had been seen—too late!

A moment more and the train had shot by, its speed lessening, and the reversed wheels of the engine biting desperately at the rails. The driver and fireman stared each at the other, a wan smile of relief struggling through the terror on their rough visages.

For a wonderful thing had happened. Plunging almost under the buffers of the advancing train, a man and a horse had skimmed the gate of the crossing, bird-like and low, as the swallow flies before rain. There had been the hollow rattle of iron hoofs on the wooden planks of the crossing—audible above the clatter and rumble of the slowing express—and then horse and man were over the further gate and in safety.

The rider had leant in mid-career to snatch at the blind girl. As his gallant mount took the second leap, he lifted his own burden across the saddle in front of him.

In the lane beyond he eased his horse. The girl lay still and white, she had lost consciousness; the horse steadied itself into a hand-gallop. He spoke to it soothingly and pulled it up; it had broken into a lather of sweat. Nor could he marvel, he had roused it from a walk to hurl it, with whip and heel, at the double leap. It was a staunch, "flea-bitten white"; no Park hack used to hurdles, but a peerless old hunter. Paul Jerome, in all his wanderings, had never thrown leg over a better bit of horseflesh.

"By Jingo!" he exclaimed, pausing in his saddle to look at the woman he had just rescued, "what a pretty creature! And swooned; I thought as much!"

He dismounted carefully, flung a rein over his arm and lifted his burden to the soft turf of the wayside. A sigh burst from Kate Hartigan's lips and she sat up with an effort. The war-correspondent saw that she was sightless, and a great pity moved him.

"Don't be alarmed," he said; "you were lingering a trifle too long on the crossing, and as the gates were shut I had to jump my horse over them and whisk you out of danger rather unceremoniously."

The blind girl sprang to her feet.

"Oh!" she cried, "where is Dennis, then? He must be killed, killed by the train. Dennis! Dennis!" she moaned.

She buried her face in her palms. Paul Jerome studied her.

"If you mean the person who was with you," he replied, with a singular harshness in his voice, "you may make yourself easy. Mr. Dennis got over in perfect safety. He is doubtless behind us. I galloped some distance down the lane before pulling up. May I ask," added the war-correspondent, "Mr. Dennis' other name, and if he is a relative or only a friend?"

The blind girl dried the tears that were hanging on her lashes. "He is my brother," she answered; "his name is Dennis Hartigan. I am Kate Hartigan and I live with Mr. Davenal and his daughter at Hawthorn Cottage."

The war-correspondent suppressed an exclamation, and regarded her with a new interest. As he hesitated, looking at her, a hoarse cough sounded behind him, and he turned, but not so quickly as did Kate Hartigan. The blind girl had already flung herself into the arms of a short, squarely, built person, whose blue serge garments and tanned skin were redolent of the sea. Dennis Hartigan had overtaken them.

"Dennis! Dennis!" cried his sister; "I thought you were killed. Why—oh, why, did you leave me?"

The ex-steward glanced irresolutely at the war-correspondent. Paul Jerome patted, with an abstracted air, the flank of his horse.

"I—I don't know, Kit," the blind girl was told; "you see, I sort of lost my head and made a bolt for it. I'm—I'm not used to trains, you see, being, as you may say, a seaman."

He put her by and stepped towards the war-correspondent. "I can't find any words to thank you, sir," he faltered; "if—if it hadn't been for you, Kit would have been dead by now. It was a wonderful jump of yours, to be sure."

Paul Jerome met the speaker with a full and searching gaze. The ex-steward started. He had only just recognised the blind girl's rescuer.

"Not mine," he said coolly, "but this good brute's. Lucky for you, Mr.—Mr. Hartigan, that Mr. Stormont suggested my making the acquaintance of his old hunter. If I had been on a common hack, your unfortunate lack of presence of mind might have had very serious consequences."

The ex-steward's tan grew a shade less deep. "Losing your nerve's a queer thing, sir," he replied evasively; "but it's a mercy Kit's not a penny the worse. Poor lass, she's a bit flustered, though, and with many thanks to you, sir, I'll get her home."

He slipped his arm through his sister's. But the blind gir disengaged herself, an expression of disdain had flitted over her face.

"I'm quite well," she said petulantly; "besides, I told you not to come by the crossing, Dennis. And the train wasn't all that near us when you got frightened. It's very strange, I didn't think men ever got frightened."

Dennis Hartigan muttered an oath; but Kit had slipped away, and was stretching out a hand towards the white hunter.

"I want to pat the horse that did the jumping," she continued, "though my heart was in my mouth when I felt him come all on top of me."

The war-correspondent guided her tremulous fingers; they stroked the tall withers.

"And now I should like to know who you are," said the blind girl; "your voice is quiet and kind—you must be very brave. Did the engine hurt you?"

"Not in the least," rejoined the war-correspondent, "thanks to old Buckshot here; he was one too many for the iron-horse. My name, at your service, is Paul Jerome."

Kate Hartigan said it over to herself. "Thank you, Mr. Jerome," she added; "I shall remember you all my life, I am glad there are *some* brave men in the world."

Paul Jerome laughed, but the sun-burnt countenance of the ex-steward was distorted by a sudden vicious sneer. He moved off sulkily, and Kate Hartigan followed him. The war-correspondent bade her good-bye, and, springing to the saddle, cantered down the lane.

When he drew level with Dennis Hartigan, he motioned to him. The ex-steward came reluctantly to his stirrup. The war-correspondent's face set sternly, and he bent from his saddle.

"Hartigan," he said, "we have met before—last night in the hall at Groudle Tower. As I gather, you have just escaped from the clutches of the law. Now I chanced to see the whole of what happened at the crossing yonder, and you are either a most appalling coward or——"

He stopped, tapped the ex-steward on the shoulder with his riding switch, and then pointed with the same article to the blind girl, who had paused on the earthen side-walk to put up her disordered locks.

"The caution may be unnecessary," concluded Paul Jerome,

Digitized by Google

leaving his previous sentence ominously incomplete, "but if I were you, Mr. Hartigan, I would not let my sister come to any harm for the next little while. I shall not easily forget the way in which you abandoned her to her fate. Rather than panic it suggested, to my mind, *deliberation*."

The war-correspondent gathered up his reins. "A word to the wise," he added significantly, touched the white hunter with the whip, and trotted off without looking back.

At the head of the lane he met a couple of railway officials, hastening from the station hard by, to obtain some confirmation of the story that had been gasped out by the driver and fireman of the express. They stopped him politely and sought to question him. He put them off good-humouredly, minimised his exploit as much as might be, and rode back by the high-road to the Tower.

TENTH CHAPTER.

A Confession is Interrupted.

"I CAN'T lose her, I can't—Heaven knows I can't!"

John Davenal lifted his big, close-cropped head; it had been resting on his folded arms. The latter themselves were lying on the flap of an old-fashioned bureau, half chest of drawers, half writing-desk. The top drawer, pulled out and open, formed an escritoire, with pigeon-holes and smaller drawers at the back. All were filled with business and miscellaneous papers, laboriously folded and docketed; the diver was a methodical man.

The bureau stood by a polished bedstead of solid mahogany, turned and carved; its white sheets and chintz counterpane smelling of lavender. Fifty-year-old prints, in broad frames of light walnut, hung on the walls, in company with an elaborate sampler or two—scriptural subjects worked in coloured wools.

There were dimity hangings to the toilet-table, and muslin curtains with bright brass bars to the windows. One of the sashes was thrown up, the sea-air stole in, and the sound of the waves on the beach. The afternoon was far advanced and the tide was backing sleepily out, a sheet of shimmering, steely blue. John Davenal was alone with his thoughts.

The diver slid aside a flat, horizontal panel, and revealed a shallow well beneath. From it he took a small parcel and unfastened the pink ribbon that secured the packet. The contents were a tiny pair of soft red morocco shoes, a coral necklace, an ivory rattle with bells of thin silver, and a rippling golden curl like floss silk.

John Davenal gazed at them. "My little Moira," he murmured, his own broad dialect springing to his lips and making the words almost unrecognisable, save to a Cumbrian ear, "my pretty little lass! And thou wast a pretty little lass."

He fingered the eloquent trifles that lay before him. "The first pair of shoes I bought thee," he murmured; "the rattle thou'st forgotten long since, and the beads thou wast so proud of."

The diver brushed away a tear. "How I mind teaching her to call me daddy," he muttered huskily; "'twas a sweet lie on sweeter lips, and she took it for the truth."

He smote his great hand on the desk.

"But it's a lie!" he exclaimed; "a lie! I'm a childless man, trying to cheat Fate, and I can't do it. And she—she's a woman now, and her young heart's gone out like a bird to find its mate. I've lost her, lost her, that never was mine to keep."

John Davenal dashed his hand across his eyes, a girlish voice had floated up to him from below. It was Moira.

"Dad, dear," she called, "don't you want your tea?"

The diver went to the bedroom door and answered cheerfully in the affirmative. Then he returned to replace the pathetic mementoes in the well, closed and locked the panel, and descended.

Moira was putting a smart frilled silk cosy over the teapot that she had just filled from the steaming kettle on the hob, and there was a small pile of hot crumpets keeping hot before the fire. The slant afternoon sunbeams fell across the neat table from the window, the fresh green stalks and the blossoming flower-heads of the hyacinths on the board ledge basked in its rays.

The yellow glory shimmered on Moira's golden locks and made the delicate threads that would not be caught into her carefully-smoothed tresses like spun threads of the wandering precious metal. In a corner by the fire stood the tall frame with the panel of ribbon-work; the great spray of briar rose almost completed.

John Davenal moved heavily to his chair; the sight of the peaceful hearth and its dainty ministrant was unendurably bitter to him.

"Where's Kit?" he inquired. Moira shook her head as she set the crumpets on the table.

"I haven't an idea," he was told; "she went off somewhere a while ago. I said, 'Teatime soon, Kit'—you know, she hates to be asked where she's going, but she only said, 'Don't wait for me, there's a dear.' I expect she's going to pay some calls. Kit loves a gossip, and everyone is always glad to see her."

The diver wrinkled his brows. "Dear, dear," he exclaimed, "I'm not certain I wanted Kit to hear any gossip at the moment. You see, all Groudle will be talking about—about that business up at the Tower."

Moira poured him out a cup of tea and filled one for herself. "Oh, Kit isn't a child, dad," was her reassuring answer, "and I daresay people will be sensible and not talk about it too much."

John Davenal stirred his tea and gazed down into the mimic whirlpool produced by the spoon.

"Groudle folk," he retorted, "are magpies to talk and owls to think." There was a flash of irritation in the remark. "Perhaps I ought to have told you both," he added, "about what you are bound to know in the long run."

He hesitated, and twisted his spoon this way and that in his strong fingers. "Moira," he said, "my sister—your—your Aunt Hannah, that is, was married. She had been married for years and years, though few but I knew it. And who do you fancy her husband was?"

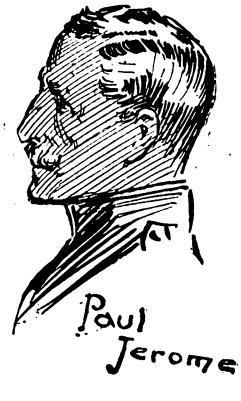
The girl's face was bent on him with a swift, feminine interest. "I couldn't guess, dad," she replied; "why I believe I never saw Aunt Hannah."

The diver took a hasty sip at his teacup. "Oh, yes, you did," he said; "when you were a little thing she came once or twice, but—but you wouldn't remember her, I doubt. However, that doesn't matter, you have seen her husband, and quite lately."

A singular embarrassment seemed to have fallen on John Davenal. He coughed and cleared his throat. "You'll be surprised," he continued, "and so will Kit—Kit especially, Moira. What do you say to Dennis Hartigan for—for an uncle?"

Moira started—then frowned—the diver saw the frown. "Mr. Hartigan," she exclaimed; "Mr. Hartigan Aunt Hannah's husband, and we never knew—Kit never knew!"

"No," assented John Davenal; "it was her wish and his. They as good as parted soon after they were married. He was a wild young chap, and she had a good situation—the marriage was a secret one and she hadn't left Lady Tarleton before she found out that Dennis wasn't what she thought him. So she sent him back to the sea and kept on as a lady's maid."



Moira pondered. "How very peculiar!" she commented, "but I should say Aunt Hannah was very wise—I couldn't fancy Mr. Hartigan being nice."

John Davenal stole a quick glance at her. "You wouldn't have liked him for a father, eh, my lass?" he queried. The girl shivered.

"Not for worlds," she replied. "It's quite bad enough to have him for an uncle—or a brother, as poor

Digitized by Google

Kit has. But there, I mustn't say that, for Kit is so fond of him, and so happy he has come home. She's been quite miserable because he hasn't been here yesterday or to-day."

The diver put down his spoon. "Moira," he said, "yon detective fellow, who came in here last night, and worried you about that chloroform-bottle, I saw him this morning and he knew all about Dennis and Hannah being married."

"Oh," responded Moira dubiously, "but I don't see what it has to do with us. But he was such a queer person; I couldn't make out what he wanted with the bottle, or how he came to know we had it."

John Davenal put a hand on hers. "Yes," he repeated, "and Mr.—Mr. What's-his-name—Mr. Ussher, said it was no use to him, now that no charge was being brought against Dennis."

Moira gasped. "No charge!" she murmured. The diver lowered his glance, his voice had been growing more and more husky and embarrassed.

"Aye," he assented, "they—they were saying in Groudle this morning that Hannah had been chloroformed to death."

"Chloroformed!" said Moira slowly, and there was a thrill of horror in her tone that struck the diver to the heart.

"But—but it isn't really thought now that—that Dennis did it," stammered the diver, "and, after all, lass, he—he is your—your—uncle, and you must try to think well of him. Many a man has been proved innocent that folks once believed guilty. Blood's thicker than water, Moira, and we must stand by our own."

Moira rested her soft chin in her palms, absorbed by a profound and tragic consideration.

"So that," she said, "was why the detective wanted the chloroform bottle. They believed that he had killed her. How horrible!"

John Davenal pushed back his chair. "Don't be over hasty, lass," he bade her, in a hard, constrained voice, "the stuff was bought in kindness to me, and signed for squarely in the book. No doubt that was how the police found out he'd had it."

"But I couldn't find the bottle," objected Moira, out of her reverie; "what if he took it away with him?"

The diver began to stir his tea again. "That can't be, lass," he told her drily, "for I put it by myself, and carried it up to Mr. Ussher this morning." Moira sighed, a sigh of relief.

"That settles it," she rejoined, "but what a strange coincidence, that Aunt Hannah should have been chloroformed, and Mr. Hartigan have bought some of the same stuff himself."

Moira started. "Oh, dad," she interrupted herself, "you're not eating a bite. Don't let us talk about the dreadful thing any more, you're making yourself ill again."

She slipped a crumpet on to his plate. Then an anxious expression sprang into her eyes.

"I do wish," she confessed, "that Kit would come back. It will upset her, won't it, to find out all this in a breath. And Mr. Hartigan not having been near us for two days will make her more anxious than ever. Poor Kit, she won't know what to think—how terrible if she were to—to believe him guilty, even for a moment. Oh, but she couldn't, she is too fond of him. I don't think, when you are very fond of anyone, that you can believe ill of them."

Moira coloured, and looked down at the shining steel bars of the ancient, homely fender.

"Dad," she pursued, "that reminds me, I—I want to tell you something. Something about myself." She paused, stole from her chair, and leant over him as he sat in his.

"Dad," she faltered, "you mustn't think I've been sly or—or afraid of your knowing. I didn't really know myself till—till quite lately. I suppose, if my mother had lived, I could have talked to her even before I was sure."

John Davenal drew a deep breath, but he said nothing. Moira put her cheek to his.

"Don't be angry, dad," she begged, "or—or sorry. I'm going to be your own little daughter just the same, and I believe I don't love him any better than you, only—only differently."

She stopped. The knob of the door outer had whined, and the tones of a man's and a woman's voices sounded in the tiny hall. They were those of Kate and Dennis Hartigan. An exclamation burst from the diver's lips, and he rose from his chair.

"It's them," he said in a hoarse murmur, "they may have met by chance—she may have heard nothing. Best be careful, lass."

Moira nodded, forgetting her interrupted confidence, and crossed to open the door. The ex-steward and his sister had lingered momentarily in the small ante-chamber without.

Kate Hartigan passed her brusquely into the kitchen, and went to the rear of the cottage to remove her hat and jacket. Dennis Hartigan followed loungingly. The diver met him.

"I—I know, Dennis," he said, in a low tone, "and so does Moira. We haven't told Kit—have you?"

The ex-steward shrugged his shoulders. "Not I," he responded, in the same fashion, and added aloud: "Give me something to wet my whistle, I'm as dry as a limekiln."

Moira moved towards the teapot, but he stayed her with an impatient gesture.

"No slops for me," he said. The diver muttered an apology, and himself had recourse to a cupboard whence he produced a bottle of whisky. The ex-steward picked up the steaming kettle, and mixed a glass of hot grog.

"The wind here's confoundedly cold," he observed, by way of explanation, as he tossed off a good third of the beverage, "and my nerves want screwing up—Kit and I had a narrow escape from being run down at the level-crossing."

"Kit!" cried Moira, "how frightened she would be! She hates trains."

"Do I?" Kate Hartigan asked calmly; "I suppose I do. But I couldn't help being frightened, you see. I'm not a *man*."

The blind girl had come back unperceived into the room. She sat down at the table, and Moira hastened to attend to her. Dennis Hartigan drank the rest of his grog and helped himself to a biscuit. The diver watched him, glancing occasionally from him to Moira, and from Moira to the ex-steward.

At last he forced himself to venture upon some commonplace remark, and the singular sense of strain that hung over the quartette lessened somewhat. John Davenal resumed his seat at the table and the meal proceeded.

When it was at an end, the diver rose, got his hat, and lit a pipe. "I'm in the mood for a stroll," he observed, "what do you say?"

"I've no objection," answered the other gruffly. He left the table, caught up his peaked cap, donned it, and put

Digitized by Google

the end of a long cigar to John Davenal's briar. Then, side by side, they went out into the first of the gloaming.

Before they made their exit, John Davenal had turned his back to his companion, and, with a glance over his shoulder at the blind girl, caught Moira's eye, and laid his finger on his lip.

Moira understood. She was not to speak to the blind girl of the awful suspicion that had flung a transient shadow upon her brother. But the caution was not needed. Conversation was the last thing which Kit appeared to contemplate. Seating herself by the fire, she abandoned herself to silence and inaction. She scarcely seemed even to be thinking. Moira, too, was occupied with her own thoughts—she had realised suddenly that she had not told the diver who it was she loved—not better than himself, but yet "differently."

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Spark and an Open Door.

"Excellent, excellent, you make me blush for my own wretched display. Shall we have another game, and make it a hundred-up this time?"

Irene Tarleton fished out of the dusty pocket of the antiquated billiard-table the ball she had just put down.

"You ought to blush for your duplicity, Mr. Jerome," she said. "I suppose you do *play* sometimes, instead of only pretending. But I don't mean to let you flatter me any more by doing it."

The war-correspondent put away the rest she had been using. "I'm out of form," he answered; "honestly I am. Besides, I think your style of playing is better suited to this table."

His fair antagonist laughed outright as she relinquished her own cue. "That is as much as to say," she retorted, "that I'm too much of an amateur to be bothered by this ghastly cloth. Well, to be frank, that last break was a series of sheer flukes."

She laughed again, her ripple of merriment sounding clearly in the great room, whose shaded gas-brackets struggled with the dying sunlight of the Spring day.

"Was it?" said Paul Jerome thoughtfully, and he rolled a ball to strike the opposite cushion. It rebounded, and after describing a complicated succession of angles, returned to the head of the table, and stopped by the red ball.

"Life is very like a billiard-table," he added, "only we don't know what is in the mind of Fate, when she gives us that little tap with the cue of destiny. If I had guessed, for instance, that my journey to the Balkans for the *Gazette* was to bring me round by Petersburg, Copenhagen, and Hull to the coast of Cumberland, and that here I should encounter you again, how much more contented I should have been."

"Would you?" murmured Irene. The war-correspondent drew a step closer to her.

"Would I?" he repeated. "Candidly, Miss Tarleton, I was horribly frightened sometimes out yonder. I ended by wanting to come back so badly that I was afraid of Fate playing me some nasty trick. When I went out first I rather hoped I might go under—I was only a Fleet Street hack who had bluffed his way into a post he might not be able to fill. And—and I had a certain heart-ache that warned me I was better out of England, if not out of existence."

He hesitated, contemplating her with a characteristic coolness. "But when I found I had made a hit," he went on, "and might come back somewhat more prosperous and rather less of a nobody than I had been, why, I got positively nervous. And when I was captured by the Turks——"

Irene Tarleton's gaze drooped. "I know," she said, "there were no dispatches of yours in the *Gazette* for a week. It was dreadful."

Paul Jerome leant on the table, in such a fashion that his hand was very close to Irene's. "Then you did think of me," he asked. Irene looked down.

"Of course," she answered, and added quickly, "you didn't imagine I could forget a friend, and especially a friend in danger?"

The war-correspondent winced. "N—no, I suppose not," he replied drily. The next instant he had caught up a cue and a rest, and was addressing himself to a difficult if impromptu stroke. Lady Tarleton had just entered.

"Ah, Irene, my dear," she said, "I have been wondering how you have been contriving to amuse yourself. The Tower is really too terribly dull for anything. We shall have Mr. Jerome beating a precipitate retreat to town."

"Not at all, Lady Tarleton," the war-correspondent assured her. "I find the old place extremely interesting, and Stormont has promised me some deep-sea fishing. Deep-sea fishing is my delight."

"As it used to be Stormont's," remarked Lady Tarleton, "before he took to running about in the heart of Asia and Africa. However, it seems to agree with him, and that's everything, is it not?"

She turned to her daughter.

"I'm afraid, Irene," she pursued, "that I must carry you off for the moment. I want you to write me some letters. Really, this unfortunate affair of poor Davenal has been engrossing me—that detective man simply haunts the Tower like an incarnate interrogation point. But I must try to attend to other matters, and you are such a sensible little secretary, my dear. So sorry to spoil your game, Mr. Jerome, but I think you will find Stormont in the neighbourhood of the stables."

Effusive, yet insistent, Lady Tarleton bore off her daughter, a significant glance had said more to Irene than was contained in her mother's spoken sentences. In her boudoir Lady Tarleton snapped at her daughter in a truly feminine fashion.

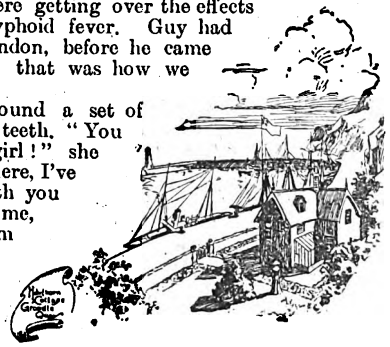
"Upon my word, Irene!" she exclaimed. "On a first acquaintance, you make yourself amazingly free with Mr. Jerome, who is nothing, after all, but a common newspaper person, without money or connections. It is just permissible for your uncle to be intimate with him, but you are not a wanderer on the face of the earth, an associate with gipsies and beggars."

Irene shrugged her shoulders. "Mr. Jerome, mamma," she responded crisply, "is very clever, very brave, and a thorough gentleman. What is more, he is a Society 'lion,' or will be, when he gets back to London. That is, if he lets himself be lionised, which he probably won't. But if it comes to that, he and I have met before—often."

Lady Tarleton stared. "Good Heavens, child!" she cried, "Where?"

Irene drew herself up, as if to brave the storm that spoke in her mother's voice.

"At Nice," she answered, "when we were there on Guy's yacht. He was there getting over the effects of an attack of typhoid fever. Guy had known him in London, before he came into the baronetcy, that was how we met!"



Her mother ground a set of still white and even teeth. "You reckless, deceitful girl!" she exclaimed, "but there, I've no time to deal with you now. But mark me, Irene, one symptom of sentimentality towards this Mr. Jerome, and I pack you off to your aunt's in

Digitized by Google

Yorkshire. What would Guy think of you, if he knew?"

Irene made a wry mouth, but her eyes ran over with merriment. However she did not choose to take up more openly the gage of battle that her mother had thrown down, so she got pen, ink, and stationery, and settled down to write, from her mother's dictation, note after note, effusive but characterless.

Meanwhile, Paul Jerome, unconscious of the storm-cloud that had burst over Irene's head, was strolling, cigar in mouth, through the long avenue of Groudle Tower. He had failed to find his friend Stormont, and was pursuing the search with resignation, content to chew the cud of his thoughts, cultivate an appetite for dinner, and await the advent of the meal, when he should see Irene again.

Yet, as he strolled and pondered, his reflections were fairly equally divided between Irene Tarleton and the little blind girl whom he had rescued that afternoon from a horrible death. "I am Kate Hartigan," she had said, "and I live with Mr. Davenal and his daughter at Hawthorn Cottage," so she was Dennis Hartigan's sister, and it was Dennis Hartigan who had been arrested by Ussher on suspicion of Hannah Davenal's murder, it was Dennis Hartigan who had so deliberately deserted the blind girl on the level crossing, two hundred yards from an advancing express.

The war-correspondent frowned, he had been a "crime special" in the days of his reporterhood, and his trained scent suggested to him that he was on some kind of a trail. Should he follow it? It would be something to do for a day or two at hours when he could not see or speak to Irene. Besides, it would amuse him to best the blundering Ussher once more, as he had bested him in the old Fleet Street days.

As he smiled at the recollection he was aware of the swift, rhythmic beat of a well-broken team, and looked up. A high phaeton was nearing him through the quiet fall of the pleasant evening. There was still plenty of light, and he saw the face of the driver in the same moment as the latter perceived him. The phaeton stopped, and the war-correspondent sprang forward.

"My dear Vanbrugh!" he cried.

"My dear Jerome!" exclaimed the person addressed, and, giving the reins to his groom, Sir Guy Vanbrugh leapt out of the phaeton and seized Paul Jerome by the hands.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said. "What on earth brings you into these outlandish parts? Are you on a walking-tour?"

The war-correspondent returned the cordial salutation as cordially.

"I struck up a friendship with Mr. Stormont in Petersburg," he answered. "We travelled home together, both ultimately bound for London. He wanted to revisit Cumberland, and I was, for the moment, on a loose end. So here I am, renewing my acquaintance with your charming cousin and making that of her mamma."

Guy Vanbrugh laughed. "Yes," he said, "you're quite a notable now. My hearty congratulations! Not that I was surprised to hear of your successes—I always knew you had it in you. But I am keeping you."

"Not at all," rejoined the war-correspondent, "I was thinking of retracing my steps; I have only been looking for an appetite."

The other turned to his groom. "Drive on up the avenue," he instructed, "we will walk."

The man obeyed, the baronet slipped his arm into that of the war-correspondent, and they strolled on together.

"Excuse this expedient to get a moment alone with you," observed Guy Vanbrugh, "but you mentioned my cousin Irene. Now I wouldn't be impertinent for worlds, but I am going to risk taking something sufficiently for granted to drop you a hint. If Lady T. as she may do, thinks fit to tell you a 'secret' about Irene and myself, don't pay any attention to it, there's a good chap. Irene and I are merely chums; to—to be honest, my affections are engaged elsewhere, and she knows it, and, I believe, is confoundedly glad of it. But we're keeping Lady T. in the dark, for the sake of peace."

Paul Jerome smiled. "You're an awfully decent fellow, Vanbrugh," he replied, "and there isn't much wrong with your eyesight. I'm glad you told me. Thanks, very much!"

"Oh, that's all right," said his companion, embarrassed, "by the bye, to change the subject, I believe there has been some sort of a tragedy up at the Tower. One of the servants, they say!"

"Yes," answered the war-correspondent, "Lady Tarleton's maid, an elderly woman, was found dead in bed, chloroformed and smothered. An old police butt of mine has the case in hand, an amiable blunderer named Ussher, a London man. He is most amusingly bothered. I am half inclined to solve the mystery myself, and wipe Ussher's eye, not for the first time."

As they talked, Guy Vanbrugh had turned their steps down a narrower path that wound, cutting off a corner, to the Tower entrance. Penetrating a dense shrubbery, it had brought them within sight of a low stone building, domed and windowless, and set in a species of grassy basin. The basin was incircled by stone uprights and chains, and entered by a flight of stone stairs.

"What is that place?" asked the war-correspondent. Guy Vanbrugh answered him absently.

"That," he said, "oh, that is the family mausoleum—generations of Lennoxes lie there in their last sleep."

"Lennoxes?" repeated Paul Jerome, questioningly.

"Yes," rejoined Guy Vanbrugh, "Stormont's wife was a Lennox, Lady Tarleton is a Lennox. Stormont enjoys for life the Lennox estates and fortune. But as for the mausoleum it has not been opened for many a long year."

"Hasn't it?" queried the war-correspondent drily, "well, it's open now."

He pointed to a door that had been brought into sight by their onward progress. It was a low and massive portal, giving access to the lightless interior of the mausoleum. And against the blackness flickered a yellow spark, like a stricken match. While they looked, it went out.

(The explanation of the light will appear next Tuesday.)

Fred: "They tell me at your office that you are only one of the clerks. And you said you were a director." Charles: "So I am. I address envelopes."

Landlady (meeting Mr. Growler on the stairs): "Singing in the morning? Don't you know it's unlucky to sing before breakfast?" Mr. Growler: "It may be, but somehow I never feel like singing after breakfast."

Fashionable Mother (languidly): "Well, Sarah, how is baby to-day?" Nurse: "He cut two teeth this morning, ma'am." Fashionable Mother (still more languidly): "That was careless of you, Sarah! You oughtn't to let a young baby play with a knife."

"Bobby is attending to his pianoforte lessons very faithfully of late," said the youth's uncle. "Yes," replied his mother. "I don't have any trouble with him about that now." "How did you manage it?" "Some of the neighbours complained of the noise his exercises made, and I told him about it. Now he thinks it's fun to practise."

"I'm dreadfully afraid that Cousin Jasper's wife is an awful gadabout," said Mrs. Brown to her husband after a visit to her wealthy relative in the City. "Why, mother?" "Well, she has her name printed on cards, and in the corner it says 'Tuesdays.' And I asked her what it meant, and she said that was her day at home. Think of it! Only home one day in the week!"

Digitized by Google

FOR HIS SAKE!

The Story of How a Girl's Devotion Saved Her Lover.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

META RAYNES was a typewriter girl, and lived at the top of an old-fashioned building in a central part of London.

Perhaps it was a lonely life for a girl, but Meta had grown accustomed to being by herself, and being of a sweet and sunny disposition, she contrived to find compensations even in her hard working existence.

She loved her big "garret," as she called it, and as indeed it was. She had made it cosy and homelike with a curtain across it to screen away the bedroom side, and with cheap rugs, a few pictures, some books, and a comfortable chair or two had really managed to make for herself a charming den.

If she loved the inside of her room, she loved even more the outlook from its window. Standing there she could see for miles across the roofs and towers of London; she could look down into the green trees of a square close by, and she could gaze upon a tall church tower that rose heavenward opposite her window, and she had learnt to have quite a friendly feeling for a gargoyle with a ferocious dog's head that jutted out in her direction.

But her Sundays were the last and greatest compensation of her otherwise lonely life, for on Sundays she could meet Jack Melville—Jack, her handsome young lover—who was working so hard to make a home for them both!

On a heavenly Sunday in May they were strolling slowly across a deserted corner of Richmond Park, enjoying the loveliness around them, when Jack exclaimed suddenly:

"Meta, I believe those two bounders whom I call by courtesy my chiefs have a regular down on me. Just lately they have done their very best to provoke and irritate me in every possible way."

Meta started violently, and Jack, who held her hand, felt the movement, and looked round at her.

"Why did you——" he began; but she interrupted him.

"I—I think I can guess why they don't like you, Jack," she said fast and nervously. "I told you, didn't I, that both your chiefs, Mr. Daubeny and his brother, Mr. George Daubeny, have given me a quantity of work lately?"

Jack nodded.

"Well," she went on in a lower voice, "they—oh! Jack—I didn't mean to tell you—I was afraid you might be angry, but I—they—I mean——"

"What do you mean?" Jack stopped dead and looked hard at the girl.

"I mean," Meta answered, averting her face to hide the burning blushes that swept over it, "I think perhaps they are nasty because they know—I am engaged to you!"

"They haven't been rude to you—they haven't insulted you?" Jack demanded fiercely, so fiercely that for a moment she repented of having told him anything.

"Not rude, Jack," she said, "and don't look at me so angrily. I have done nothing I am ashamed to tell you, dear." Meta turned back to him and laid her arms about his neck. "You are my whole world—you have my whole heart; I only did not tell you about those horrid men because I did not want to make you angry, as you are in their office."

Jack's fierce looks melted into a smile; he drew his betrothed closer to him.

"They are utter cads!" he said scornfully, "and I sometimes think George Daubeny is on the verge of lunacy; he *is* a cranky creature! Tell me, have they dared to admire *you?*"

"I have often had to go to their house about work," the girl continued; "they live together, you know. They have given me quantities and quantities of typewriting, as I told you, Jack; and then, lately, each of them in turn has asked me to marry him, and has worried me to do it. Of course I refused—refused with scorn. Perhaps I was too scornful, but I hate them both—I *hate* them! They remind me of reptiles, crawling, loathsome reptiles."

"But do they know you and I——" Jack began, and the girl again broke in.

"Oh! Jack, I couldn't help telling the elder Mr. Daubeny. He has always been the worst. He has almost persecuted me; and at last one day, when he insisted on walking home with me, and had worried me until I was nearly distracted, I turned on him and exclaimed: 'For pity's sake leave me alone! I am betrothed to a man whose little finger is more to me than your whole body, even if he is only a clerk in your office. What are you to me beside Jack Melville?'"

"That was not wise, dear."

"Jack, I know, I know! The moment I had said it, the moment I saw the awful look of baffled rage and malice on his face, I repented of my folly. But it was too late. I heard him mutter under his breath: 'Melville shall pay for this!' and ever since I have been dreading, dreading—I know not what."

Her voice was so strained, so anxious, that her lover tried to laugh away her fears.

"My dear child, it is all right," he said, "don't look so anxious. They can only make things a bit unpleasant for me; they can't do any real harm."

"But supposing—oh, Jack, supposing they hurt you?"

"Hurt me? My darling, don't be afraid. This is the twentieth century, not the twelfth; men don't go about hurting one another nowadays. Bless you, don't worry your pretty head about it. I should like to kill those two cads for persecuting you, that's all!" He spoke viciously, and his face grew so dark that Meta shivered. "Not that it is surprising that anyone should admire you, my darling," he added vehemently.

And indeed Meta was very fair to look upon. Slight and very graceful, she made you think of a tall white lily, and the likeness was emphasised by the exquisite whiteness of her skin, and her glorious crown of golden hair.

Her eyes, blue as forget-me-nots, looked wistfully into Jack's as they moved slowly onwards; and he drew her again into his arms, and kissed her tenderly, with the words:

Digitized by Google

"No wonder they think you are throwing yourself away on a poor beggar like me; my beautiful queen!"

"Throwing myself away!" she answered impetuously, her face suddenly transfigured with love, "did I not say you were my world? What is all the rest of the world to me in comparison with you? Less than the dust under my feet! There is nothing I would not give up for you, Jack, and nothing would be too hard for me to do—for your dear sake."

* * * * *

A week later Meta stood on the doorstep of the Daubenys' house, a parcel of typewriting in her hand. Most gladly would she have refused to do more work for the two brothers who had persecuted her, but such a refusal would have been suicidal for her. Work was infinitely precious, and to offend the two brothers, joint heads of an important firm, would have been madness.

Still it was with white face and fast-beating heart that Meta waited on the doorstep on that sunny May morning.

It seemed to her an interminable time before the door was opened, and when it swung back at last, Meta recoiled before the changed and ghastly expression on the butler's face.

It was the colour of ashes; and he was shaking in every limb.

"Is something wrong?" the girl asked abruptly.

"Lor', miss, ain't you heard?" the man answered in a whisper, glancing fearfully over his shoulder; "though how could you have heard; it's only just took place. Master—Thomas Daubeny—is, has been—oh, lor'! miss, it's something awful!"

By this time Meta's own limbs were shaking; she grasped at the lintel of the door to steady herself.

"What is it?" she said. "Has something happened?"

"Something happened?" The man looked at her with dazed eyes. "Why, yes, miss—ain't you heard? Mr. Thomas has been murdered—murdered in the office this morning by one of his own clerks."

"Murdered!" Meta's voice was high and thin, it no longer seemed to be her own. "Who did it? Why did they kill him? Tell me quickly," and hardly knowing what she did, she gripped the butler's arm and shook it.

"They do say it was all to do with a woman," the man answered, recovering some of his equanimity in the pleasure of telling his story, "though who the woman is nobody knows. But the murderer, he's been took up, and Mr. George, he——"

An arm suddenly thrust the butler aside, and the younger Daubeny appeared behind him,

"Come in, Miss Raynes," the young man said, and Meta, even in that moment of dismay, found herself wondering whether the note in his voice was one of triumph or of horror.

"Come in, I will tell you." He put out his hand and drew her through a door opening from the hall.

This was his brother's private study, the room in which Meta had been accustomed to receive his orders, and it looked so normal, so ordinary, that the girl speculated with a shudder whether the terrible news she had heard could possibly be true.

"Your brother!" she faltered, looking into George Daubeny's evil face; "it is not true that——"

"It is perfectly true that he has been murdered—foully murdered!" was the answer, given in an even voice which still held that something in it of triumph—or was it horror?

"And shall I tell you who killed him?" The man she loathed drew nearer to her and laid a heavy hand on her arm.

"*My brother was killed,*" he said slowly and emphatically, "*by your lover, Jack Melville.*"

Tearing herself from his hold, Meta drew back from him, and looked him full in the face, with gleaming eyes and proudly uplifted head.

"It is a lie!" she said; "the sort of lie that a cur like you *would* tell! Jack Melville is not the kind of man who is a murderer."

For a second the flashing of her eyes, the indignant scorn on her face seemed to cow the man before her. Then he recovered himself and laughed, harshly, wildly.

"A lie is it, my pretty dear?" he said recklessly. "A jury will decide that question. Your fine lover is safe in the hands of the police. My brother was stabbed—stabbed in the back with a knife bearing Jack Melville's name upon it. Your lover is doomed!"

Meta's face grew ashen white; she swayed a little where she stood; then controlled herself by a supreme effort, drew herself up to her superb height, and waved her hand with a haughty gesture to the man who barred her way to the door.

"Let me pass," she said; "do you think you can frighten *me?* Do you think the woman who loves him would ever believe that Jack Melville stabbed a man in the *back*? Tell your story to the jury; let fifty judges condemn the man I love—but I know—I shall always know—that his innocence is as clear as the day!"

The July sunshine poured into Meta Rayne's window. She stood there listlessly, looking out at the dusty green of the trees and the tall church tower with eyes that saw none of them.

Only one vision danced before them—morning, noon and night—the vision of a prisoner in the dock, whose eyes had met hers across the crowded court, whose voice had said firmly: "Not guilty, my lord." Whose face had seemed to her, as it had always seemed—the purest and noblest in the world.

To-morrow the jury would give their verdict; the verdict, the world said, was absolutely certain beforehand; Jack Melville would be condemned to death. Meta, standing alone in her room, clenched her hands in a very agony of impotent longing, impotent despair, and dropping her face against the window pane, she moaned aloud:

"Oh! God, if I could help him, if there is a way in which I can help him, let me find it! Give me something to do for his sake!"

The words had scarcely left her lips when the door opened softly, and George Daubeny stole into the room, an expression of such fiendish malice on his face as made Meta shrink terrified from him.

A sudden recollection swept over her of Jack's words, spoken in Richmond Park only so few weeks ago: "I sometimes think George Daubeny is on the verge of lunacy." The wild eyes, the strange gestures of her unwelcome visitor, made Meta wonder with a strange contraction of fear at her heart whether George Daubeny was mad now?

His conduct went far to justify her fears. Without speaking a word of greeting, he walked swiftly to the window, and, scarcely noticing her except to bestow upon her a demoniacal smile, he leant far out, his gaze fixed upon the church tower.

Then he turned to her and spoke rapidly.

"So your fine lover is guilty—no doubt of that, is there? No doubt, no doubt!"—he laughed wildly—"verdict to-morrow, you know," he nodded his head frantically; "and sentence—sentence—we all know what that will be—ha—ha—'hang by the neck—until——'"

"Hush—hush!" Meta cried passionately.

"Not so fast," he answered, gripping her hand in his own that burnt feverishly; "I say 'hang by the neck,' that's the sentence—*unless—you—step in and save him!*"

"*I?*"

"Yes—you—my lovely white lily. Give me a kiss and I'll tell you how you can do it."

Digitized by Google

Seizing her roughly, he pressed a kiss on her cheek, then almost flung her from him, as she shuddered and cried out:

"That's it, spurn your best friend, perhaps I won't tell you now how to save your precious lover."

"Ah! tell me, tell me!" she said, her hands going out in a pitiful gesture; "I will do anything for his sake."

"Anything? Will you? Look out there!"—he dragged her to the window—"see that gargoyle with the dog's head?"

Meta assented.

"There is a letter in that stone dog's mouth," he said impressively; "that letter will give you the name of my brother's murderer! Ha! ha! ha!"

"A letter there? Your brother's murderer. Then you know—you know who did it?"

"I know—I know!"—a demoniacal laugh broke from him and echoed wildly round the room—"it is my secret, mine, mine—and you must hunt for it in the dog's mouth, ha—ha!"

"You know, yet you have let Jack——" Her voice failed, as the madman laughed afresh, flung his arms into the air, shouted, "go and look for yourself—the secret is *there*"—and, first pointing dramatically towards the window, he next flung himself across the room and rushed precipitately through the door and downstairs.

Meta, too dazed and terrified to follow him, stood still for a moment, then she leant far out of the casement, craning her neck and straining her eyes, until all at once she exclaimed:

"He may be mad, but he has said one true thing; there *is* a letter in the dog's mouth. Ah! if his words should be true! If they should be true! Jack—my Jack, I will do it for your sake!"

* * * * *

Slowly and carefully Meta climbed the narrow winding staircase of the tower. By dint of coaxing and bribing the old verger had allowed her to go up the stairs, and she wound her way up and up, pausing now and again to look out of the wide openings in the wall to the dizzy depths below.

Presently the stairs came to an abrupt end, she was confronted by a blank wall, whilst on her right hand gaped one of those wide openings that gave upon the outside world.

Clutching at the wall, she leant out. Below her she dared not look. A few feet from her, round to the left, she could see the gargoyle, jutting out over space. She shrank back and shivered, shutting her eyes because of the awful giddiness that seized her.

"I cannot do it—I cannot!" she moaned.

That moment's glimpse had shown her that to reach the gargoyle, she must climb out of the opening on to a narrow parapet that ran round the spire, and reach from that to the corner of the buttress from which the gargoyle's long body sprang.

"It is impossible," she said again, and then suddenly she stood upright and opened her eyes.

"I must try," she said; "it is Jack's life! I can but make the attempt, if I fail—I fail; but I must try for his sake."

Sick with horror, her head dizzy and swimming, she crawled out of the opening on to the narrow parapet without. So tightly did her hands cling to the few stones that jutted out of the wall that the blood dripped from them, but she did not heed it. Keeping her head erect, lest for a moment she should see the ghastly gulf below her, she kept on—and on to the angle from which the gargoyle jutted.

It was a narrow enough angle in all conscience, but compared with that awful parapet it seemed wide—almost safe; and Meta leant for a moment against the wall to take breath. Once, only once her eyes glanced downwards, and a shiver ran through her.

The roofs, the trees, the towers that lay far below for one wild moment rocked and swung before her eyes; she shut them closely and gripped more firmly at the slab of stone till her equilibrium returned. Then she began the most perilous part of her terrible adventure.

Flinging one arm as far as she dared along the body of the stone dog, she dragged her own body forward—forward—forward towards the gargoyle's mouth, half hanging over the abyss, half pressed against the stone beast.

Would she reach its mouth? Could she ever reach it, or would she, in the act of doing so, overreach herself—slip and fall—and fall into those dizzy, seething depths below.

"God help me—for his sake!" she cried aloud in her agony, and, pulling herself one step further, she put out her right hand once more.

Her hand had touched the letter!

Hardly daring to breathe she drew it from the dog's mouth, and slowly, slowly, with infinite caution, dragged herself back to the angle, every nerve at highest tension, every muscle taut and strained.

She dared not pause in her backward path; she did not rest even for a second in that friendly angle, but crept back, back along the parapet, fearful lest a moment's delay should bring on a paralysis of fear.

And at last, when, trembling in every limb, she crept in again at the wide opening of the tower, it was only to sink down upon the steps, white and unconscious, the letter clasped closely in her hand.

Jack Melville's life was saved. The letter was the confession of the true murderer, another clerk in the office, who on his own death-bed had written the confession and confided it to George Daubeny.

Whether that wretched man had intended to give it to Meta, or whether he divulged the secret unintentionally, will never be known. His reason never returned to him. It was believed that he had himself put the letter into the gargoyle's mouth, but even this fact was never known.

Months went by before Meta recovered from the shock of her awful climb, and though she is now a happy wife, the many grey threads in her golden hair are signs of what she endured during the terrible moments when, as she says, "I hung between Heaven and earth, to save my Jack. I could only have done it for his sake."

L. G. Moberly.

Result of the "Cats" Competition.

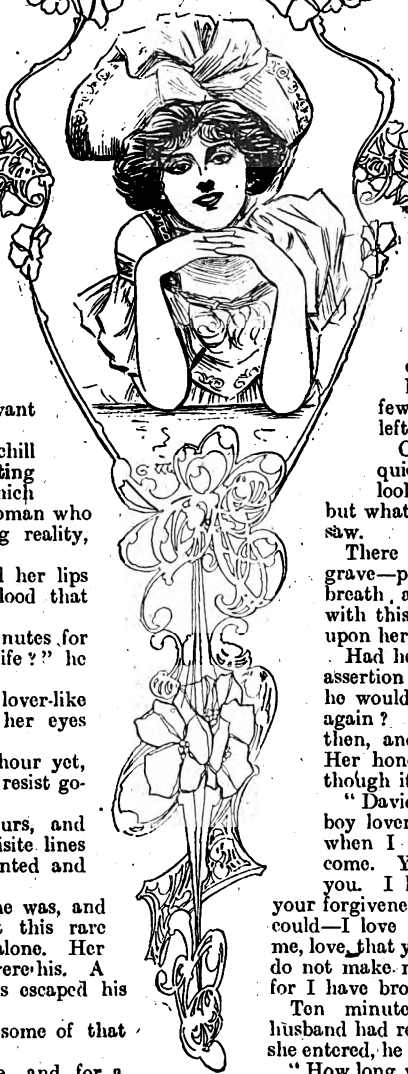
The Gramophone prizes have been awarded as follows:

E. Gillespie, 10 Wellington Street, Salford, Manchester; Mrs. R. Fuller, 1 Camden Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent; S. J. Kyberd, 140 Belgrave Road, Hoe Street, Walthamstow; C. Renshaw, Birtle Vicarage, Bury, Lancashire; J. Bradley, 1 St. John Street, Felling-on-Tyne; H. King, 1 Thomas Street, St. Paul, Bristol; Mrs. Howard Watson, The Vicarage, Water Orton, near Birmingham; J. Winfield, 11 Whitehaugh Terrace, Paisley, N. B.; G. H. Barnes, 244 Waterloo Road, Hightown, Manchester; Mrs. Judd, St. Monica, Whitton Road, Twickenham; W. F. Dray, 289 High Street, Lewisham; J. Higton, Hollywell Farm, South Wingfield, Alfreton, Derbyshire; T. M. Loughnan, 24 Mount Pleasant Square, Dublin; H. James, 17 Beach Street, Swansea; Mrs. H. Wyatt, 9 Grange Street, Leigh, Lancashire; H. J. Lewis, 3 The Buildings, Bathampton, near Bath; W. Eggleton, 106 Westbourne Street, Hove, Sussex; W. Webster, 131 Thomson Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow; G. Q. Waters, 75 Court Road, Barry Dock; F. Evans, 11 Briscoe Road, Colliers Wood, Merton, S.W; J. Curtis, 10 Park Street, Griffithstown; H. C. Millen, 77 Rye Hill Park, Peckham Rye; A. Herbert, 16 Whitworth Street, Stanley Grove, Longsight, near Manchester; F. Hepton, 28 Upper Market Street, Woolwich; A. G. Snook, 90 Milkwood Road, Herne Hill.

TURN NOW TO PAGE 399. ☛

Digitized by Google

Out of the Past.



When Absence Did Not Make the Heart Grow Fonder.

THE great creaking iron gate swung upon its hinges, there was a light yet decided footstep along the pathway to the house, and then the merry tinkle of a bell sounded.

To the man inside, the tuneful melody acted as magic. He rose hastily and opened the door before a servant could do so.

As he opened the door he felt the chill rush of winter air, and caught a fleeting glimpse of the deep, smouldering sky which formed a crimson background for the woman who was his divinity, a beautiful, breathing reality, radiant with love and life.

As he drew her into the house he kissed her lips and cheeks, her hair, and the scarlet blood that coloured her cheeks turned a ruddier hue.

"I have been waiting thirty long minutes for you. Where have you been, my sweet wife?" he added tenderly.

The tone was one of reproof, but the lover-like reproach was dear to her. She lifted her eyes with a half laughing plea in them.

"I didn't expect you home for an hour yet, and the air was so tempting I could not resist going out."

He watched her throw aside her furs, and admired for the hundredth time the exquisite lines of her figure. The bright, gold hair glinted and sparkled against the deep purple toque.

He thought how surpassingly lovely she was, and realised with a thrill of emotion that this rare woman was his. She belonged to him alone. Her mind and heart, her beauty and her soul were his. A sigh of great contentment and happiness escaped his lips.

"Come and sit by the fire, and take some of that Arctic atmosphere off," he said, laughing.

She sat beside him on the oaken settle, and for a while neither spoke, resting in the quiet of perfect harmony, and watching the idle play of the flames as they darted hither and thither. The evening paper lay at his feet, and with a laugh she picked it up.

"Now," she said, "I will read you all the news—war, society, politics—which will you have?" And he, content with the mere sound of her voice, murmured, "Anything."

"Then it will be war," she declared. "for that will be the only way we will ever have any experience about the subject."

She read aloud a few items, and then her eyes wandered slowly down the list of wounded and killed.

"David Hathaway." She got no further. "David Hathaway!" her heart echoed, and then suddenly the whole brutality and fierceness and horror of war seemed to close down upon her and stifle her heart beats. The paper slipped from her hand like an animate thing.

"I must go upstairs," she said, "and re-arrange my hair for dinner."

Something, he knew not what, that rang in her voice, prompted him to turn and look at his wife, but she was shielding her face from the firelight with one white hand.

The slender fingers hid her eyes, and cast her face into shadow; thus protected he could tell nothing of the emotions which were surging through her. She rose abruptly, and, with a few words, promising to return soon, she left the room.

Once in her room she shut the door quietly, and then walked to the window and looked out upon the dull purple twilight; but what lay before her eyes was not what she saw.

There rose before her mental vision a lonely grave—perhaps a mere trench—sharing the last breath and sigh of David Hathaway. And with this picture the knowledge was born in upon her that it was of her own doing.

Had he not left her five years ago with the assertion upon his lips that come what might he would win fortune or die before he saw her again? And she had promised to wait until then, and she had broken her faith, her vow. Her honour had been killed just as surely as though it had been struck by bullets.

"David!" she whispered huskily, "my brave boy lover, I thought it was the end a year ago, when I married, but now the end has really come. You are dead, and I cannot mourn for you. I have wronged you, and I can only ask your forgiveness, for I would not change things if I could—I love my husband. I was lonely—lonely—tell me, love, that you understood how it all happened, and do not make me feel as if I should be the one to die, for I have broken faith, and you have not!"

Ten minutes later she went downstairs. Her husband had reinstated himself by the fire, and, when she entered, he said:

"How long you have kept me waiting. I was just thinking of coming upstairs, to see whether anything had happened to you. It seemed for ever, although I have been trying to occupy the time in reading. By the way, I see the death notice of David Hathaway. He got killed by a stray bullet during a skirmish with the followers of the Mad Mullah. It was a very sad case. Curiously enough, I met his brother in the street yesterday, and he buttonholed me for a loan. Wanted to bring back David's wife and child. They went out a few months ago to join him; he had just begun to get together what promised to be a prosperous trading business when this disturbance occurred, and as he knew the country very well, he joined the forces as a scout. The wife and child are left almost destitute."

She clutched the arm of the chair. "How long had he been married?" she asked.

"Oh, two years, I believe, poor fellow!"

And then a great cloud lifted from her shoulders and vanished for ever; and the exoneration she longed for came.

Charles Orford.

Digitized by Google

A GOOD MATCH.

The Love Story of a Writer and an Actress.

THE season was drawing to a close, and already the earlier birds had departed; the tourist was beginning to crop up in strange localities, and the British lodging-house keeper sniffing the battle afar off, to prepare for war with her natural enemies, the visitors, groups of whom I found scattered about Euston Station as I comfortably ensconced myself in the corner of a carriage bound for Staverton Towers.

A very few months back, Clement Sandering, with whom I was going to stay, had been living in town on a comparatively small income, which he had augmented in a somewhat desultory way, by literary work.

He had written a novel, a successful comedy, an endless variety of articles on an endless variety of subjects, and was looked on as rather a rising man. Probably he had never heard of Staverton Towers, when one morning, amongst the letters and papers which burdened his table, was a note from a firm of lawyers in the City to tell him that the Towers, and a rather extensive property in Meadshire, belonged to him.

Sandering had met with such things in the realms of fiction, and the intimation seemed rather like the foundation of a plot for a novel than a real and veritable possibility. It was true, however; a distant relative of the late owner had died childless in Paris, and within a very short time Sandering had resigned his chambers and left town.

In the former days I had vaguely hovered during the season round a certain Gertrude Leigh, Sandering manifesting a slight disposition to admire her sister Bell.

All this was entirely hopeless, for there was not the very remotest chance of old Sir Thomas consenting, even if the girls had wished it; and Lady Leigh would probably have had fits if the subject had been mentioned to her.

The affair was not very serious on my part, nor, as I think, on Sandering's, though some of his heroines bore a suspicious resemblance to the fair Bell; but, then, one must get his heroines from somewhere, for pictures painted without models are seldom satisfactory.

Circumstances alter cases, however, and his circumstances had very materially altered the case. Since his accession he had been in Paris, where I knew the Loighs were also staying, and though his letters had not said anything particularly pointed, it was evident that they were much together, and only natural to suspect that something would come of it—the usual something.

Immediately on his return he had written to ask me down; there was no one with him, he said, and if I had work to do it would be much quieter than the chambers; so taking a heap of paper to try to ease a conscience which demanded industry, and secretly resolving to do nothing but lie under the trees and smoke, I started, anxious to see Sandering, in case his bachelor days were soon to be ended; for marriage sometimes alters a man very considerably, and a young wife has not always an enthusiastic affection for her husband's bachelor friend.

He met me at the station, and we drove through some of the prettiest scenery in Meadshire to the Towers, which was a very fine old house.

After dinner we retired to a small room to smoke, and discuss all that had happened since we last met.

"And how are things theatrical?" he asked, when he had given me details of his journeying.

"Much as they were when you left, I think; and, in one way, as they will be always. The good pieces pay; the bad ones don't. All the same, I suppose we are to understand that the drama is declining?"

"That's a very silly cry," Sandering answered. "There are plenty of good actors, and plenty of good plays. I don't mean to say that the whole thing is in a perfectly satisfactory state.

"A number of gentlemen, and some ladies, adopt the profession now, and study it; but many fellows go on the stage with the idea that the art of acting can be learnt any morning before breakfast, and, under the impression that "ease" is the great requisite, behave in drawing-rooms with the sort of ease that City clerks exhibit in their favourite liquor-shops."

"But there is a bigger blot on the stage than what old actors call the "cuff-shooters." Look in the photograph shop windows," I replied.

"Yes, at the—those—the—well, the 'popular actresses.' Popular actresses—my stars! As you know, I am very far from being a straight-laced moralist, but to see long rows of ogling creatures, whose modesty is as scant as their attire, labelled 'Popular Actresses,' is a little too much; and men who have the interest of the stage at heart ought to protest vigorously."

I could only assent.

"Why do these sort of persons go on at all?" continued Sandering, who evidently felt the subject deeply. "From vanity, generally, or some reason other than the making of small salary, or a desire to learn the profession.

"Either they want the money, or they don't want it; in one case they have no business on the stage, and in the other the less business they have there the better. I speak, of course, of the "shop-window actresses,' and it is for the sake of the gentlewomen who are really actresses that I am so indignant."

"It's a rough sea and a difficult voyage, but how bravely some little girls weather the storm. For instance the young lady—for she was a young lady, although she had been doomed to wear something like the costume of an acrobat—who played Mary in your comedy," I said.

Sandering rose slowly from his chair, and leant against the mantelpiece, smoking thoughtfully.

"Miss—what was her name?" I continued. "You seemed much struck by her once, and that is why she was taken from the ranks to play the part, I presume. Miss Burton—that's it. I suppose you have forgotten all about her, now?"

"No," he slowly replied, with a somewhat troubled face; "I have thought a good deal of her—and a good deal less of myself in consequence."

I looked at him inquiringly.

"I was struck with her, as you say, and told her so, and used to take her about to afternoon performances and that sort of thing; and gave her the part in the comedy, as you know."

Digitized by Google

"Which was quite as much to your advantage as to hers, for she played it charmingly," I interrupted.

"She did, certainly. Well, I used to take her about, and got to like her, awfully. After a time she seemed to grow shy about it—wouldn't come always when I wanted her to, and I was vexed and couldn't understand it.

"One evening, when she was out of an engagement, I wanted to take her to the opera, and she made an excuse, and so I asked her about it. She said, 'Of course I'd like to go with you every day, dear, only you know how particular I have to be, and if we are always together, people will talk and wonder where——' I think she was going to say, 'Wonder where it will end,' so it occurred to me to wonder where it would, and knowing where it ought—for she was evidently very fond of me—I told her that I wanted to marry her."

He stopped and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"And what did she reply?" I asked.

"I took her to the opera that evening. Things went on for a couple of months—she was a dear, good little girl," he said, breaking off his sentence and pausing, as some reminiscences appeared to flit through his mind, "and a lady, too. I don't mean to say she would get through a wood of social etiquette, as Gertrude Leigh might do, without knocking against some of the trees, but in heart she was as perfect a lady as the best of them.

"However," he continued, "things went on for a couple of months, and she was away from town when I heard, to my intense amazement, as you know, that this place had come to me. I wrote to her at once, but I had to go to Paris on business connected with the estate before returning to town. Well, the Leighs were there, and so was Ethilton, and—and he knew about the affair—with the little girl, and——"

"And I suppose he indulged in that mysterious style of conversation which is vaguely termed 'saying things'?" I asked.

"Yes. He talked about my position in the country, and my small knowledge of a girl whose associations had been somewhat equivocal; and said what a good thing it would be if I went in for Bell Leigh—you know I used to like her, rather—and he persuaded me to stay on—he was always talking about it—and——"

"Lord Ethilton is such a very great swell that I can't be expected to see things from his elevated point of view; but I must say I fail utterly to understand why your position in the county should oblige you to act dishon——"

"Go on," Sandering said, as I stopped short; "oblige me to act dishonourably——!"

"To act unkindly," I continued, "to Miss Burton."

"And you think I ought to go and see her? Perhaps she has forgotten all about me," he said.

"I'm sure that you ought to go; and she's not the sort of girl to have forgotten you—or to have ever forgotten herself, in spite of Ethilton's charitable opinion," I answered.

"I will go," he said, flinging his cigar into the fire. "I will go; and, by Jove! I feel so happy now that I've made up my mind. Of course I ought to go; and I'll start to-morrow morning—at least, it seems so rude to you, old fellow, when you've just come down——"

"Not at all," I said, and meant it; though, for the matter of that it is the only reply to such a speech possible under any circumstances. "I'll go up with you, if you like."

"Don't you mind, really? I can't tell you how much obliged I shall be. Do you know where she is?"

"Yes; I was in at rehearsal at the Prince's a day or two ago. She was going to play in the new *opera bouffe*."

"A part?" he asked.

"Two lines, I think, and about five bars of recitative. There were thirteen people in the boxes and nearly two rows of stalls the other night, and such good business nearly turned Manley's head, and he put a new piece into rehearsal at once."

"There's a train at half-past ten, if that's not too early for you," he said, very eager to be off, now that he had decided to go.

"Not at all; and, as it's nearly twelve, I think I'll retire. Good night!—whatever are you thanking me for? Good night! and good luck in this and everything."

A servant brought up a very early message next morning that Sandering was up, and waiting for me to breakfast with him; and the dog-cart to take us to the station was at the door some twenty minutes earlier than was necessary.

We arrived in town about two o'clock, and hastened to the theatre, where rehearsal was busily proceeding. Sandering's heart slightly failed here, and I left him in the neighbouring square while I went to find Nelly Burton, and tell her that he was waiting to see her.

I made my way up the little dark staircase, and paused at the back of the half-lighted stage to take in the scene.

The ladies of the establishment, gorgeously arrayed and highly bejewelled, were seated in a semi-circle, receiving, with some shrugging of shoulders, the verdict of the leader of the band that there was very little improvement yet in the repetition of a chorus, and that it must go a good deal better before it would do. He was a vulgar person, and of bad manners, for he ventured to say that some of the soprani were very flat and quite out of tune.

Two of the men were bitterly quarrelling with each other in the most polite tones, as to what business should or should not be introduced into the scenes they had together.

One of the principal ladies was going through a speech to which the author listened with a badly-concealed expression of contemptuous dismay; but he did not interfere, for he had written pieces before and knew the actress and her ability, and so sorrowfully resigned another of his best points and a good joke, fervently hoping that the next good part he wrote would be cast for a lady who had at any rate a little idea of reading, speaking, and understanding simple sentences in her native tongue.

Barkington, the stage-manager, who worked sixteen hours a day, and did as much as sixteen people, was bustling busily to and fro.

The manager, surrounded by some of his company, was examining a brilliant poster containing all the hues of the rainbow, in addition to several which no well-conducted rainbow ever dreamt of assuming, destined soon to blaze out and illuminate a thousand walls. But posters won't make pieces, charm the printers and lithographers never so wisely.

I soon caught sight of Nelly Burton, whose fresh, honest little face formed a striking contrast to some of those around her—harsh, *blasé*, and coarse in expression as many of them were. Her trim little jacket had been worn before, and the newness had left the hat which was perched on the top of her fair curls; but she was very pleasant to look at.

"Are you busy?" I asked, when she had arched her interrogative eyebrows more than ever, and given me a very nice little hand to shake, on ascertaining that it was I.

"I have to sing all this, directly," she answered, smiling as she held out a sheet of music-paper with a very few bars scribbled on the top. "They are going over that scene again?"

"Not without cause, I think. Miss Shaftesbury does not seem to know much of her part, nor to play what she does know particularly well; and she certainly can't sing the music," I said.

Kind little Nelly wanted to find an excuse for her directly.

"Well, you see, it's rather an awkward part to play," she urged.

Digitized by Google

"Then the author's intention will be thoroughly realised, for she's certain to play it awkwardly. I came here on purpose to find you, Miss Burton. A friend of mine, and of yours, wants very much indeed to see you," I said, taking her a little apart. "Can you guess who it is?"

Her lips said "No," but her face very plainly said "Yes."

"It is Clement Sandering," I continued.

"I can't imagine what Mr. Sandering can wish to see me for," she replied, with an effort at haughtiness which did not much accord with the eager way she glanced round to see if he were near, as she asked, "Where is he?"

"In the square; waiting very anxiously to see you," I said.

"I am quite at a loss to understand what Mr. Sandering can have to say to me. Will you please ask him to write if there really is anything?" she answered.

"To a certain extent, Miss Burton, I am in Clement's confidence; and if I were not, your tone would lead me to think—several things."

"I am sure my tone is just the same as always," she said, looking up with a faint twinkling as of coming tears in her ordinarily bright eyes. "Mr. Sandering is nothing to me, and I had rather not see him."

"Of course, if you had rather not, there is no more to be said; but he will be greatly pained and hurt at your refusal—your unkind refusal, for he came all the way from Staverton this morning on purpose to see you. I did not think that you would ever have condemned anyone without hearing the defence. Circumstantial evidence is so terribly deceptive," I rejoined.

She did not in the least know what to do, and so tried to be angry, and rolled up her sheet of music without the slightest regard for the legibility of the writing.

"Well, good-bye, Miss Burton; I will say that you are too angry to forgive him, shall I?"

"There's nothing to forgive, and I'm not angry a bit," she said, quite as savagely as it was possible for her to speak.

"What is the word?" I answered, repressing a slight inclination to smile. "Annoyed—hurt—vexed—grieved—disappointed? There is evidently something wrong between you, for you and he were excellent friends when his play was produced.

"If you see him, in three seconds he will probably explain away—whatever requires explanation, and then you will be very sorry that you hesitated in hearing him."

She unrolled her music, and studied the signature at the beginning of the stave with great diligence.

"My cue will be coming directly," she said at length.

"And then you'll see poor Clement?" I asked.

"Indeed I don't know why you call him 'poor Clement,'" but she lingered over his name, and seemed to like the sound of it; "he's not—— Yes, I'll go, if you don't mind waiting a minute more," and she went down the stage, did her scrap of duty, and then we left the theatre together.

Sandering was coming towards us as we turned into the square. He threw away his cigar, and raised his hat as I left Miss Burton and retired; he seeming uncertain whether or not to offer his hand, for her obstinate little paws were tightly holding her parasol.

I looked after them, however, when they had gone a little way, and saw one hand slowly relax its grip and resign itself for a moment to Sandering's custody, anticipatory of its retention for a very much longer period; and when presently they overtook me, a glance convinced me that all was right. Nelly Burton appeared well on her way to making a good match.

* * * * *

The future Mrs. Sandering lived in rooms up a good many stairs in one of the streets which surround Russell Square; and thither I used sometimes to accompany my friend; when our pretty hostess regaled us with cups of tea, and sang songs to us at a tinkling little piano which tried strenuously to be gay and festive, and make good music, but whose age and decrepitude would sometimes assert themselves by the sudden cessation of a note or so, which grew tired and refused to speak any more.

Here, too, we examined her drawings—she was a very clever little person, and sketched admirably—and looked over the precious volume in which were pasted the newspaper cuttings criticising her performances; mostly from country chronicles, though there were nearly two lines from a London morning paper which had afforded her so vast an amount of pleasure, that if the writer had but known the gratification his pen was destined to give, I believe he would have defied his editor and put in half a column.

"The only suggestion I have to offer," he said, pointing to the sketch, "is that a body should put explanatory notes to her drawings."

On one of these afternoons, about a week after our arrival in town, we were looking over a portfolio of sketches, and Sandering was amusing himself by chaffing the drawings to tease Nelly.

"The only suggestion I have to offer," he said, putting a sketch on the mantelpiece and looking at it with the burlesqued air of a connoisseur, "is that a body should put titles and explanatory notes to her drawings; because a body is apt to be misunderstood."

"I wish you wouldn't keep on teasing me about saying 'a body,' just because I used the expression once," she said, spoiling a laugh with a pretended pout.

Digitized by Google

"You should be very careful what expression you make use of, for you want all you can muster to put into these works of art, dear. Now, here's a strange picture; very charming, very interesting, but just a trifle vague," he said, selecting another from the case.

"A gentleman, seated in a—a box carried by two elliptic wheels, and drawn by a—by an anomalous quadruped, which my slender knowledge of natural history will not permit me safely to—— A horse, is it? Really a horse? Well, we'll call it a horse, at any rate, if only for the sake of, or rather the avoidance of, argument—drawn by a horse.

The gentleman is engaged in emulating the example of Simple Simon in the ballad, and fishing as he goes along the turnpike road—*driving!*—do you seriously mean it? Very well, dear, you drew it, and so you ought to know; but why a man should go out driving with a fishing-rod in his hand, I—a *whip?* Oh, no; come now, Nelly, dear, that is going a little too far; really it is only as a personal favour to you that I can consent for a moment to accept that as a whip. Men don't hold their whips jutting over their horses' backs like bowsprits, and it quite bears out my premises that explanatory notes should be appended to these works of art."

Nelly showed a disposition to attempt the recovery of her much-abused work; but Sandering was on the alert, and resumed—

"He is driving (if you really do insist upon it) up a hill towards a church of ingeniously-assorted architecture, about which I will only say that if the incumbent is not more upright as a man than the steeple is as a building, the heads and morals of the congregation are in some danger. You are quite sure that is a horse?"

"What a shame!" Nelly said laughingly. "I'm sure it's all quite plain enough."

"Quite *plain* enough, in all conscience—you might almost go so far as to call it *ugly*," Sandering replied.

"You may think so, if you like, sir. I'm sure the church is upright, and my uncle was incumbent—at least, curate there," Nelly said, looking at the drawing.

"Why, I never knew that you had an uncle, dear. What's his name, and where does he live?" he asked.

"He lives abroad, and I don't write to him much—he wouldn't like my being in the profession. He's very kind, though, and used to want me to go and live with him, only I didn't. Hedley, his name is."

"What Hedley—not Robert, I suppose?" Sandering asked.

"Yes, it is Robert. How did you guess?" inquired Nelly.

"You don't mean to say that this is Chesterton Church?" Sandering said in a tone of extreme surprise.

"Yes, it is," Nelly answered, evidently bewildered at his knowledge.

"But surely, Nelly, Robert Hedley, who was curate of Chesterton in the seventies, was not your uncle?"

"Not only was, but is. Why are you so excited about it, dear?" she asked.

"Don't you know that—have you not heard of his death Nelly?" he inquired.

"No, indeed I haven't," Nelly replied.

"Poor little girl! I ought not to have mentioned it so suddenly. He died last year."

Nelly laughed. "Then all I can say is, that he has since been represented by a wonderfully healthy-looking ghost. I have not seen him lately, but two or three times since then; and I shall most likely have a letter from him—or the ghost—to-morrow morning. I wrote the other day, the first letter for a long time, to tell him about—about us," she said.

"My dear child, if you are not joking, there must be a very great mistake somewhere. Do you know that if Robert Hedley were alive he would inherit Staverton Towers? But he *must* be dead. I have every proof of it. You know," he said, turning to me, "it was chiefly to ascertain this that I went to Paris. He *must* be dead."

Nelly persisted, however. He had lived in Paris, years ago, she said, but was now minister to a little Protestant community in the South of France, and such, on investigation, turned out to be the case. A Robert Hedley, a clergyman, corresponding apparently in other particulars, had died in Paris; but we had the best reasons for assuring ourselves that it was not he.

An extract from one of his letters to his niece will best finish my story.

"—— let Mr. Sandering, then, resume his occupation of the Towers without scruple; convinced that I should but be unhappy in leaving my work here, and adopting a new life, at my advanced age. You are my only relative, and if I have power to dispose of the property at my death, it will be yours; if not, it appears that your husband would inherit it."

Sandering talked nonsense at first about having asked Nelly to marry him under false pretences, and it being his duty to free her from the engagement; but she appears much to prefer her bondage, and impudently asserts that if he did go away, he would only want to come back again as he had done before.

Of course, Sandering scoffed at this remark—what else could he do?—but, all the same, he knew that what she said was quite true.

There is some question of entail which the lawyers have not yet decided, and, indeed, I believe they have not been requested to do so; but, under any circumstances, there seems every probability that it will turn out to be a good match.

Alfred E. T. Watson.

"What are you doing, Tommy?" "Standing before the looking-glass," said Tommy. "I wanted to see how I would look if I was twins."

Teacher: "Now, here is an example in mental arithmetic: How old would a person be to-day who was born in 1868?" Pupil: "Please, mum, was it a man or a woman?"

Jones: "Look here, Smith, when you asked me to lend you that half-sovereign, two months ago, you said you only wanted it for a short time." Smith: "Quite true; I only had it half-an-hour."

"You shouldn't be so restless in church, Charlie," said the minister to his little son. "I could see you moving and jumping about in the pew all through my sermon." "I was stiller'n you were, papa," answered Charlie. "You was wavin' your arms and talkin' all through church."

Tom: "How cold that pretty Miss Jones does look, Bob. She ought to have something round her!" Bob (absent-mindedly): "She will have as soon as it gets dark."

Cobwigger: "Didn't you think it rather foolish for her to ask you if her hat were on straight?" Merritt: "No. It was in a railway train, and we had just come out of a long tunnel."

Guest: "How is this? My bill this time is 12s. a day, and last December I had the same room and it was only 10s. a day?" Clerk: "Yes, I know; but the days are much longer now."

Young Man (to messenger boy): "What did the young lady say when you gave her the flowers?" Messenger Boy: "She asked the young fellow who was sitting in the porch with her it if he didn't want some for a buttonhole."

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION. Starts To-day.

Cash Down. Cash Down. Cash Down.

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

and 25 Gramophones.

THIS IS AN ENTIRELY NEW COMPETITION AND IS NOW PLACED BEFORE THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT IS EXCEEDINGLY SIMPLE, AND IS OPEN TO EVERY PERSON WHO READS "SHORT STORIES."

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Staticns in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated.

The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled up all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A second list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sways, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

FIRST LIST.

1. Over the hill gay with heather came the seven sisters munching sandwiches.

.....

2. I do wish you would come with me to the East-end on Monday, Brooke and Hockley have promised to come.

.....

3. They pressed on, panting for breath, until they reached the place where the five ways met.

.....

4. To obtain admittance we had to knock long and loud, and when the door was opened the sight that met our gaze made us rush away and hide ourselves.

.....

5. The halfway house was an inn named the Horse and Jockey. They knew full well that it was nowhere near the fishponds, but it was useless to ask them why they went there.

.....

6. Let it lie. It will get washed over the waterfall and on to the sandy banks of the river where we can pick it up.

.....

NAME..... **ADDRESS**.....

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES. YOU CAN BEGIN HERE.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

MY HEART'S DESIRE.

I AM a native of a seaside village in Cornwall. As I grew up I began to tire of the monotony of the life and determined to go out into the world and make a name for myself.

One day when I was in the ruins of the Old Keep, which is on the cliffs, meditating upon what I should do were I free to carve out my own destiny, two strangers appeared—evidently tourists, I thought. They told me they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood for a few days, and asked if I knew of any lodgings. I said that my father would be glad to put them up at the farm, and accordingly they came home with me.

Their names were the Honourable Robert Lestrange (commonly called Bobbie) and Di Northcote.

I told these two Londoners of my desire to see the world. Bobbie encouraged me in my ambitions, but Di advised me to stay at home. This, however, was not at all in my line, as I told him, and when he saw that nothing would shake me from my resolve, he promised to try to find something for me to do when I arrived in the great city.

Bobbie met me on my arrival in London. Owing to a fog we got separated, and as I stood on the steps of a house I heard a man's voice asking me to come inside and wait until the fog cleared. Feeling that it would be hopeless to find Bobbie, I accepted the invitation. I remained there some time when Di happened to call, and he took me to my lodgings in Bloomsbury, where Bobbie was waiting; he told me that the man in whose rooms I had been was Lord Cecil Trevor, one of the worst "men about town."

Di came in next morning to tell me he had found me a place as trier-on in the firm of Philips and Philips, mantle and jacket makers. He also gave me some advice which I rather resented. I didn't like my work at all, and as I felt I ought not to live alone I got Lizzie Brown, a new girl, to share rooms with me.

I met Lord Cecil Trevor again at a dance of the employees of Philips and Philips—he was a friend of young Fred Philips. He was just about to see me into a cab after the dance when Di Northcote came up, with an angry gleam in his eyes such as I had never seen there before.

I FALL OUT WITH DI.

I AM bound to confess Cecil Trevor showed great presence of mind. There was an odd expression on his face, but he did not get angry at all.

"Miss Cardew has just given me permission to see her home," he said, quite affably, ignoring Di's studied rudeness.

"Thank you," said the latter curtly, "but as I am going in her direction we need not trouble you."

Lord Cecil hesitated a moment, glancing from one to the other of us; then I suppose he realised that Di was determined to accompany me at any cost, and that it would be wisest to seem to withdraw with a good grace.

He turned to me.

"I am sorry," he said purposely throwing a good deal of feeling into his voice, "but I hope I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you again. I have had a delightful evening."

Ever since Di addressed me I had been standing very upright, with my head thrown back a little, and a studied expression of careless disdain. Now I held out my hand instantly to Cecil Trevor, and smiled up into his face.

"Oh, yes, I hope so," I said warmly; "I have enjoyed myself very much."

He pressed my hand, looked hard into my eyes, then bowed and walked away.

Di at once held out his hand to help me into the hansom.

"Will you kindly direct the driver?" I said frigidly, and ignoring his extended arm, stepped into the hansom, and seated myself in the middle of the seat.

Di coolly mounted the step.

"Which side shall I sit?" he asked.

"Outside," I replied, staring straight in front of me.

"It is too cold," he answered, suppressing a smile. "If you don't make room for me I'm afraid I shall crush you."

I moved to one side and we drove away in silence. He spoke to me a few times, but as I only answered shortly, he soon left off. At the door he asked for my latch-key, but I took it from my pocket and fitted it into the latch myself; afterwards entering and closing the door behind me with merely a "good-night."

The next evening I was rather surprised to find him waiting for me outside Philips and Philips. He asked me to go to dinner with him at once, and I declined, starting to walk homewards.

Without the least hesitation he accompanied me, and in spite of my soreness, I could not help admiring his cool persistence. He talked to me all the way on topics of the day, not in the least nonplussed by my unappreciative replies;

Digitized by Google

and when we reached my door, he asked if he might come in.

I shrugged my shoulders and he followed me, closing the sitting-room door behind us, and placing his hat and stick on a chair. Lizzie was spending the evening with friends, so we were quite alone.

"Now," he began, "let us have it out and done with."

I stood by the chimney-piece carelessly unbuttoning my gloves, and made no reply.

"Of course you can't keep this up indefinitely," he continued. "Anyhow, I don't intend to let you."

I turned on him then.

"Mr. Northcote," I exclaimed warmly, "once for all, let me tell you I will not allow you to assume this right of command over me. I am absolutely free and independent, and I wish you to understand I intend to remain so."

He was too much of a gentleman to throw his previous help into my face, and only replied quietly:

"Most certainly. I have not the slightest wish to interfere with your independence, but at the same time, since I was partly instrumental in your coming to London at all, I intend to act as guardian to you whether you wish it or not, especially when such a man as Cecil Trevor is in the question. Once more I tell you, he is not a fit companion for any self-respecting girl."

I was silent, but inwardly determined to choose my friends for myself.

He gazed into the fire for a few minutes, still perfectly calm and serene. I watched him, and there grew up in my heart that determination to make him *feel*, which afterwards ruled so much of my intercourse with him.

I saw in him then, by a kind of divination, just the man he was. The brilliant scholar, the fascinating companion if he chose, the far-seeing, unerring judge, with each trait carefully hidden away beneath a crust of cynical indifference with which he purposely misled the greater part of the world.

I do not mean that I saw everything clearly then, but I realised he was not the man he chose to appear, and unconsciously I pitted all my own share of character and insight against that other, hidden part of him to force it to the surface.

When at last he looked up from the fire, he regarded me a moment critically.

"I see it is not much use expostulating," he said. "You will have to cut your wisdom teeth your own way, and I shall have to look after you in mine. However, I will leave you an address, and if ever you are in a difficulty and send for me I will come at once."

He took a card from his pocket-book and laid it on the chimney-piece.

Then he turned to the door.

"Good-bye," he said simply, and without offering to shake hands or giving me a chance to thank him, walked out.

I picked up the card and read:

Mr. Reginald Northcote,
Thatched House Club.

I fingered it a few moments thinking it was rather good of him not to leave me to go my own way to destruction without caring, then rang the bell for supper.

It was some time in coming, for though the landlady looked after us all right, she never hurried herself on my account, and always behaved with an easy familiarity that made me think she had not a very high opinion of me.

This was very unpleasant to me, but I did not know how to help myself, and dreaded hunting for fresh rooms.

She was particularly familiar that evening, and when at last I sat down to my solitary meal, I felt homesick and depressed.

It was all very well to come to London to be a brilliant success; but it was another thing to live in a dingy lodging, waited on by a familiar landlady, with no prospects much beyond trying on jackets for highty-tighty young ladies.

I had been low-spirited several times through disappointment, but I remember I was particularly so that evening, and my inward greyness coloured everything about me with dull monotony.

Just when I was on the verge of a little weep, there was a ring at the front door, and the next moment my landlady entered with some beautiful flowers.

"For you," she said. "My, ain't they beautiful!" And she stood and gazed at them open-mouthed.

"Who brought them?" I asked, with a pleasant glow of surprise.

"A messinger b'y. 'Ere's a card in a henvelope as come with 'em."

I tore open the envelope, expecting to find it was a peace offering from Di.

When I read: "With Cecil Trevor's compliments," I felt my cheeks flush a little.

On the back of the card was scribbled: "Please look out for me when you leave to-morrow. I want to see you particularly."

"Will you bring me some water for them?" I said, and replaced the card in the envelope.

All the next day I wrestled with myself as to whether I should meet him, or purposely avoid him. I had not the least doubt as to what I ought to do, but my inclinations led in the opposite direction.

The fact was, I was still dull and lonely. I did not care for the other girls, with the exception of Lizzie Brown, and she was rather a bore at times; I was weary to death of my occupation, and I dreaded going home to sit alone, for Lizzie was very often late at the shop, not reaching home much before ten. In which confession lies the nucleus of cause for half the downfalls in a big city.

While I was still hesitating one of the girls was very rude to me, and all the others laughed. I don't think they meant to be unkind, but I believe they were jealous, for though I neither wished it nor encouraged it in the least, the shop-walker of the mantle department never missed an opportunity of a few words with me.

I lost my temper and answered back hotly, which resulted in a little scene. Finally, feeling tired and miserable, I put on my hat, and went out to meet Cecil Trevor.

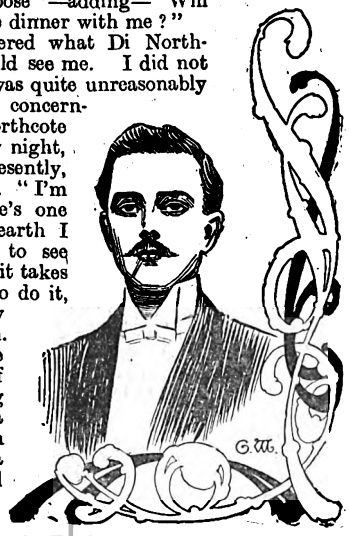
He was waiting for me, and greeted me with unmistakable pleasure. I did not exactly reciprocate it, but I liked being appreciated again, and began immediately to feel on better terms with myself.

My depression had fortunately not cowed me in the least, however, and I was quickly on the defensive.

"How good of you to come!" he said, and I replied carelessly; "I had nothing better to do, that's why."

He frowned slightly, and remarked: "Then I must thank my good fortune I suppose"—adding—"Will you come and have some dinner with me?"

I assented, and wondered what Di Northcote would say if he could see me. I did not mind much because I was quite unreasonably prejudiced against him concerning Cecil Trevor. "Northcote was fairly riled the other night, wasn't he?" he said presently, with a look of amusement. "I'm awfully glad. If there's one thing in Heaven and earth I thoroughly enjoy, it's to see Northcote put out; but it takes such a dickens of a lot to do it, it's a pleasure one only gets once in a blue moon. I've seen that fellow smile in that sickening way of his at the most insulting remarks, and never turn a hair; and however much you may hate him, it is a hundred to one you will never have the satisfaction of annoying him."



Digitized by Google

"Why do you hate him?" I asked.

"Domineering, insolent brute," he muttered; "fancies himself formed of some special clay, superior to all the rest of humanity. I should like to know by what right he treats you as a child?"

"He doesn't!" I exclaimed warmly. "He only tries to, but he will never succeed."

I was too engrossed in making this plain to observe an expression of triumph steal over my companion's face; though I had reason afterwards to know that he was purposely attempting to incense me against Di. I had not even the sense to see then that I was playing straight into his hand.

"That's right," he said; "don't go under to him whatever you do. You'd never get free of him again. I'm not going to give the chap away, because it's a beastly, low-down game, I think; but I tell you plainly, he will get you under his thumb if he can.

"He hates above everything to be thwarted, and if anyone disputes his sway, especially a woman, he never rests until he has conquered them."

"Or they him," I remarked meaningly.

"You won't do that," he answered; "it's an impossibility. He's like an adamantine rock. Every woman who has tried to move him, has either given it up or gone to pieces in the attempt. If you take my advice you'll just drop him altogether."

I realised dimly the utter futility of such advice if Di did not choose to be dropped, but I only said:

"Was he ever in love at all, do you know?"

"Oh, yes, there is a story, but it was when he was a very young chap. He was heir to a dukedom, you know, through a second cousin, and he got engaged to a beautiful girl at Oxford.

"Then a nearer relative turned up from Australia, and he remained plain Mr. Northcote, and the girl dropped him. He believed in her, silly young fool, and it was such a shock to him he's never been the same again."

"Did she manage to get the real duke?" I asked.

"No," he told me, "there was a mystery about the chap. He turned up from Australia, proved his identity, claimed his dukedom, and vanished again. I believe he has never been to England since."

"Then he might just as well have stopped away," I said; "and let Mr. Northcote have his bride."

"Yes, but chaps don't throw dukedoms about, even if they don't care for them at the time. I daresay he thinks it may come in useful some day."

We went into a quiet restaurant for dinner, but even there I was conscious that we attracted a good deal of attention; but whether it was I or my companion that caused it I did not know.

It was a very pleasant meal, for he entertained me with descriptions of high life which interested me vastly. After dinner, however, he proposed going to his rooms.

I refused at once, and said I would go home. He remarked questioningly that he supposed he mustn't come with me, and I said "No, certainly not."

"Why?" he asked, and I did not know what to answer.

"Does Northcote come?" he went on, and I was obliged to confess that he did.

"And Lestrange as well?"

Again I had to say "Yes," and he asked at once: "Then why can't I come?"

"They are old friends," I asserted, stretching a few weeks into a few years to suit my convenience; "perhaps some day you may come."

"It might just as well be now," he urged. "We could have such a nice chat, and it is so difficult anywhere else. Come—let me call a hansom?"

"No, no," I exclaimed vehemently, remembering Di's warnings.

"If you will promise not to worry," I added; "I will walk all the way with you now."

He had to be content with that, and we started off leisurely.

"What on earth possessed you to go to Philips and Philips?" he asked presently.

"Mr. Northcote arranged it," I said; "but I don't like it at all."

"I should think not"—with emphasis—"you are absolutely thrown away there. You ought to go on the stage; you'd soon go to the top and make a fortune."

I caught my breath eagerly and looked up at him.

"Oh, do you think I should?" I exclaimed.

"I'm sure of it," he answered; "I can't imagine why you didn't start long ago."

"I should love it," I ran on with the same eagerness; "but I'm afraid I shouldn't be any good."

"Nonsense. My dear girl, beauty is half the battle, and you are fully equipped."

"But if I gave up my post at Philips and Philips and did not earn anything on the stage, I should be penniless," I said anxiously.

"That need not worry you," he answered at once, and I fancied he seemed pleased at the idea. "I'll see that you don't starve. I could offer you a nice easy post as bachelor's companion, or secretary by day, you know," and he tried to get hold of my hand, looking closely into my face.

I drew aside instantly.

"You are trespassing," I said. "Remember our compact."

He frowned, and then gave a little confused laugh.

"You're as hard as a stone," he remarked; "and not a bit kind to a fellow. However, I'll have to go on liking you because I can't help it. If you wish I'll get you an introduction to a theatre-manager. He'll let you do something for a start, if it's only to walk on, if I ask him."

"Oh, thank you," I cried delightedly. "I'd love to try. It's just deadly, messing about with those mantles all day. Will you see about it to-morrow?"

He promised, and it was with feelings of suppressed excitement, I said "Good-bye," and went into my home.

It was with great trepidation, however, I presented myself for my first interview with the manager of The Queen's Theatre.

Lord Cecil had arranged it all, and taken good care, I was bound to see, that our negotiations over it should be verbal. He absolutely refused to write anything, insisting instead upon my meeting him.

I did not altogether like it, but felt I had no choice if I wished to go on the stage; and undoubtedly I did. The consequence was that I saw a good deal of him, and it took me all my time to keep him at arm's length.

When I entered the manager's office, one of his first remarks was: "I suppose you are very friendly with Lord Cecil Trevor?"

Something about his way of saying it, made me grow very hot, and I replied indignantly—"No, I am not. I only know him slightly."

"So—so——" he said significantly, and, narrowing his eyes, looked me up and down in a way that made me want to run away and hide.

I should not like to imply that this particular manager was in the least an example of his class; and I am obliged to confess, what I have learnt more fully since, that the mere fact of my being introduced by Lord Cecil was sufficient to make him adopt towards me his tone of that first interview.

"How tall are you?" he asked next; "would you mind standing up?"

I stood up, and again he took stock of me generally.

Digitized by Google

"Umph——" he remarked approvingly; "you're a fine woman."

I felt furious, and doubtless showed it, for he added in a conciliatory tone. "Now, don't get angry. If you want to go into the theatrical profession you must put up with its ways. It's no use being too thin-skinned; and if you're going to be very straight-laced it's no good your coming to this theatre, because you'll never get on."

I bit my lips hard and said nothing; for I was then under the impression that Lord Cecil's introduction was of great account to me, whereas it really made no difference at all, and the part I was afterwards given, my appearance would easily have secured for me.

"Now," he continued coolly; "let me see what sort of a neck and arms you have."

"I will not!" I exclaimed instantly; "I never heard of such a thing. Have I come here simply to be insulted?"

"My dear young lady," he said; "now don't go into a tantrum. Most of the girls I am in the habit of receiving for such an interview as this usually raise no objections. That is why I asked you."

I daresay I looked rather well as I stood before him, burning with indignation, for I have always found when I get angry I provoke admiration, whether my companion would or no.

Anyhow, after a few minutes he added: "I think you'll do all right. You can walk on for a few weeks as a trial, and then, if I can manage it, I will give you a part. You will receive twenty-one shillings a week, and your dress will be found for you. You can begin to-night if you like."

I thanked him and explained that I must give a week's notice at Philips and Philips, so it was decided I should begin that day week.

I went home feeling very pleased in spite of the unpleasant interview, and not a little of my rejoicing was at the thought of what Di's feelings might be when he found out my changed plans.

The poor salary did not trouble me in the least, as I was confident it would soon be raised, and meanwhile I could afford to spend some of my savings.

That evening Lord Cecil called at my lodgings without waiting for my permission when he was shown into the room, I looked up with both surprise and annoyance.

He held out his hand, but I drew back and looked at him in silence.

"Don't be angry," he said, "I want to know all about your interview with the manager, and I couldn't arrange to meet you earlier. It is an old saying that one good turn deserves another, so you might let me stay now I am here."

The contrast of his at once claiming an obligation compared with Di's careful ignoring of it, struck me unpleasantly; but since I had allowed him to help me I felt compelled to make the best of it.

"You may stay fifteen minutes," I said, and placed the clock in a better light. Needless to say when the fifteen minutes were up he easily found some plausible excuse to remain, but at last, in desperation, I told him he really must go without further delay.

In reply he only remarked, "I wish Northcote would drop in now. His face would be a picture. I should enjoy it for weeks."

"I wish he would also," I retaliated, "then you would be obliged to go."

He looked considerably amused.

"I like your cheek," he said, "it beats everything I ever knew. You are almost the only girl of my acquaintance who would not ask me to stay."

I drew myself up somewhat haughtily, and turning away, occupied myself with some flowers in a way that implied dismissal.

He stood astride on the rug and watched me a few moments.

"All the same I believe I like you for it," he said at last.

"I'm no saint, as doubtless Northcote has impressed upon you, and I admit I haven't much respect for your sex; but I like pluck, and you've got more than your share."

Still I stood with averted head trifling with my flowers.

"Look here, Maud," he began, advancing a step.

I turned at once and regarded him stonily.

"Miss Cardew, then, if you will. I'm going now. You'll part good friends, won't you?"

"Good-bye," I answered evasively.

"No, that won't do," he said. "You've got to shake hands with me, or I'll sit in that chair till morning."

I believed him capable of it, so coldly extended my hand.

"Good-bye," I said again. "Another time I hope you will wait until you are invited."

"I won't promise," he answered daringly; "I'm going to break you in, you know," and with an easy laugh he turned away.

Exactly as he opened my door the landlady opened the front door in answer to a ring we had not heard.

I do not know if Fate went out of her way in those days to guide Di Northcote to me at the most awkward moments, and purposely involve me in difficulties, but certainly she achieved it in a most remarkable fashion.

"Will you give this to Miss Cardew," said a voice I could not possibly mistake; and then Di looked up and saw Lord Cecil advancing from my room. Not a muscle of his face moved. He gave one quick glance, and then looked straight past him to where I stood under the light of the gas.

"Will you come in?" said the landlady, and he raised his voice slightly as he replied—

"No, thank you; I merely called to leave this book."

Then he turned and walked away.

Lord Cecil turned too, as if to come back, but I waved him aside.

"No," I said bitterly, "this is your fault. The least you can do is to go after him and explain."

He hesitated a moment, then asked—

"Do you wish me to?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say "Yes," but a little demon of pride and wilfulness had time to take possession of me, and instead I tossed my head and remarked, "Oh, it is of no consequence."

When he had gone I stood for a long time staring into the fire.

"What will Di do now?" I kept saying to myself. "What will Di do now?"

(Next Tuesday I will tell you what Di did.)

"Why will Brown have nothing but French dishes on his table?" "It's an idea of the governess, to make the children speak French in the household."

Father (who has been helping a son in his school work): "What did the teacher remark when you showed him the translation?" John: "He said I was getting more stupid every day."

Mother (indignantly): "What's that, you thoughtless child? You say you haven't taken all your nice presents round and shown them to the neighbours yet? What do you suppose I bought them for?"

Digitized by Google

A Tottering Pedestal.

A TALE OF LOVE AND A MISUNDERSTANDING.

"Well, that is cheerful!" exclaimed the assistant editor, as he hung up the telphone receiver with a jerk. "Mr. Allen is ill, and probably cannot come down for several days," he added, turning to where Natalie stood, pulling off her gloves.

"Ill?" she echoed blankly. "Ill? Is it anything serious? Who telephoned?"

"Dr. Porter; he didn't say what the trouble was, but it would take more than a headache to keep the boss at home. He has been working like all possessed lately, you know."

Indeed she knew—who better? Had she not seen him there in the harness day after day, anxiously watching him grow haggard and worn under the extra strain which a sudden break in his staff had put upon him? Had she not longed, mutely, rebelliously, to be able to lift even a little of the load from his overburdened shoulders?

Mechanically she sat down at her desk, trying to begin her work. There was a mist before her eyes, an inexplicable lump in her throat, and instead of her papers, she saw before her the editor's strong, self-contained face. Was he being well cared for, she wondered; was everything possible being done for him? Even while she realised the absurdity of such questions, they persistently recurred to her.

Of Mr. Allen's private life she knew no detail; in the office she attended strictly to her business, and outside of it had no intercourse with any of her associates there. From chance remarks which Mr. Allen had made she knew that he had been through the mill, attaining his present position, while still a young man, by the most persistent sort of hard work.

"Oh, I've slaved and starved, and all the rest of it!" he told her once, half-jestingly, but there was a ring of truth through the lighter strain that made her wince.

Daily she had marvelled at the power of the man; his alert, decisive mastery of emergencies; his ever-ready courteous appreciation; his patient, tactful handling of the innumerable nameless worries, the never-ceasing, varying demands that go to make up the sum of an editor's existence, were all revelations to her.

His up-hill fight had not embittered him or made him unmindful of the struggles of others. When Natalie, utterly inexperienced, came to him, he held out a helping hand, showing her kindness where she had expected rebuffs, considerations wherever consideration was possible. She thought that all editors were like him, and could not understand why anyone should try to dissuade a girl from "breaking in" to newspaper work. Nothing that she could ever do for him could adequately express her gratitude.

So this morning she pulled herself together and went to work with a will; now, if ever, was the time to put forth every effort, that their editor's part of the great news machine might be kept in smooth working order for him. There was little rest for anyone in the office that day.

Late in the afternoon the doctor telephoned again. Mr. Allen, he said, was worrying greatly about his business, and someone from the office must come to him, and be sure to say that everything was all right, as the patient was in no condition to be disturbed about anything.

The assistant looked round perplexedly.

"I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to go, Miss Spencer," he said. "I simply can't spare one of the men."

Natalie succeeded in veiling the eagerness of her assent. How glad she was to go; to see for herself just how he fared, and have her tormenting doubts dispelled.

When she reached Allen's residence Dr. Porter admitted her, saying that the family were all away.

"As luck would have it, it is even his man's day out, and he would not hear of the fellow staying at home with him. He'll kill himself yet trying to be kind to people," fumed the little doctor, who was Allen's friend as well as physician.

"You think he is very ill?" Natalie faltered.

"He will need considerable care," was the doctor's non-committal reply, as he led Natalie into an inner room where Allen lay tossing restlessly, his eyes unnaturally bright, his face flushed, his fingers pulling nervously at the coverlet. Although he managed to speak with some of his wonted alertness, Natalie's watchful eyes detected his suffering.

"It was a shame for them to trouble you to come to me," was his first remark. Then he listened with satisfaction to what she had to say, and told her clearly and concisely what he wanted done; but the strain told. As she left him he sank back very limply among his pillows.

"He will rest for a time now," Dr. Porter said, when Natalie rejoined him. "Still, I hate awfully to leave him alone."

"You are going, too?" Natalie asked quickly.

"Why, I don't see how I can help it. There is one patient whom I really must see—the others could wait. I have sent for a nurse—goodness knows why she does not come!" impatiently pulling out his watch.

"I'll stay here till she does come," said Natalie promptly.

"You're a little brick!" exclaimed the doctor delightedly. "I was just wondering if I might not ask you. I will be back in half an hour any way, and probably the nurse will be here before that," and, after giving her a few directions, he hurried away.

Returning to the sick room, Natalie slipped into a chair near the bedside, sitting quietly till Allen began to toss and moan. Then she bathed his hot head with some cool stuff the doctor had prepared. He opened his eyes for a moment, looking wonderingly at her, then lay still again.

When he woke once more he saw her still near him in the dim light.

"Natalie!" he said breathlessly.

She did not move or answer him, believing him to be only half awake.

"Natalie," he repeated; "am I dreaming, or is it really

Digitized by Google

you?" There was no mistaking the eagerness in his manner. The blood surged to Natalie's cheeks at the sound of her name on his lips. Could he know what he was saying, to be thus calling her by name?

"Dr. Porter had to leave, so I am staying with you till he returns," she said unsteadily.

"I only wish that you would stay for ever!" he murmured. "Natalie! My Natalie!" catching her hand, and pulling her down till she sat on the edge of the bed, "do you know how much I love you? I never thought before that you cared anything for me, but you seem different to-night. Do you love me, Natalie?" capturing her other hand.

Natalie's heart beat tumultuously; how should she answer him? Did he really mean this—and for her?

"Answer me, Natalie," compelled the insistent voice from beside her. Well if he was delirious he would not remember; and if he knew—if he meant it——

"Oh, I do! I do!" she cried.

He crushed her hands to his burning lips.

"My love! my dearest!" he whispered, while his eyes made eloquent appeal to her. She leant down till her lips touched his brow. Smiling and still clasping her hands he dozed again, like a tired child.

Natalie felt that she had been suddenly snatched to some wonderful, beautiful world, wherein all was brightness and great glory. She slipped to her knees, laying her cheek softly against his hand.

"He loves me! he loves me!" trilled a voice in her soul, while she tried dizzily to form the words with her lips.

"I can love him as much as I want now!" she thought. 'And, oh, it's so good—it's so good!"

It seemed doubly so to her because there was no one else in all the world for whom she cared deeply. There were those for whom she felt affection, but not one whom she really loved. Now that the flood-gates were down, the long repressed emotions of her impulsive nature swept riotously through.

A sound in the outer hall brought her back to earth and she rose hurriedly from her knees, trying to free her hands without disturbing Allen. He only tightened his hold.

"You are not going?" he said plaintively.

"I must—I think the doctor has come back! Please let go my hands—dear!"

He kissed them again, then reluctantly did as she asked.

"Try not to worry about the office," she begged; "we will make things go right for you, if you will only do just as the doctor tells you."

"Oh, I'll be good!" he promised, "just so as to get rid of this fever and be able to kiss you, my Natalie."

With this promise to comfort her Natalie went home, tired and overwrought, with some work still to do; but happy, happy, happy.

During the days of anxiety and uncertainty which followed Natalie vainly wished that they would send her to him again from the office. It was so hard to glean tidings of him only through the reports of others, to have to show only a moderate solicitude in his progress.

When they said that he was to sit up, she decided after some hesitation to send him a note by the next person who went to him. No one who saw it would ever guess what a precious little missive it was—they would fancy it some dry old business communication.

"How was Mr. Allen?" Natalie asked, when the bearer returned.

"I did not see him, because the nurse said that his wife had just come home and was with him, and——"

But the sentence remained unfinished, for, at that point, Natalie suddenly dropped, a dead weight, into the astonished reporter's arms.

When she recovered consciousness they urged her to go home and rest, for she had done much extra work during Mr. Allen's absence. She refused steadily, with a white, miserable face, that they could not understand.

Dully she reasoned to herself that sometime she must take up the awful burden of life again, so she might as well begin at once. Through the recurring waves of despair that swept over her one fact alone seemed clear—

"*His wife was with him.*"

His wife!

Slowly another thought disentangled itself from the chaos of her mind—she had made some mistake that night. Her king, which, being interpreted, meant her editor, could do no wrong. Delirious, after all, he must have been, thinking her perhaps this very wife.

"My Natalie," seemed to echo back mockingly to her. Well, that must be his wife's name too. They had quarrelled perhaps—the marriage was not a happy one. All he had said seemed to indicate this, if there were any reason at all in his utterances. Those words that *she* had treasured so, that *she* had repeated to herself so often, so ecstatically. The note she had sent him. A horrible surge of shame brought the blood back to her pallid cheeks as this thought smote her. What, what would he think? There would be no room for doubt—he would know.

Thus her thoughts ran riotously, tumultuously, without sequence, one thing only repeating itself—*he* had meant no wrong. Hard as it was to reconcile all of his utterances with the theory of delirium, the mistake was, must have been, hers alone.

Slowly the day dragged on, till Natalie began to think with dread of the time when her work should be ended, and she alone with her tortured, miserable thoughts. She was ill-fitted to bear another stinging blow that came to her.

"Mrs. Allen wants to see Miss Spencer," an office boy announced abruptly, coming to her desk.

The room began to whirl again. "The note," she thought. That dreadful, tell-tale note. Bracing herself as best she could for the ordeal she went to the waiting-room, where a very beautiful woman met her cordially.

"Ah, he has not told her," thought Natalie. "That is like him. But why is she here?"

"Miss Spencer, Mr. Allen wants to see you particularly. He told me to stop and ask you to drive home with me," Mrs. Allen said.

Poor Natalie was at bay. This was practically a command from the editor, which she could hardly disregard.

"I cannot come just at present, Mrs. Allen," she managed to answer, "but will you say that I will be there soon?"

The idea of driving in his carriage beside his lovely wife was quite unbearable.

"Then I will call for you again, say, in half an hour. There are one or two errands that I shall be glad to do."

Even this crowning pain was to be heaped upon her it seemed, so, with breaking heart, Natalie endeavoured to consent graciously.

As they drove away together Mrs. Allen chatted brightly, frequently speaking of her husband, while Natalie inwardly writhed, wondering if she could go through with all of this ordeal. Now that the meeting with Allen was drawing so near she began to fear that she had over-estimated her strength. She should have refused to come at any cost.

"Stanley has told me how you stayed with him the first night he was ill," said Mrs. Allen suddenly, "it was so good of you."

Digitized by Google

Then he remembered! Oh, this was too much. Natalie wanted to scream and smash the carriage windows as the pleasant voice continued:

"He said that you were the best nurse he had at all, and often when his fever was bad they say he called for Natalie!"

Natalie gasped. What manner of woman was this who could talk so lightly about her husband's calling for another woman? "Another woman!" That was she, Natalie Spencer—Natalie was not his wife's name—what he had said he meant for "Natalie," he remembered. He——

No, no, it could not be! Her dear love, her idol, this man of highest honour.

Before she could collect her thoughts they had reached the house.

"Why, child, you are white as a sheet," cried Mrs. Allen, as the light fell on Natalie's face, "you must have a glass of sherry before you see Stanley. He would think that I had not taken good care of you if he were to see you looking like that."

Natalie had become passive, so many shocks and conflicting emotions having benumbed her faculties. As she mechanically thanked Mrs. Allen, and drank the sherry, she rather believed that she was having a very bad nightmare. To be sure it was very real, but nightmares so often are.

"That's better; now go to Stanley," Mrs. Allen commanded, as she saw the blood slowly creeping back to the girl's cheeks. "He's in there," she continued, "nodding towards a carefully closed curtain, but making no attempt to lead the way. Vaguely wondering Natalie crossed the room, resolutely pushed aside the curtain, and entered the cosy den where Allen was sitting propped in an arm-chair.

He looked up eagerly, a glad light in his eyes. "My Natalie," he said softly, attempting to rise.

"Don't get up," she cried, running to him, even the anger that his words inspired swallowed up by her anxiety for him. As she reached his side he tried to take her hand, but she drew quickly away.

"How can you, how dare you?" she questioned miserably.

"Why, Natalie, what do you mean? 'Can, dare'—this to me?" he questioned, in blank amazement. "Was it all a dream after all—wasn't that night real, Natalie? And your note to-day?" With trembling fingers he pulled the little, crumpled missive from the pocket of his dressing-gown, and held it accusingly towards her.

"Oh, don't, don't," she moaned, not trusting herself to look at him. "I thought that you wanted me on business, or I should not have come. If you only sent for me to insult me——"

"Why should you accuse me of such a thing?" he began hotly. "Why are you torturing me like this, Natalie? I don't in the least understand," he ended helplessly.

Natalie pressed her hand to her head. Was she crazy or was he? Agonising doubt of him began to creep into her heart, benumbing her senses, even though his bewilderment seemed too real to be feigned.

"Do you suppose I knew about your wife?" she said, in a harsh whisper.

Allen grasped the arms of his chair and leant towards her.

"My *what?*" he exclaimed.

"Your wife!" she insisted hysterically. "The nurse said—" A light of relieved understanding brightened Allen's face; he was almost smiling as he quickly interrupted her.

"So that is the trouble, is it?" he asked rather stiffly. "I remember now that the nurse did call Mrs. Allen my 'wife' at first, but surely you"—his voice softened, but the reproach in his face stung her cruelly—"Natalie, Natalie, she is my young step-mother. My poor, little sweetheart, how could you believe——"

Natalie flung herself on her knees beside him, and, between her sobs, managed to explain how the mistake had occurred.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she ended in such a woe-begone way, that Allen hastened to prove to her, in a distinct, convincing manner, the extent of his magnanimity.

M. C. Hueston.

Your Editor Chats.

You will find the first list of sentences in our great new Competition on page 399. I am sure that the discovering of the hidden names of railway stations will prove both an attractive and instructive amusement for all readers. The Competition is extremely simple, though at the same time a large amount of skill is required in finding the names. The prizes consist of three cash gifts, being £50, £25, and £10 respectively for the first, second, and third prizes. In addition to this twenty-five Gramophones are offered.

I have been led to offer these Gramophones, which are similar to those which have already been given away in other Competitions, owing to the repeated requests of many readers who have so far been unsuccessful in winning instruments, but yet are desirous of obtaining them, they having heard from other prize-winners of the magnificent quality and tone of the instruments. Each Gramophone is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, which greatly increases the volume of sound.

If any readers have friends who experience a difficulty in obtaining a copy of this issue of *Short Stories* in order to be able to enter for the Competition, they will find the first list of sentences in *Pearson's Weekly* and *Home Notes*, dated April 2nd, both of which cost one penny, and are on sale on Friday next.

The majority of readers experienced considerable difficulty in deciphering correctly the facsimile of Mr. R. Norman Silver's handwriting which was published in *Short Stories*, dated March 7th. The following is a list of the pencil-case winners, and also a copy of what Mr. Silver wrote:

L. H. Bowden, St. Bulades, Aylestone, Leicester.
A. Bruce, 4 Clarence Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.
E. Canham, 27 Courtney Road, Highbury, N.
F. Hulme, 5 Earl Street, Audenshaw, near Manchester.
W. Rose, 46 Shamrock Street W. Glasgow.
Mr. Ramsay, Maplebank, Leadhills, Abington.
M. Richardson, Lynwood, Egremont, Cumberland.
N. H. Simmons, 43 Milson Road, West Kensington.
J. H. Gainford, 33 Everton Terrace, Liverpool.
J. H. Robertson, 9 Glenogle Road, Edinburgh.

Hans Christian Andersen, that teller of so many simple yet haunting tales, said once that his stories looked over his shoulder. What he meant no doubt was that in every true romance there is something that "comes of itself," some situation, some character that springs up as with a life of its own. Such situations, such characters, come to the author with a little *thrill* that gives him a new interest and a new pleasure in his work.

In "Held Apart" the writer has been fortunate enough to meet with many of these odd sensations. One thrill came to him when he seemed to see the scoundrelly ship's steward, Hartigan, checked in his drunken song by the creaking of a hinge, lolling in his chair and staring with stupid, startled eyes at the blind white girlish face in the doorway. Another came when he heard—as novelists do hear—the cold, hard voice of Hannah Davenal bidding her aristocratic dupe and accomplice, "*Go down to Groudle Tower and look!*" The others—but his readers must discover those for themselves.

He trusts, however, that they may find as much pleasure in reading "Held Apart" as the writing of it has given to

R. Norman Silver.

The result of the "Cats" Competition will be found on page 393.

Digitized by Google

A FLAW IN THE STRUCTURE.

The Story of a Weakness that Became Strength.

"I always feel a dreadful bore when I call in at this time of the evening, my dear Maud!" declared Miss Rose Dawson with an easy air, which did not betoken any special amount of compunction. She had already been there for more than half-an-hour. "I know that you are usually in the study with your father, when he is at home in the evening, going over his plans for new ships and all that sort of thing. I hope he is out now, or I may be keeping you from him!"

"You are not a bore at all, Rose!" said Maud Newbold quietly. Her friend's lively chatter amused her, and Rose did not intrude too often. "My father is not out, though; he is in the study with Mr. Arnold Morrison, and they are going into some plans together."

"Mr. Morrison!" cried Rose in mild surprise. "Oh, is he working for your father's firm now? Very clever, people say, and I know he is very good-looking and manly. So you do not have so much of your father's society now, of course—superseded!"

She laughed, not giving Maud time to reply.

"Of course, you've heard about that romance of his? He was looking at some plans or something of that sort"—this was a favourite expression of hers—"when he let the paper fall and the wind caught it.

"Just as the paper was rolling into the water, a girl ran up and caught it with her umbrella, pinning it to the ground. Mr. Morrison came up, recovered his paper, thanked her—and report says that he fell in love with her on the spot!

"I have seen the girl; very nice, almost charming, but she is only a poor milliner or something of that sort, and not quite good enough for him! Lucky for her! Of course I don't mean to say that a milliner is not as good as—— But there, I mustn't turn gossip!"

Maud had not heard it all; she was sitting in her chair with tightly clasped hands and in the attitude of one who is about to spring to her feet. Her face wore a tense expression, but this could not be seen by Rose as they were sitting in the twilight.

"I wonder, now, how it would be if he met somebody else, more in his own circle?" continued Rose, just a little more thoughtfully. "Would he give her up? The girl, I mean. Her name is Alice Boyce. That is the question!"

Maud did not reply, but the intensity of her expression deepened, till she had the appearance of one who is in pain. Rose fidgeted and went on, somewhat awkwardly:

"I suppose it is rather too bad to discuss the gentleman while he is so close to us! What about the Paynes' ball? You will go, I suppose? And when shall we have the pleasure of seeing you a captive to Cupid?"

"If it were not for the fact that you are so good, if you did not demonstrate the possession of a heart in so many ways, I should be disposed to assert that you do not own one! The efforts of several men to make an impression are sufficient to cause most persons to declare that you have hedged that organ round with the determination to die an old maid!"

Maud's face lost its pallor and became bright with colours. With an effort she forced herself to reply in a steady voice:

"Let us leave my heart to take care of itself, and let us consider the following problem, Rose: Suppose a woman sees a man with whom she falls in love, or with whom she feels that she could fall in love, whichever way you like to put it. The man, however, is engaged, in word if not in fact, to another—girl. Yes, we will call her a girl in order to distinguish her from the woman first mentioned.

"Now, the man has never made love to the woman; there is no deceit on his part, and the woman does not know till after the first fateful meeting, that he is even acquainted with the girl. Yet, although the man has said nothing to the woman, yet she is perfectly sure that if she exerted any power, call it fascination, if you like, the man would leave the girl and come to her."

Maud ceased speaking, although she had not finished her statement of the problem. Rose looked interested.

"Where's the problem?" she asked. "I don't see it yet, but perhaps I am dull to-night."

"What ought the woman to do?" continued Maud. "Ought she to go about her ordinary mode of living and resolutely turn from the man, who is unconsciously tempting her with the greatest happiness that can come to a woman, or ought she to take that happiness? Ought she to sacrifice herself or be happy—leaving the girl to——"

"My dear Maud, I am almost out of patience with you!" cried Rose, in a tone of mild surprise. "I thought you were prossie; I am sure that a girl who mixes in shipbuilding plans with her father ought to be practical! What right has the woman to sacrifice herself?

"If happiness is offered to us mortals, we are bound to accept it! The fact that someone else has to suffer because we do it, is not our concern. *That* is her, or his, concern!"

"But suppose," began Maud anxiously, while her hands clasped one another still more tightly.

"I don't suppose anything!" declared Rose positively. "It is only in novels that the characters sacrifice themselves; it doesn't cost anything, you see! The author uses up so much ink and paper and brain tissue either way, so it makes no difference! But in real, practical life, it *does* cost something! So you don't sacrifice yourself, you leave that to the one who can't help herself!"

"Listen to me!" requested Maud. Her voice was calm and steady, but she was trembling with suppressed emotion. "The man loves the girl, and will be happy with her unless the woman allows him to—fall into temptation himself.

"The woman has all she requires, all she desires, except the love of that man; but the girl has nothing save that. She is poor, has to work hard for a living; she knows the miseries of genteel poverty, and can only look forward to a life of work. But she has that man's love, and if he could offer her only a workman's lot in life, yet would she feel recompensed for the hardships of life by having that man's love.

"Ought the woman to take that from her? The woman who has all else—ought she to take from the girl the only thing she has to make her happy?"

"I am afraid that problem is being put to me in too poetical a manner!" laughed Rose. "I tell you, Maud, that the whole matter, stripped of the gilt of poetry, comes to this:

"The woman is throwing away a chance of happiness, and she has no right to do so! It is quite conceivable that the man would be more happy with her than with the girl; why, then, should she bring about a double sacrifice? That settles it, my dear Maud!"

She rose to go, and Maud, rising also, switched on the electric light. Rose was busily engaged in setting her hat straight, and rattled on for a moment without noticing her friend.

Digitized by Google

"It is quite a treat, notwithstanding your absurd problem, to find you interesting yourself in love matters, Maud. This is very promising, and augurs well for the peace of mind of certain male friends—or of one of them, at least! We shall see developments before long, and—— Good gracious, what's the matter? How white you look!"

"Oh, it's nothing!" exclaimed Maud, with a faint smile. "I have not felt quite well to-day, and my headache is becoming worse, I fear."

"Then it's time I went," decided Rose. "Lie down quietly, my dear, and don't worry your head about problems! No, don't come to the door! Well, if you *will*, you will!"

Maud accompanied her friend to the door, and Rose soon disappeared. Maud Newbold turned and walked slowly back along the hall, but at the end she stopped abruptly, for Arnold Morrison came out of the study and came towards her.

"I hope I have not kept you from your father, Miss Newbold," he observed courteously. "We should doubtless have benefited by your apt suggestions on a difficult matter."

His manner was quiet and unemotional, but the look in his eyes was very keen and penetrating.

For a moment the deep brown eyes of Maud Newbold seemed unable to meet his steadfast gaze, but after the first short faltering they looked firmly into the blue orbs, through which one could almost read the man's very soul.

"It is very good of you to say that, Mr. Morrison," she replied, with her usual gracious manner. Her winning smile, the faintest trace of which was upon her lips now, had a fascination for him, and he wondered why it was so near the vanishing point. "What is the subject now?"

"It would appear to most people to be a trivial matter, Miss Newbold," he responded, "but you, who know as much about these matters as many trained men, will understand that it is more than a trifle. We have discovered a flaw. A small flaw, scarcely noticeable; but you understand that ever so small a flaw spoils the whole construction. We must alter all our plans; it means a loss of money and time, but it cannot be helped. Do you not agree with me?"

"Oh, dear! It seems so unfair to hold that a little defect spoils the whole of a beautiful structure!" she said in a tone of concern. "Can nothing be done, but to pull apart and begin again?"

"Nothing, I fear, Miss Newbold! If a construction, a machine, an organism, a character even, has a weak spot, it spoils the whole. Is that not true, or do you think——"

There was almost a pleading accent in his voice; he appeared to be stating a positive fact, and yet pleading to be told that he was incorrect in his theory. What did he mean by including the character of a human being in his category?

He had turned his eyes from hers while speaking, and her heart beat violently. Was the theory true? She felt that it was, and yet she tried to think otherwise, as he was endeavouring to do! Her heart cried out against this harsh dictum.

"Oh, that is too severe a judgment, Mr. Morrison! Does it follow of necessity that a flaw, a weak spot, mars the whole? No, no; I cannot think it!"

She clasped her hands tightly. He turned his eyes slowly to hers, and in them she read the application of his stern remark to himself. She read what he could not say, for he was bound to another.

His allegiance was due to Alice Boyce, but there was a weak spot in it—only just a speck of disaffection, but that little flaw spoilt the purity of the allegiance and marred the structure of the engagement. He knew it, but he was pleading to be told that he was wrong!

And Maud saw this in his eyes and shut her own, for what was he reading in them? What injustice were they both doing to Alice Boyce? Was there not a flaw in the structure of her own womanly character and integrity in permitting this feeling to linger in her heart? She was aroused from her soul-piercing meditation by the sound of his voice.

"Yes; all that I have said is true, although I would that it were not! I see that you agree with me. Good-night, Miss Newbold!"

She felt his hand touch hers, and he was gone.

She looked about as if in search of him, then groped her way to the drawing-room, for her eyes were filling with tears and she could see nothing. Throwing herself on a couch, she covered her face with her hands and moaned in the agony of her stricken heart:

"No, no! It is not so; it is all theory! Arnold, Arnold, my love! I cannot give you up!"

"Why, whatever is the matter, my dear child?" inquired her anxious father, entering the drawing-room half an hour later. "You look ill, and I believe you've been crying! Headache? Don't have it so bad as that very often, do you?

"I think you haven't been looking so well just lately, and I have a good mind to send you to Italy or Egypt for the winter! Your aunt thinks of going to one place or the other and you could go with her, you see. Don't wish to go? Well, well! Never mind about that just now. Go to your room and bathe your head. Your poor mother used to have dreadful headaches at times."

Maud was glad to escape from her father's eyes. He looked after her and sighed.

"She has been studying too hard!" he mused. "She must have put in a lot of study to get the grip of the thing as she has done. She seemed to go in for it more than ever after that first visit of Morrison's! My word, wasn't he surprised to find a girl knowing so much! I shan't forget that in a hurry!

"He was inclined to treat her like a know-nothing at first, just bowing to her and taking no further notice. But I could see the look of utter surprise when she put in one of her shrewd suggestions! It was as good as a play to watch them! After that, she studied harder than ever, and he always seemed to be waiting to hear what she had to say." He chuckled with amusement.

"I've wondered, occasionally, if I should be told that Morrison wanted to be my son-in-law. Hum. No, I shouldn't mind, although I want Maud to do better. Oh, yes, I forgot! I've heard something about his being engaged! So that's all right. She will be better in the morning!"

* * * * *

On the following day Maud Newbold did more walking about the town than usual; she explained this to her father by saying that her head felt heavy and that out-door exercise might benefit her. Yet there was some other motive—an additional reason for so much walking, if, indeed, it were not the principal one; she appeared to be constantly on the watch.

On the second day she continued the practice; morning, afternoon and evening she went out. It was Saturday, and there were more people about. It was early in the evening; she had made her way towards a piece of land that had been set apart as an open space.

Almost on the edge of the common, as it was called, she passed at the back of a seat on which two girls were sitting, and a remark from one of them brought her to a stand with considerable suddenness.

"You're a lucky girl, Alice Boyce!"

"Yes, I am!" was the reply, uttered in sweetly simple tones. "I am very happy!"

Maud felt rooted to the ground; it was mean to listen, yet she was unable to move.

Digitized by Google

"You are going to be taken away from the drudgery of earning your own living and placed——"

"It isn't that!" protested Alice Boyce earnestly. "I should be happy without that, and I sometimes wish that he were more in my own position, because then he might not be tempted to think that he could have done better!

"But I mustn't say that of him!" she added hurriedly, and Maud could see the colour suffusing her cheek as she caught a side glimpse of it. "He is so good, so noble, that he would not be tempted! I can trust him, and I am ashamed of myself for even allowing the thought to come!"

The words were spoken quietly, but to the keen, perceptive faculties of the listener there was a depth of passion in the tone. Maud pressed her hand to her side, as if a sudden pain had estruck her, and moved away, passing in front of her rival.

"I am glad that I have found her at last!" murmured Maud as she walked quickly homewards. "It has made me stronger to see her, and I cannot take from her the one thing she possesses!"

Mr. Newbold was out till nine o'clock, and punctually at that hour Mr. Arnold Morrison arrived and was shown into the study. Maud saw him as he left.

"How has it been arranged?" she asked. "Has the weak spot necessitated the complete undoing of the work or can it be strengthened?"

"In this instance it can be strengthened, Miss Newbold," he answered gravely. He was gazing at her, trying to read her soul. "It is an exception!"

"In human character," she proceeded slowly; "a weakness, if properly dealt with, may be turned into strength and the whole structure is really stronger for it afterwards. It requires the moral fibre to cut out the defective point, or to probe it, and do what is necessary to fortify it; and if that be done, the result in after years is self-esteem. That means more happiness; for, if the weakness has been accepted, and one's conduct shaped accordingly, the result would be shame, the inability to hold one's head erect! It were better to suffer the pain of—sacrifice!—than that of shame!"

"I understand you, Miss Newbold!" he said softly, drawing a deep breath. "You are so good, so good!"

He took her hands in his, clasping them so tightly that he hurt her, carried them to his lips, and let them fall. She heard his steps as he passed out. The sacrifice was made!

The wedding took place within six weeks, and the smiling bride little guessed how near to shipwreck her happiness had been.

Maud Newbold was in Cairo on that day, and her aunt wondered at her niece's absentmindedness. Maud's thoughts were far away; there was a dull pain at her heart which struggled for mastery with a fierce joy—the joy that comes from doing what is right at any cost.

"I did not rob her of it!" she murmured many times. And the thought seemed to cause a gleam of light to illumine the vista of long years of single existence that stretched before her!

George Day.

Liver Complaint, Constipation, and Piles.

A LEADER OF 50,000 MEN WHO WAS GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.

BILE BEANS COMPLETELY CURE HIM AFTER DOCTORS AND OPERATION FAIL.

THIRTY YEARS OF AGONY ENDED.

Mr. Jabez Leedham, of 69 Sauvey Gate, Leicester, ex-president of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, has had a remarkable record. By his great natural gifts he rose from a humble position in a boot factory to be president of the great boot trade union of 50,000. He reached this position in spite of the fact that for thirty years he battled against liver complaint and piles. He stuck to his work in spite of these ailments until he could do so no longer. When his life was almost despaired of and he was given up by the doctors as incurable, he started using bile beans, and after a course he was restored to complete health and strength.

But hear his story: "It's quite true, he said to the interviewer who waited upon him. "For the greater part of my career as a leader of Labour I have been handicapped by very serious illness. The cause of my trouble was really liver complaint, and which caused an aching head, a feeling of weight, a dull, aching pain in every limb and an overpowering presentiment that some great calamity was going to happen me.

"These are a few of the feelings I had, and every sufferer from liver trouble will recognise them. Constipation was another source of trouble, and, greatest of all, piles. Oh! the torture of the latter ailment I shall never forget. Doctors? Bless you, I went to one after another, and it was all in vain. I went to the infirmary—no use. I stayed at home and rested—no use. I tried various recipes which friends advised—no use. Years ago a very clever medical man told me that there was no hope for me except by a surgical operation, and at last I underwent the operation. To my horror THIS, TOO, PROVED WITHOUT AVAIL. I was soon suffering again as bad as over.

"Sometimes I was so weak that my arms would actually fall helpless at my sides, my speech seemed to be leaving me, and beads of perspiration stood on my forehead. I dearly loved the work of bettering my fellow men through trade union lines, but at last my illness compelled me to give it up and retire from office. Everything failed to do me good, and I was just waiting for the end.

"One day, as I sat in my chair at the door, Mr. Rudkin, the butcher, coming by, stopped and looked at me. 'Leedham,' he said, 'you'll not live much longer, lad, unless you try the right cure, and that is——bile beans. I've been as bad as a man can be, and they cured me.'

"Then I gave them a trial, and at the end of a few weeks I was feeling some better. The drowsy, heavy, dull feelings were getting less troublesome. I began to have more energy, and the piles began to leave me. This improvement increased, and, to cut a long tale short, in a few weeks I WAS RESTORED TO PERFECT HEALTH."

Bile beans are an absolute cure for liver complaint, constipation, piles, indigestion, biliousness, headache, weakness, kidney disorder, pains in the side, loins and back, dizziness, sleeplessness, nervousness, anæmia, and all female ailments. Also for colds, chill, neuralgia, lumbago, rheumatism, and influenza. Bile beans may be had of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., Red Cross Street, London, E.C., on receipt of prices 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. (2s. 9d. box contains three times 1s. 1½d. size). Insist on seeing the name "Chas. Forde" on each box.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM (CLOTTED)

absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d.; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free, supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.

Digitized by Google

A Shadow Barrier.

The Story of a Broken Engagement and its Sequel.

EDITH had always known that David had been engaged before, but his love had been too satisfying, and she had been too happy to think very much about the matter.

When he asked Edith to marry him, David told her of his previous engagement, and there the subject rested. Edith had been proud to be too honourable to question him; indeed, she was not conscious of any desire to do so. She felt no resentment against the other woman, for David's love was too complete to leave any room for jealousy.

But one evening as they sat in the cosy window-seat in the library, watching the sunset colours change and glow, there came to Edith the woman's instinct to probe the heart of the man she loved, and lay bare all its secrets.

"Do you love me, dear?" she began, moving closer, to run her fingers through David's hair.

"Indeed I do, my darling."

"Better than you ever loved before?"

"Yes, dear."

"That other woman—the one you were engaged to first—did you love her?"

"Of course, or I shouldn't have asked her to marry me!"

Edith's hand dropped to her side, and the man took it and held it in a strong clasp.

"It seems odd," mused Edith. "I suppose you sat by her side and held her hand just as you are holding mine now. Did you make the same pretty speeches you do to me, I wonder?"

"Certainly not," replied David gently. "No man ever makes love to two women in quite the same way."

"No, men are too adaptable for that," said Edith, but there was no malice in her voice, and David, glancing at her quickly, saw that she did not realise how deep the truth of her remarks lay.

"Isn't that red sky gorgeous?" he asked after a moment. "In a little while it will be the faintest pink."

"It's wonderful," said Edith. "Do you know, dear, that you never told me which one of you broke that engagement?"

"Didn't I, dear?"

"No," Edith answered, "but don't tell me if you would rather not," she added softly. "Somehow I feel sure that you did."

"Yes," David said, "you are quite right. I broke it."

"I am glad it was you," said Edith quickly, "because it makes me feel sure you have no regrets. I never had any patience with the false notion of honour that prevents a man from breaking an engagement. I don't see how it can be honourable to marry a woman when you do not love her."

As she spoke Edith looked at her lover to see whether he shared her opinion. His face, with the glory of the sunset full upon it, was very sober.

He did not speak for some time, and Edith waited, knowing he would soon tell her what was in his mind.

"I did not break my engagement because I had ceased to care," he said finally, "but the woman I was to marry did me a great wrong, and I lost faith in her. I could not marry a woman I did not trust, so I released her. I think it right to tell you this, dear."

"And then," said Edith softly, "you ceased to care?"

"Yes, dear, I ceased to care. Not all at once, but gradually. There, now the sky is pink, a pink that would just become you. Don't you wish I were equipped with wings so I could fly up and get you a piece of that cloud for a ball dress?"

"Was it before you met me or afterwards that you ceased to care?" Edith asked.

"I hardly know. It was before, I think, that I stopped caring, but it took you to restore my lost faith in womanhood."

"And I made you forget?" Edith's voice grew tender.

"Yes, dear, you made me forget," said David in the same tone. "See, how fast the pink is fading!" he continued. "It is just as well I could not get you that ball dress, I think. I am afraid the colour wouldn't wash."

Once Edith would have retorted gaily that people didn't wash ball-dresses, but now she gave his hand a tiny pressure and said:

"It must have hurt you dreadfully to be treated so. Are you sure the hurt is all gone?"

David returned the pressure, but he did not speak at once. Edith looked up at him, but the light was growing dim, and she could scarcely see his face.

"It still hurts a little, dear," he said slowly, "not because I have any regrets, but I feel a resentment because of the way I was treated. I shall get over even that in time, but now it makes me angry to think of it. I love you dearly—better than I ever thought I could love anyone, but a blighted trust must always leave a scar, I suppose."

"Poor darling!" Edith's free hand went to David's head and ran lingeringly through his curls and across his forehead. With a caressing motion her fingers touched first his cheeks and then his eyes.

Suddenly she felt something wet against her hand. Her body grew tense, and her arm dropped to her side as though she had been stung.

David had said that the other woman was nothing to him now, but—that tear in his eye! Slowly Edith drew her hand from his clasp, but he did not seem to notice. Presently she shivered, and he felt the motion.

"What is the matter, dear?" he said. "Are you cold? Shall I close the window? See, the pink is only a dull grey now."

"No, I am not cold," said Edith wearily. All the brightness seemed to have gone out of her life; it had changed from gorgeous crimson to a dull grey while the sunset faded. Her

(Concluded on page 412.)

Digitized by Google

ASTHMA

WHY ?? is it generally thought that there is no cure for **ASTHMA,**

CHRONIC BRONCHITIS,
SHORTNESS OF BREATH, EMPHYSEMA, BLOOD-SPITTING, HAY FEVER, and other Lung Complaints.

BECAUSE !! the usual treatments only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE
ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE.

Sufferers will receive, post free, **Free of Charge,** particulars of the famous WEIDHAAS HOME TREATMENT when applying to **THE PAUL WEIDHAAS HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, 16 T.A. BUCKINGHAM ROAD, BRIGHTON.**

Mr. Weidhaas has tried the Treatment on himself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured himself, and had then practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of special cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by this Treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been **GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.**
No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from **COLD FEET.** Read the following Testimonial, one out of thousands received:

MRS. GREEN.
(From a photo.)

BRONCHIAL ASTHMA (4 years' standing) CURED.

Before undergoing the treatment, Mrs. Green wrote: "I have to sit up, propped up in a chair, by the fire all night. I cannot lie down for the dreadful cough and labouring for breath. It is as if I am being suffocated. I have suffered from Asthma for 4 years. I cannot sleep with my mouth shut. I have pains as if someone were pressing on my chest—piercing pains sometimes. I have palpitations and pains under the heart sometimes. I have always had a short breath from a girl."

After the treatment, Mrs. Green wrote: "I wish I had applied to you before; it would have saved me a great deal of suffering and expense. The doctor that I was under told me that I might go to one hundred doctors, but none could cure me. Now I know there is a cure, simple but wonderful, and would be only too pleased to see anyone that wishes to hear from my own lips what your cure has done for me."
London. MRS. GREEN.

(Full address on application.)

The DIRECTOR is prepared to pay

£1,000

to any Charitable Institution if the above is not a genuine extract from the patient's own letter. The original may be seen at the Paul Weidhaas Hygienic Institute by any bona-fide inquirer.

CURABLE

Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

FOR **HEADACHE** AND **Neuralgia.**

Cures in TEN MINUTES.

For INFLUENZA.

KAPUTINE *immediately* relieves the distressing "Influenza" pains and *cures* the fever.

KAPUTINE has the confidence of and is recommended by many eminent medical men. KAPUTINE is *not* a single dangerous crude drug, such as has been condemned by the medical papers, but is composed of *several ingredients*, first discovered thirteen years ago by one of our leading medical men. There is no other remedy like KAPUTINE, the SAFE remedy for Headache and Neuralgia. Ask for KAPUTINE, *and see that you get it and not some dangerous substitute offered for the sake of extra profit.*

KAPUTINE is the ONLY preparation of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

C. E. POPPLESTON, Esq., B.A., Mus. Doc., writing from Exeter College, Oxford, says:

"I have suffered continually from severe Headache. A medical friend advised me to try Kaputine. I did so, and in a few minutes my Headache had left me. It is a splendid remedy."

Packets of 18 doses 1/-,
of all Chemists, Stores, etc., or post free from
KAPUTINE LTD., Huddersfield
for 12 stamps.

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. **2½%**

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles,** and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

from **8/-** *MONTHLY*

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc.

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6-0-0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN,** The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

INCREASE YOUR INCOME.

SEND us your name and address, and you will receive **Free** on approval 24 of our Silver Aluminium 1903 Novelty Thimbles. Each one is prettily embossed with the inscription "Remember Me," "Forget-me-not." They are lighter and tougher than silver, never tarnish, and will last a lifetime. One million sold already.

WE TRUST YOU—
NO MONEY REQUIRED.

Sell the thimbles at **2d.** each, making 4/- altogether, which forward to us, and we will send you at once the Guaranteed Timekeeper or other Presents of High-class Jewellery you have earned, and which you can select from our list sent with the "Sell-at-Sight" Thimbles, and we will also tell you how you can make a regular income of **£2 10s. per week.** Write to-day and we send to-morrow.

GOLD & Co., No. 37 THE WATCH HOUSE Delamere Crescent, London, W.

Mothers

Icilma is the only absolutely safe Natural remedy for children's skin and scalp irritations. A perfect boon in the nursery. Send postcard, with address, for method of treating children's skin troubles by natural remedies and offer to those who have not yet tried it, to ICILMA (Dept. 12), 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

MERLIN CYCLES

MARVELLOUS VALUE A HIGH GRADE £10 10 0 Cycle for £5 19 6. Free Wheel and Back-pedal Brake.

Brand New Guaranteed Pneumatic-tyred Cycles for **£3 19 6**

Merlin Cycles are always good, no matter what price you pay.

MERLIN CYCLE CO., Martineau St, Birmingham

Digitized by Google

heart ached, and her head throbbed. She wanted to be alone —to think it over.

"I have a headache, dear," she said aloud. "I think, if you will excuse me, I will go to bed. Perhaps it will be better by morning."

"I hope so, darling," answered her lover, adding in a whisper, "I am sorry. I'll go now," he continued, "and to-morrow I'll come and take you for a drive."

"Thank you, dear," said Edith, but the face she lifted to his was unresponsive to his kiss.

"Why, your hands are cold!" cried David. "How thoughtless I was to let you sit so long beside that open window! These evenings are cool. But I was watching the sunset, and did not think."

Edith sighed. It was not the sunset that made him forget, she thought.

All night Edith lay awake, staring into darkness. When daylight came she got up and wrote the following letter to her lover—

"Dear David,—*I am sorry, I did not mean to hurt you last night. I did not suppose it could hurt you to talk of her. But it did, dear, and so, although you do not know it, you must care for her still. If you did not love her, the thought of her could not bring tears to your eyes.*

"*I am going to break our engagement, dear, for I love you too well to have even a memory between us. Ah, you don't know how it hurt me when I saw that you did not want to talk of her. Had I shown tact I would have changed the subject, but I could not do that.*

"*And I should always be wanting to talk of her to see if it hurt you.*

"*It will be easier to endure the agony of separation than to go through life with this awful ache in my heart, and feeling that I have not the power to heal a hurt that anyone else cou'd cause you.*

"*Do not try to see me, dear, you cannot alter my decision and you will only make things harder for me. To think of you is almost more than I can bear, and yet I must go on thinking of you always. Good-bye, dear, and God bless you.* Edith."

After this letter was sent, Edith took up her life as if it were something that must be got through somehow. A week passed without bringing any sign from David, but on the eighth day a letter came. Edith clutched it to her heart with a fierce eagerness. She had not known how hard it would be to let him go out of her life. Trembling she broke the seal and read the letter.

"My Dear Child,—*I shall not try to tell you how your letter hurt me, but it was a hurt far worse than the hurt of the other night, the one that caused you to write it.*

"*I am not going to plead with you, dear. I am a proud man, and I could not do that, but I am going to ask you to alter your decision.*

"*I hardly know how to write what I wish to, dear; how to tell you what I want you to know. There can be nothing between us, not even a memory.*

"*Once I loved that other woman, I believed her everything that was good and womanly, and when my confidence in her was shaken, I thought that I never could trust anyone again. I believed at the time that it was the depth of my love that made me suffer so, but now I know it was because my trust had been betrayed. I mourned, not the woman herself, but the ideal she had shattered. That is why it still hurts me to talk of her, although she is nothing to me now.*

"*It was you, dear, who brought back my faith in human nature, my trust in woman; and your power to do this is the best proof that I love you as I have never loved before.*

"*Some people say that a man's first love is his best; if his love lasts and becomes the fuller, rounded love of his later life, it is the best, but each time a man loves he loves against greater odds. His trust has more bitter experiences, more cynicism to battle with. There can be no love that is worthy the name without confidence, and the love that can bring to life a dead faith must be the greatest love.*

"*I do not think you can realise this, dear; you are too young. But try to believe me, and do not send me away from you. I have said that I would not plead with you, but I do plead, dear. You can do what no one has ever been able to do; you can make me forget my pride.*

"*I know how you love me. Your letter told me that, as well as of your pain. I am sorry for the hurt, dear. I understand. But if you send me away now, some day, when you are older, and have learnt the difference between the troubles that are shadows, and the cares that must be faced and fought, you will be very, very lonely.*

"*Better the joy of love, dear, than the pain of loneliness.*

"*The messenger is to wait for an answer. Will you say, 'Come?'*

"David."

"Cry away, dear, it will do you good," said David, an hour later. Edith had said "Come," but on seeing him she had burst into a passion of tears. The sudden release from the tension of the past week was too much for her self-control.

"I don't know why I am crying, I am sure," she said, "for I am glad—oh, so glad! I found out that I could not live without you."

Ina Brevoort.

Binks: "I don't like to complain about trifles, Mrs. Jingle, but my hash appears to consist largely of fragments of deal board." Mrs. Jingle (the landlady): "Well, what kind of board do you expect for twenty-five shillings a week. Mahogany?"

First Sweet Thing: "Is it true that you love Dick Dashleigh? Tell me, dear, in confidence." Second Sweet Thing: "Well then, in confidence, dear, I do love him devotedly." First Sweet Thing (aside): "That settles it! I'll accept the proposal he made me last night."

Consult the Oracle;

Or, How to Read the Future.

A Guide to the Interpretation of Dreams, and to Matters Magical and Mysterious, being the Wisdom of Past and present Times as to what will come to pass.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Price 1s., post free 1s. 2d.

Some of the subjects dwelt upon in this excellent book are:

Omens, charms, and spells for lovers—Mystery about plants—The Fortunes of little people—Certain cure for adder's bite—Something important about dogs—Character judged by the hands and fingers—How to cure anæmia—Lucky and unlucky numbers—Omens connected with apple trees—Fortunes told by cards—Baptism as it should be—Cupid at work all the year round—Beckoning to ships, unlucky—Getting out of bed backwards, unlucky—What we may learn from bees—Lucky days of birth—Married life begun as it should be—Bleeding at the nose—Unlucky breakages—How to have money plentiful in everyone's pocket—Hints to bridegrooms and bridesmaids—The sneeze of a black cat—Feathered prophets of good and evil—Proper days for putting on new clothes—Lucky coins—Rocking the cradle—How to cure cramp—Fortunes read in the palm of the hand—Notes on dogs—Singing in the ears—The influence of the evil eye, etc., etc.

ORDER FORM. **S.S.**

To the Peak Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "Consult the Oracle," for which I inclose the sum of one shilling and twopence.

Name.....

Address.....

Digitized by Google

Will Deafness afflict half the next Generation?

A startling report on deafness has reached the public press through a prominent London Medical Journal, which publishes an official record of tests of the hearing of school children. These tests show that more than one-half of the children examined were deaf to some degree, and also that, unfortunately, there was a very large proportion where deafness had not previously been recognised. This tendency to overlook a slight defect in the hearing is, without doubt, the reason why the offices of Aurists and our special ear hospitals are crowded with people seeking, later in life, a cure for obstinate deafness. On this question the Editor of the "Journal for the Deaf" gives some interesting advice in a series of articles on "Prevention of Deafness," "Tests of Hearing," and "Cure of Deafness." In the latter paper are discussed the various kinds of treatment. Among these is mentioned the Method adopted by the Drouet Institute, consisting chiefly of an external application, which has succeeded in curing many apparently incurable forms of deafness. The "Journal" referred to can be obtained free by post by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. With the Journal will be sent a Report Form, by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to the treatment of deafness, and Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases. The Editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination.

Sulpholine Lotion.

For Clearing the Skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

GIVEN AWAY with the Spring Double No. of

HOME NOTES

(No. 480).

A Paper Pattern of a

BLOUSE.

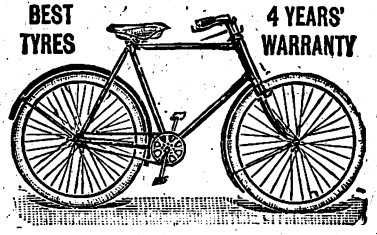
Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE 2d.

HALF PRICE

Greatest Cycle Bargain ever Offered

BEST TYRES — 4 YEARS' WARRANTY



ASTONISHING OFFER!

To introduce Royal Duke Cycles, we will supply 2,000 now, for only half list price—**£7 7s. each**—with 4 years' warranty. Free wheel, choice of noted tyres, Crabbe brake, triple enamelling and many other important features.

PAY ONE SHILLING WEEKLY

On easy payments, you can send 1 shilling weekly, or any larger amount that suits your convenience. No guarantor, no unreasonable enquiries. **Pay while enjoying the use of your machine.** Ladies', gents', boys' and girls' models. Every penny of your money returned if not as represented. We point with pride to thousands of voluntary testimonials. **Write for full particulars of Royal Duke Cycles,** mentioning name of this publication. Enclose stamp. **Address:**

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, City Road, London, E.C.

Also at 14, Peter Street, Manchester.

SONGS COPIED.

Legible as print, 5d. page; transposed correctly 6d. page. Mrs. Conyers, Morchard Bishop, Devon. Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Do you not envy the woman with a "pearl-like" skin? Then use **"Peralia"** regularly. It soothes, refreshes, clears and beautifies, making the skin smooth and healthy. Preserves a fine complexion and restores a faded one. Makes the hands and arms like velvet. Endorsed by society and professional women all over the world. Gentlemen find it extremely pleasant after shaving; relieves irritation—cools the skin. Use it for Spots, Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, and especially for Red Nose.

In Bottles, 1/- 1/6 2/6

Postage, 3d. extra

Doctor's certificate guaranteeing its purity, and testimonials, sent with each bottle.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

ARE YOU LITTLE?

Or Flat Footed? If so, try our Elevators, which will increase your height from 1 to 4 inches without detection. Comfortable to wear. Price from 5/6, Lady's; 6/6 Gent's, per pair. Send stamps for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73, Camden Street, North Shields.**

NOSE

If your nose is large or badly-shaped in any way, use our Nose Machine, price 10/-. Cheek Plumpers for thin or sunken cheeks, 10/- pair. Ear Instruments for standing-out ears, 10/- each. Send stamp for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73 Camden St., North Shields.**

FREE TO YOU

To advertise S.L.S Records, we are giving away our noted Phonographs for a limited time. Write, giving full address and nearest railway station; enclose stamp.

Symonds' London Stores, 128, City Road, London

CRIMPOLINE HAIR CURLING FLUID.

Curls the hair naturally in a few days, and, what is more, the hair will keep in curl. Does not change the colour or destroy the hair but makes it soft and silky, and will curl or friz into natural curls. No tongs needed. Not sticky or greasy like other curling fluids, which only keep the hair in curl. After the hair has become curly it is not necessary to continue using Crimpoline. Give Crimpoline a trial—the result will astonish you. Use it for Ladies', Gents', and Children's Hair. **1/9 and 2/6 per Bottle, Postage 3d.** Ask your Chemist or Hair Dresser to get above preparations for you; if they are out of stock, we will send it direct to you secretly packed.

Have no other or you will be disappointed.

Under Royal Patronage. Used by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc.

PERALIA PERFUMERY CO.

(Dept. 14), **72 and 73 Camden Street, North Shields.**

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

From Factory to Rider.

How Does This Suit You?

Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. **£14 14s** Grade for **£6 10s** Write, H Dept, Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

Ten Days Free Trial

is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way. 1903 Models, fully warranted,

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample cycle at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44,

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

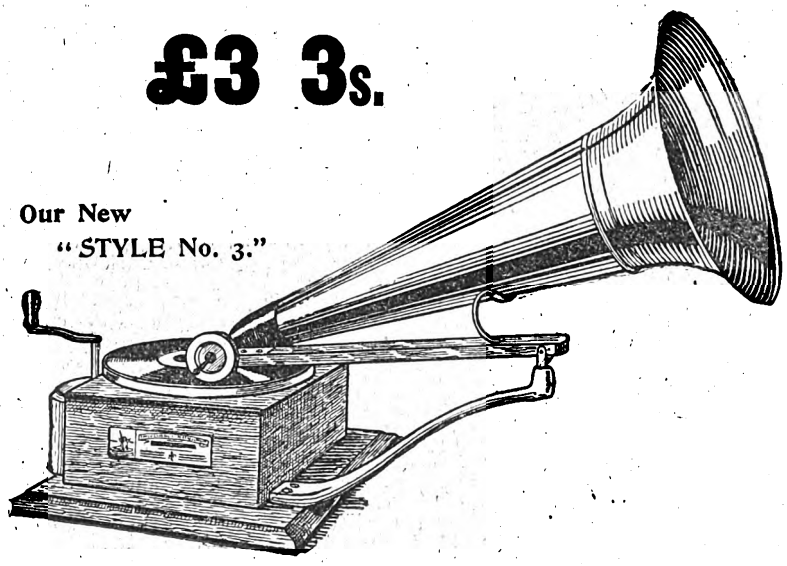
You can now buy a Clockwork . . .

GRAMOPHONE

FOR

£3 3s.

Our New
"STYLE No. 3."



SPECIFICATION:

CABINET—Polished oak.
MOTOR—Strong single spring, clockwork mechanism.
TURNTABLE—Seven inch, will play both 7-in. or 10-in. records.
HORN—Bright nickel 14-in. horn, bell mouth.
SOUND BOX—Our Patent Concert Sound Box (hitherto only supplied with our most expensive machines).
NEEDLES—200 special Sheffield made Gramophone needles in metal box.

This instrument will play 10-in. Grand Concert Records as well as 7-in. Records.

According to the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "It is without question one of the most extraordinary scientific triumphs of modern science."

The *Daily Mail* of Jan. 6 says: "It is the most wonderful machine of its kind yet constructed, and almost marks the climax in the art of phonographic construction. Among the 'records' are songs rendered by the greatest opera singers, including all the Covent Garden 'stars' of the past few years. A correspondent who has heard the machine working states that the metallic ring to which one has become so accustomed is quite inaudible, the volume of sound being almost as full as the original voices."

On receipt of a postcard we will send you full Catalogues of our Records, our Price-lists of Gramophones, and the name and address of the nearest dealer in our Gramophones.

THE GRAMOPHONE AND TYPEWRITER LTD.,

21 CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C.

Digitized by Google

He Wouldn't Ask Again.

"I'll never ask another woman to marry me so long as I live." "Refused?" "No; accepted."

Putting it Kindly.

This is a delicate way of putting it, isn't it? "My dear," he said to his wife at table, "I begin to think there are a few misprints in your cookery book."

Little Things Tell.

The Curate: "You should always be particular about details, Miss Tucker. It is little things that tell." Nellie: "I know that. I have three small sisters."

He Was Forgiven.

Culprit (in confusion): "I beg pardon! but really I couldn't help it—you looked so roguish and tempting." She: "Are you sorry?" Culprit: "No, I'm not. She: "Then I'll forgive you."

A Smart Husband.

Daughter: "Did you find out what it was that papa cut out of the paper?" Mother: "Yes, I bought another copy. I've read it all through, but I can't see anything wrong with it. It's an article on the healthfulness of housework."

Reason for Extravagance.

Friend: "I can't help wondering why a man on your small salary should give his affianced a cluster diamond engagement ring." Mr. Smartchapp: "That's so she won't slip it off and leave it upstairs when the other fellows call."

Saved the Dentist's Fee.

Mother: "Why, Johnnie, what on earth have you been doing?" Johnnie: "Fight'n! And you owe me half-a-crown on it. You know that tooth you was going to pay a dentist to draw?" "Yes." "Well, Billy Biffer knocked it out."

Why He Ate It.

Young Wife: "Dear, why are you eating so much more of my cake than usual to-night? Is it nicer than it was the last time?" Young Husband: "I—my darling—I—well, to tell the truth, I bet Tobble five shillings that I weighed more than he did, and we are going to settle it to-night."

Her Father's Hobby.

Adorer (anxious to please the old gentleman): "Has your father any hobby?" Sweet Girl: "Yes, he has, and it's such a funny one. It's dogs." Adorer (delighted): "I am somewhat of a dog fancier myself. Which is his favourite breed?" Sweet Girl: "It changes constantly. Every time I'm a year older he gets a bigger dog."

A Lover's Embarrassment.

"And when was it?" she asked tenderly, "that you made up your mind to propose?" He blushed and faltered, and tried to say that it was on a summer night, when she looked radiantly beautiful in the pale moonlight. As a matter of fact, it was one morning when the boarding-house coffee was exceptionally weak; but how could he tell her that?

One of Her Ways.

He "What is Miss Woolson getting that twenty-guinea costume for?" She: "To wear at a charity bazaar; admission sixpence."

Her Ideal.

Ada: "No, Priscilla will never marry unless she find her ideal." Ida: "What sort of a man is her ideal?" Ada: "A man who will propose."

She Liked Mystery.

He: "How fearfully and wonderfully we are made! Think even of my arms, what a mystery they are!" She: "Yes, but it's nice to be enveloped in mystery."

Excessive Politeness.

Sweet Seventeen (to her partner): "So I trod on your toe, Mr. Briggs?" Briggs (excessively polite): "Not at all, not at all, I assure you! Pardon me for having a toe."

A Severe Test.

"Promise me that you will be true to me while I am away," said a youth to the object of his affections. She: "I promise, but don't make me break my word by staying away three or four days."

Gave His Consent.

She: (anxiously): "Have you asked papa, Reginald?" He: "Yes." She (nervously): "What did he say?" He: "He didn't say anything; but I know he gave his consent, for he looked at me in a pitying sort of way, don't you know."

Insult to Injury.

Bertha: "What! That horrid little Alec Sandiman had the impudence to make you an offer? What next?" Alice: "But that wasn't the worst of it, my dear. The nasty little wretch didn't put a stamp on the letter, and I had to pay twopence for it!"

He Meant Business.

Mother: "Mary, that young Spinner has been paying a great deal of attention to you of late. Do you think he means business?" Mary (with a far-away look): "I am afraid he does, mother. He is an agent for a bicycle firm, and he has done nothing but try to sell me a machine ever since he has been coming here."

A Fable.

A young lady was once noticed by her mother to be fondling and kissing a pet kitten. "Why, Mary," said the mother, "you have kissed that kitten more in five minutes than you have me in five years." "Don't you know why I'd rather kiss the kitten than you, mother?" "No, my child." "You haven't got whiskers."

His Place in the Picture.

Mr. Mashemall: "By Jove, Miss Prettypert, I wish you'd put me into your picture." Miss Prettypert: "I will, if you sit where I ask you to." Mr. Mashemall: "Oh, delighted, by Jove! Where shall I sit?" Miss Prettypert: "On that rock in the background. Make haste!" (N.B.—"That rock" is five miles away.)

Buying Him Off.

Mr. Billion: "You shall never marry my daughter, sir." Impassioned Suitor: "Your threats do not frighten me. I'll marry her or die! When I once love, sir, no power on earth can——" Mr. Billion: "Oh, I'm not proposing to use force. How much cash will it take to buy you off?" Impassioned Suitor: "Um—er—how much'll you give?"

Mere Force of Habit.

Distinguished Foreigner: "I think the voices of English girls very sweet, but they would be still more musical if conversation were carried on in a lower tone." London Belle: "We make a good deal of noise; but you must remember our favourite amusement is concert-going, and one gets in the habit of loud talking, trying to make one's voice heard above the music, you know."

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Love Versus Art.

"PETERSBURG" is in love with a young lady who has a great talent for Art, and apparently has a promising career before her. He thinks that the young lady returns his affection, but has not asked her yet. As "PETERSBURG" himself has no talent for Art, he is afraid to ask his lady-love to share his lot, being afraid that, having no sympathy with her work, he might spoil her career. He is on good terms with her parents, but knows that they would be very much against such a union with their daughter.

* * * * *

I don't see that the fact of your not being in sympathy with your lady friend on the question of Art, "PETERSBURG," should prohibit a declaration of love. It is often the case that persons with opposite tastes are most happily married. You surely will be able to find out through a mutual friend, if not in some other way, whether she cares for you or not.

* * * * *

If she really does care for you, and you are able to show her that you can make her happy, I am sure she will not let the Art question be a stumbling-block. Regarding the parents, they are not likely to make a fuss when they see that their daughter is really in love with you; they would not permit you to be on visiting terms had they not some degree of friendship for you.

A Soldier's Trouble.

"XAVIA," who is a soldier, has been engaged to a girl for a few months, and he promised to marry her in November. He now finds that if he marries before the expiration of three years he will forfeit a lot of benefits, which will mean a great deal to him. The girl is slightly his junior, and "XAVIA" wants to know whether he should fulfil the promise made for November or ask the girl to wait.

* * * * *

I should most certainly advise you to wait, "XAVIA." You say you have only known the girl six months in all. That is hardly long enough to get to know whether you are really suited to each other. The lot of a soldier's wife is hard at any time, and think how much harder it will be if the benefits you mention cannot be obtained.

* * * * *

A thing that is worth having is worth waiting for, and, after all, three years will soon pass, and if during that time you find that you have made a mistake in becoming lovers—I imagine from your letter that you are both very young—you will be glad to think that the knot was not already tied.

Girl and Boy Friendships.

"HETTIE B.," who is sixteen, is in great trouble because her mother does not like her to speak in the streets to a number of boys to whom she has been introduced by her girl chums. It does not look very well to see a girl talking in the streets with several boys (or young men, I expect they would prefer to be called), and I think your mother is quite right to raise an objection to it. If you meet them at the houses of friends that is quite a different matter. Mothers generally know best what is good for us, "HETTIE B."

Married Women at Business.

"ONE OF YOUR READERS" has been engaged to a girl for four years, and though he cannot afford to keep her as he would wish, she wants the marriage to take place, and suggests that she should go back to business; and, in fact, tell no one of the marriage except her grandfather, her only relation.

* * * * *

I wonder, "ONE OF YOUR READERS," who your *fiancée* thinks will look after the home while you are both away at business. If it is necessary for a husband and wife to work all day in order to keep the home together they are not likely to be able to afford to keep a servant, and in consequence the home must suffer.

* * * * *

Ask your *fiancée* how she thinks she will like to come home to prepare a meal after a hard day's work. She will find that she simply cannot do it; she will break down utterly. If she wants to get married, and you see no prospect of improving your position for some time, you should consent to marry and then set up an establishment well within your means. Don't conceal the fact that you are married from anyone; it is always an unwise thing to do, and may lead to endless trouble.

Etiquette.

"AT a party should the husband or the wife enter the room first?" asked "D. F.," "also, when should the hostess leave the room after a meal?"

* * * * *

It is usual for the lady to be taken to the hostess' room to disrobe, while her husband waits for her downstairs. When the lady returns, she should enter the room first, followed by her husband. As to the hostess, after a dinner or supper she always leaves the room first—to show the way, as it were—and her guests follow her.

Mixed Marriages.

"MOSSIE," who is British, lives in Cape Colony. He was formerly engaged to a Dutch girl, but owing to his parents' opposition, she gave him up, not wishing to cause ill-feeling in the family, though at the same time persisting that she still loved him. "MOSSIE" will be independent of his parents in a year or so, and he wants to know whether he should give her up absolutely; they are both very unhappy without the other.

* * * * *

The subject of mixed marriages is a difficult one, "MOSSIE." I have known of very happy marriages between Dutch and British, and also the reverse. It is quite possible that your parents' prejudice against the Dutch was caused by the late war, and they will soon forget about it.

* * * * *

I would advise you to wait a year before doing anything definite, and if you are both in the same mind then, try to win over your parents to your way of thinking. If they will not be won I should advise you to marry in the face of their opposition, as, after all, though it is much more agreeable when parents are fond of their daughters-in-law, such a state of things is not absolutely essential, and Time heals many wounds.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

"It deserves all the praise it has received from the Leaders of the Profession."—Medical Magazine.

Ask for the "Five Boys" Milk Chocolate.

"Unrivalled as a Chocolate Confection."—Medical Magazine.

Digitized by Google

Cadbury's cocoa

THE STANDARD OF HIGHEST PURITY.—*The Lancet.*

Cadbury's is Cocoa and the Best Cocoa only.

ABSOLUTELY PURE.

"Cocoa alone is an excellent food as well as a stimulant, having a salutary action upon the nerve centres."
The Lancet.

"Cadbury's is a perfectly pure Cocoa of the highest quality."—*Medical Annual.*

A Perfect Beverage for all Seasons of the Year.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

are

THE REMEDY FOR THE PEOPLE.

RECOMMENDED BY FRIENDS TO FRIENDS.

NOT PUSHED BY DOUBTFUL METHODS.

DESERVING OF THEIR POPULARITY.

NOW ENJOYING A GREATER SUCCESS THAN EVER.

STILL WORTH A GUINEA A BOX.

BIRD'S CUSTARD POWDER

BIRD'S CUSTARD is Pure, Nutritious, and easily digested. It is a delicious article of food for daily use. Exquisite for Luncheon, Dinner, or Supper. Eggs often disagree; BIRD'S CUSTARD never.

In Springtime,

BIRD'S CUSTARD AND RHUBARB. Wholesome and healthful, rich and creamy. BIRD'S CUSTARD is the one thing needed with all Stewed, Tinned, or Bottled Fruits. It enhances their flavor and imparts to them a grateful mellowness.

NO EGGS! NO RISK! NO TROUBLE!

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

START THE NEW COMPETITION NOW.

SHORT STORIES.

No. 744.] Week ending April 4. 1903. [Price One Penny

He struck a match and went forward. By the dim light he could see the form of a woman lying chained to the bed. "Daisy," he cried, as the light fell on her face, "my love! Why are you here?"

Digitized by Google

A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "A CHANGE OF IDENTITY." See inside.

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Cutlery

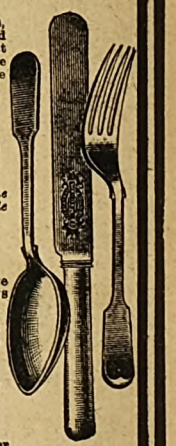
THE "ENTERPRISE" . PARCEL . 25/-

Household Cutlery & Plate.

Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white "Ivorette" Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of 'Columbian' Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.



HOW TO PAY.

Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if the Goods are not perfectly satisfactory in every respect.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms and particulars. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

Carr. Paid. For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s.	15/10	£9 10s 17/6
£9	16/8	£10 5s. 19/3

Juno Motor Cycle is the King of Motor Cycles, £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lowest prices; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6.

Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PACES.)

2/6 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-.

Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. per box.

SPECIAL BARGAINS

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE £ d S

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER**, jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

POWERFUL FIELD GLASSES by celebrated optician (Le Gautier, Paris); 30 miles range; 8 achromatic lenses (guaranteed), nickel silver eyeshades, in leather sling case; sacrifice **10/6**.

GLADSTONE BAG, 24in., superior quality, real brown cowhide, strong leather straps, nickel silver fittings, &c.; in perfect condition; unsoiled; cost 4 guineas; accept **25/-**; approval.

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH**, extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK - CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6**.

MAGNIFICENT 5-ROW PEARL COLLARETTE; finest quality; mounted with four bars of lustrous Orient diamonds, in velvet-lined case, complete; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING**, 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6**.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument. 12-fold bellows (metal bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

FEATHER BOAS; bankrupt stock, special bargains, real Ostrich Feather Boas, beautifully curly, perfectly new, in box colours, grey and white, black and white, and natural. Prices **10/6** and **12/6**. Original price 30/- and 12/-; each approval willingly.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH**, jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-**.

A full list of **Special Bargains**, New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, Pawnbroker and Jeweller, 284 Brixton Road, London, S.W.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Short Stories

No. 744.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending April 4th, 1903.

A Change of Identity.

The Story of a Double Wrong.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

"Prompt action was necessary," said Mr. Josiah Wilkins, solicitor, to his son Henry, "so I wired for Netta to come at once, and she will, I hope, be here as soon as Daisy Penfold."

"And then?" queried Henry.

Josiah Wilkins meditated for a while, and his son's mind went over the facts of the matter which was necessitating prompt action.

David Millar was a wealthy gentleman with only two relatives, two nieces, Netta Morris and Daisy Penfold. The latter was his favourite, for the former he entertained the greatest aversion. He had made a will, by which he left about half his fortune in charitable bequests and the remainder to Daisy Penfold.

It was Josiah Wilkins' object to obtain a goodly share of the wealth for Netta Morris, who was his brother's step-daughter, although Millar did not know this last fact, having refused to take any interest in that side of his family connections.

Millar had agreed to make a will, but his purpose was to leave all his money to Daisy; so Wilkins had conceived the plan of getting Millar into his office to sign the will, but, just as he was about to append his signature to have the electric light fuse tampered with so that the office would be in darkness for a few minutes.

This would enable him to substitute another document, giving all to Netta; the testator and witnesses (these last not knowing the contents of the will) would sign, and there could be no dispute after the old man's death. But Millar had been taken dangerously ill quite suddenly, and had himself sent a telegraphic summons to Daisy Penfold.

The will not having been signed, he intended to cross out the charitable bequests in the old will, and to hand his safe keys to Daisy in the presence of the witnesses, Wilkins and his son, which formalities would constitute a valid bequest.

"There is only one thing to be done," said Josiah Wilkins. We must have that money or we shall have to flee the country very soon, for there are several trust moneys I can't account for! So we must substitute persons instead of names. Daisy and Netta are somewhat alike, and neither is known here. As soon as Millar has done the trick, we must get rid of Daisy, and Netta must become Daisy!"

Henry nodded.

"You don't mean murder, I suppose?" he asked quietly.

"Gracious, no!" cried Josiah Wilkins, turning pale. "We must keep her confined."

"Boyle will do that!" declared the son. "He will jump at the chance, as an experiment; and, after a time, she will come out, not only harmless to us, but a witness in our favour, having lost her identity!"

They elaborated their diabolical plan, and then went to Millar's house to await the coming of Daisy.

When she arrived she was met by Josiah, who introduced himself, and escorted her to the darkened room where her uncle lay. The only person there, other than Millar, was Henry Wilkins.

The old man and woman, who acted as servants, had been kept out by Wilkins, who declared that when they, he and his son, acting as legal advisers, had finished their business, they would retire and the servants could enter.

Was there any doubt that Millar would die quickly? That was the only immediate danger. They felt convinced that he would last only a little longer; they had even been apprehensive that he might die before the arrival of Daisy.

"Uncle!" called the girl softly, striving her hardest to keep back the tears. He had been kind to her, so kind! She had never been to his house to stay, but he had visited her at school, and had seen that she was well cared for. "Uncle!" she called again.

The old man came to himself with a start, and looked about him eagerly. The girl uttered his name, and took his hand; the touch quickened him into life. He called her by name and seemed to regain his strength.

"I have made a will, Daisy!" he said, speaking hurriedly, as if afraid that he would not have time to say all he wished. "I have crossed some out—it is all for you now—Wilkins has arranged—take these keys! There! You witness it, Wilkins? Where is he?"

The old man's strength was maintained till he had performed the formality which Wilkins had been successful in making him understand, but he afterwards fell back exhausted.

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

Daisy, forgetful of her inheritance, scarcely comprehending these formalities, bent over the pallid face and kissed it. The tears welled to her eyes, as she turned anxiously, desperately to Wilkins and asked what could be done. She did not notice that Henry Wilkins had left, and she had heard nothing of the hurried consultation between father and son. The time had arrived for setting the plot afoot!

"Nothing can be done, my dear young lady," responded Wilkins sorrowfully. "The end is at hand. Let me take you away!"

But Daisy refused to move, and Wilkins waited impatiently till a deep sigh came from Millar. Daisy had never seen death and she thought this was the end. Wilkins seized the opportunity, telling her that all was over, although he knew better. Daisy uttered a subdued cry of bitter grief, and suffered herself to be led from the presence of the one who had done so much for her.

Wilkins summoned the servants to the room by a bell; they saw the girl, her face buried in her hands, walking feebly by the side of the solicitor, and the old woman's heart went out to her. She was about to offer to conduct the young lady to her room, but Wilkins waved her back.

Unknown to Daisy Penfold, Wilkins locked her in her room, and remained on guard at the head of the stairs. He was not easily moved, but the position of affairs agitated him. He was waiting for Henry Wilkins to return with Netta.

The doctor might come in at any moment, and so complicate matters; Daisy might wish to go to the room of the supposed dead man, and might raise her voice in alarm, and downstairs lay a man whose life was fast ebbing away, and whose property was being stolen by the villains who were wishing for his speedy end, and pretending to be his friends.

"He must be dead by now!" muttered Wilkins angrily. "What a time Harry is! I hope nothing has prevented Netta from coming! What's that?"

In the stillness he heard a faint cry, a weird sound that struck terror into his soul for the moment. It came from downstairs.

"Pshaw!" The cold drops stood on his brow. "Is that the end of Millar?"

Then a ring at the bell. Wilkins hurried below, and admitted two persons.

"All is ready!" whispered Harry. "Here is Netta. Can we get Daisy down? Is Millar dead?"

"I think—I hope so!" was the trembling reply. "Quick! Have you the chloroform?"

"Yes!"

They crept upstairs, Netta following. Unlocking the door, the three entered. Daisy, who knelt by the bed with her face buried in the clothes, looked up with tear-stained face as she felt a touch on the shoulder. Instantly something was clapped to her face and she found herself powerless and perceiving strange visions.

The two men lifted the senseless form and carried her downstairs, and within three minutes she was being conveyed by road to Dr. Boyle's private nursing home in a remote part of Kent.

The three conspirators returned to Millar's room. He still breathed, much to their disappointment. The servants were once more dismissed, and the three plotters waited.

"He won't come round again!" said Henry. "We are safe enough!"

As if to belie his words, Millar opened his eyes, and, by an effort, sat bolt upright in bed. His eyes were wide open, and he glared at them.

"Where is Daisy?" he asked, in a shrill voice. Then, as Netta stepped forward, he cried aloud, in anguish and terror, "No, no! You are robbing me! I feel it, I know it! I felt it as I reached the borderland, and I have come back to prevent it!

"You are robbing me, robbing me! I know it! I feel it! Restore what you have taken! Right the wrong!" he shrieked.

He raised his hand and pointed a terrible finger at them all, while they stood paralysed with fear at this awful re-awakening, this return of strength, shrinking from the warning finger, and trying to shut the spectacle from their eyes. "Heaven will send its wrath down on you! Help, help! I am robbed—robbed!"

That was his last effort. He fell back, the terrible warning finger still pointing at them. The stiffening arm and finger slowly descended to the coverlet, but it was still pointing at them. Millar was dead.

* * * * *

Dr. Boyle's nursing home was situated in a very lonely part of Kent, as plenty of fresh air was essential to cure. It was a spacious house, but it was practically empty, for very few patients came to it. Boyle lived there with one servant, an elderly woman, partly deaf.

When he had good-paying patients, Dr. Boyle engaged a nurse, but that was not often. He was usually regarded, by the few who knew him, as a crank; he had certain theories which he tried to work out, and in which he had a firm belief.

He was the sort of man to lend himself to such a plot as that hatched by the Wilkinses, and he would be quite an innocent accomplice. To him it would be a scientific experiment, and it would not occur to him that he was doing wrong.

"The experiment is going on capitally!" he murmured, rubbing his hands gleefully. "This young woman will completely lose her identity in time! Let me see! Yes, she has been here one month. At first she was a trouble, a great trouble! She didn't give the least hope of success, but that made her a good subject for experiment, and will prove the accuracy of my theory! I'll go and see her again!"

He ascended the stairs to a room on the first floor. Listening at the keyhole and hearing nothing, he cautiously unlocked the door and entered.

The room was in darkness; he lighted a candle which stood on the mantelpiece, and the light revealed a bedstead, with the form of a woman lying on it. He approached the bed and held the candle so that he could obtain a good view of the figure, and surveyed it with a calm and critical eye.

It was Daisy Penfold! She was asleep or insensible on the bed, her wrists were encircled with a chain which, at the other end, was attached to the head of the bed.

"H'm! Asleep!" murmured Dr. Boyle thoughtfully. "That will do her good. She is tired out with her tantrums! I was sorry to chain her, but it was necessary to prevent her from throwing herself against the door, and it will also help in the experiment, as the electricity will be attracted to the metal, and then to her brain through the wrists!"

He straightened himself and paced noiselessly about the apartment. He cut a queer figure, dressed as he was in a silk hat, and ready for a walk, but still holding the lighted candle.

"It's a grand idea, and it shows how backward are our men of science that they ridicule it as impossible!" he went on. "The object of this particular test is to make that girl believe she is not herself, but some other girl—some mythical creature whom we call Netta Morris.

"She is to lose, entirely, her former identity, and to believe that she has been brought up under another name, and in absolutely different circumstances. This is done by means of electricity.

"This chamber is pervaded by the subtle force; it oozes

Digitized by Google

into the room from a dozen points. It gets into her brain, changes the convolutions, affects the grey matter, and brings about a phenomenon similar to that occasionally caused by an accident, where people quite forget who they are, forget that they were expert typists and what not.

"Only, I go further and cause the patient to assume another identity! And when once that is accomplished, nothing will ever undo it!

"This girl is losing her identity; in a week or ten days, she will be Netta Morris. I can then let her go; she will not be mad, not in the least! She will be perfectly sane, but she will be somebody else—and ready to swear to it!"

He bent over the unfortunate girl once more. She moved uneasily, opened her eyes, and hastily rose from the bed and stood before him with eyes flashing angrily.

"Go away!" she cried. "Why do you put me in irons, in chains, like a criminal?" She raised her arms and the chain clanked. "Release me and leave me! Oh, dear! what is it?"

She lifted her manacled hands and passed them over her forehead. She seemed dazed now. Dr. Boyle smiled complacently.

"You will be well soon, Netta Morris," he said, in a soft, purring tone. "Have patience, be quiet, and you will be leaving here soon."

"Why do you call me by that name?" demanded the girl. "Yet—yet it seems that it is my name. I thought I was—was Daisy something. Netta, Netta?" She sank on the bed in perplexity and gazed vacantly at the floor.

Dr. Boyle smiled again. "Some food will be brought to you when I return from my walk," he said, "and you will feel better!" He turned on his heel and left poor Daisy Penfold to wrestle vainly with the mystic force that was changing her identity.

While Daisy was being thus tortured in the name of science, at the investigation of villains and the hands of a fanatic, the three conspirators were taking things easily in the house of the eldest, Mr. Josiah Wilkins.

The pseudo Daisy, otherwise Netta, was living there for the time, it having been considered advisable to leave Millar's house. Some money had been advanced to the heiress by the executor, a former colleague of Millar, who was not moving so quickly in the matter of proving the will as Wilkins liked.

In the new will, had it been signed, he would have been executor, and he was getting anxious about his position. He had already secured Netta's signature to a deed transferring half the property to himself and his son, as soon as she should enter into possession.

They found Netta quite willing to act in accordance with their wishes, for she worshipped gold, as old Wilkins had said, and would do anything for it—that is, she was agreeable on all points save one, and that was to receive the matrimonial proposals of Henry Wilkins. Had this been necessary in order to secure money, she would not have hesitated; but it was not necessary.

"I think things are going well," remarked Josiah Wilkins easily. There was a great contrast between his appearance now and when the dead finger was pointing at him. "We may, I am sure, consider that we are safe. Candidly, I quite fail to see any chance of identification. How about *her?*"

"Going on satisfactorily, according to Boyle," answered Henry.

"When she comes out, we can give her a few hundreds to help her," said Netta with callous indifference.

"Well, I'll be off now and leave you young people to yourselves," observed Josiah Wilkins. "I daresay you have something to say to one another which old fogeys like myself do not want to hear."

"Exactly!" approved Henry.

"No, we haven't!" snapped Netta, rising to go.

She followed the elder man from the room and passed into one of the reception rooms. With a face dark with anger, Henry put on his hat and coat and stalked out of the house.

Netta sat in solitude, alternately reading and meditating. She did not intend to marry Henry, so much was certain, but her heart longed for the love of a man of her choice. Where would she meet him?

She was interrupted in her none-too-pleasant reflections by a servant. A gentleman to see Miss Daisy Penfold; the name on the card was Cyril Mortimer. Netta ordered the servant to usher the visitor into her presence.

"I don't know the name, but I may as well see him! It makes a change!" she mused.

A young man entered. As soon as the door closed behind him, he made a hurried step forward.

"Daisy, at last!" The voice was eager. "Why did you not write to tell me that——" He broke off abruptly as Netta advanced. "I beg your pardon!" he stammered in confusion; "I have—the servant has—made a mistake!"

"My name is Daisy Penfold," declared Netta calmly, not foreseeing the danger. This young man charmed her; she tried to be pleasing. "You came to see me? I have not the pleasure of knowing you."

It was not exactly conventional, but that did not matter to Netta.

Mr. Cyril Mortimer became grave; this girl was so unlike the Daisy he knew, in manner, that if her form and voice had been the same he would have known that she was not his Daisy.

"There is some great error," he said earnestly. "You are not the Miss Penfold whom I know. I must apologise for the intrusion."

Netta was sad; she did not want this young man, so tall and so handsome, to pass out of her life. Yet she could do nothing to prevent it, and in her absorption she forgot to make even a plausible attempt at explaining the difficulty. When Mortimer was gone, she realised the position.

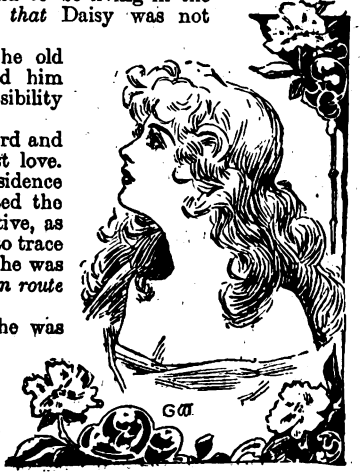
"What a donkey I am!" she cried, clasping her hands. "I ought to have told him that she had run away, disappeared. He will try to find her! We have overlooked this chance of identification. We forgot that she might have a lover!"

It is strange to notice how the cleverest rogues often leave a weak spot in an elaborate plan; this is what the Wilkinses had done.

Josiah and Henry were disturbed when they heard the news, but after reflection they regained their composure.

"It will be impossible for him to find her," said Henry. "It destroys our chance of bringing her forward, should we want to, as Netta Morris, but I fancy that we shall not want to do so. When she is thoroughly 'treated,' we can send her away. It's all right! At the same time, it teaches us that it may be well to realise old Millar's estate and invest the cash abroad!"

Mr. Cyril Mortimer was not satisfied. He had heard that Daisy had gone to her uncle; that uncle was dead, and Daisy was said to be living in the solicitor's house; but *that* Daisy was not his love.



He went back to the old servants, but they told him that there was no possibility of two Daisy Penfolds.

Cyril set his teeth hard and vowed to find his lost love. He hung about the residence of the Wilkins and acted the part of amateur detective, as well as employing one to trace Daisy from the time she was seen off in the train *en route* for her uncle's house.

On the third day he was rewarded. He saw the father and son go out together and shadowed them. They stopped at the post-office, talking, while

Digitized by Google

Henry held a letter, ready to drop into the box when he had finished. Cyril strolled casually past them, and his keen eye caught a part of the writing on the envelope. "Boyle" and "Kent."

He set to work at once to find out the name of Boyle, applying to a firm of envelope addressers. Love is said to be blind, but at times it has keen sight.

Cyril saw hazily through the deep mist, a mist that would have baffled all save the keen mental vision of a lover. He immediately grasped the fact that Daisy might be detained in this nursing home.

He was soon watching the place, after having gleaned some information about it. He saw Boyle go out and he made a bold move; he knocked at the door, and said he had been sent to inspect the small electric plant, as something had gone wrong, and the old lady let him in. Within fifteen minutes he had eluded the old dame's vigilance and was at Daisy's door.

His heart beat more quickly as he tried the door and found it unlocked. Was it Daisy within? He hoped and believed so. He peered in. All was dark; it was a room without a window. He struck a match and went forward.

"Daisy!" he cried, his hopes and fears realised as the light fell on the figure of the girl he loved. "Daisy, my love! Why are you here?"

She looked at him with unknowing eyes; she did not recognise him. He stepped back in horror as he noticed this, even in the poor light; then he heard the chilling clank of chain and his heart contracted with fear as he perceived that she was chained to the bed.

"Daisy, my darling. what have they done to you?" he cried in agonised tones. "Don't you know me, dear? It is Cyril!"

"I am Netta Morris," she replied coldly. "Why do you call me Daisy? When are you going to take these chains from my wrists?"

Cyril Mortimer was beside himself with grief, rage, and terror.

"I'll soon have the chain from your wrists!" he cried.

He dashed from the apartment and down the stairs, where he found a heavy poker. He met the old woman on his return, but he pushed her aside and left her screaming "Murder!" and "Help!"

He cared for nothing now. In a moment he was with Daisy. With one powerful blow he smashed the link attached to the bedstead, and Daisy was so far free.

"Daisy, Daisy!" he cried in anguish. "Oh, Heaven! What have they done to my love?"

In his agony he caught her in his arms, pressed her to his breast, and rained kisses upon her sweet face, calling her by endearing terms all the while. He felt her quiver under his caresses, and, a moment later, a wild cry burst from her lips.

Love had undone the work of science and villainy; she knew him, her memory returned with a rush, and she cried:

"Cyril, my love!"

A sound at the door caused them to turn; they saw Dr. Boyle glaring at them. He pulled the door quickly, and they heard the key in the lock.

"We will soon settle that!" cried Cyril, seizing the poker. "Follow me, Daisy, and we will regain freedom!"

With a mighty smash he shivered the lock and panel, and they went out. Boyle retreated before the threatening poker, and there was no obstacle to liberty. Within half-an-hour Daisy was rid of her manacles, and, after a rest, the lovers returned to London, where Cyril placed Daisy in safety.

Cyril had hoped to catch the Wilkinses by prompt action, but a telegram from Boyle warned them and they fled, taking what money they could realise, which was very little. They left Netta in the lurch, to face the consequences alone.

Dr. Boyle was sentenced to imprisonment as a criminal lunatic; he was scarcely that, but he was not a fit person to be left at liberty to do mischief in the name of science.

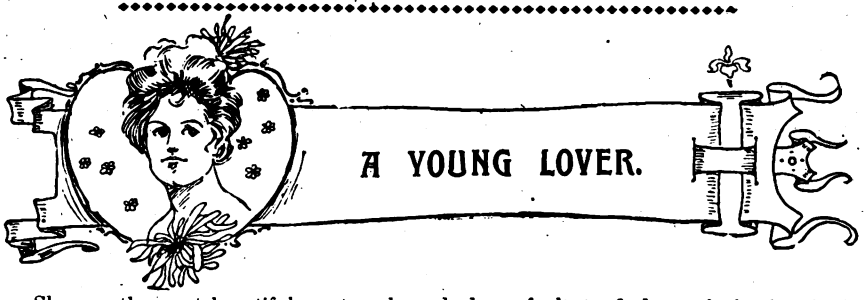
His great regret was that he had not been able to properly complete his experiment, owing to Cyril's appearance; two or three days longer, he said, and the experiment would have been finished.

At Daisy's request, Netta was allowed to go without punishment.

"I am sorry for you, Netta," she said gently, "and I will give you an annuity, so that you may never want. Go away and be penitent!"

Netta's eyes filled with tears at this unexpected treatment, and she left her cousin's presence with broken words of thanks.

George Day.



He loved her — very much. He thought that he had never loved half so much before. And she? Well, she may have loved him; that he didn't know—he hadn't asked her.

She was twenty. She was the most beautiful creature he had seen. Her hair was black—as ink; her skin was white—as a lily; and her eyes—how brilliant they were! They seemed to look into his soul. And he wondered if she knew it.

He had never seen anybody so ravishing to look at—not even in fancy. He had never before left his food half-tasted on his plate—not even at the seaside hotel. He had never before found it a task to close his eyes at night—not even when he had been ill with fever.

As for her, she looked upon him with favour; she would take his hand as they walked along the beach, and when the waves rolled further than she expected on the sand, she would cry, "Look out, Harry, dear," or the like.

He presumed he ought to be happy—there was no reason why he should not be; others in his position would have been.

Ah, yes; it was well enough—until the five o'clock express from London came in. Then she would be dressed in something wonderful in blue and gold, or in grey and black, or in pink and white, and she would walk in the gardens of the hotel and chat and gossip with the men who had been in town all day. Of course, when he came up, she treated him civilly, and he had no fault to find—no fault, that is, in order. Yet he asked himself sometimes if she was treating him as one individual, or as a species.

Ah, well! One day, fourteen trunks were loaded on the van at the side door. A good many of the trunks belonged to her. She was going away.

She came to him. She was dressed for travelling, in a tailor-cut gown with plaitings of Indian cloth on the front of the bodice, and with a black veil that could not hide the sparkle of her eyes. She held out her hand to him in good-bye, and then impulsively she took his head in her hands and kissed him.

What a thrill went through him!

He looked up—she was gone! Quickly he heard the rumbling of the van. Then he heard nothing—except that he imagined that he heard his heart beat.

He was all alone, and he let his head drop on his breast, and he cried as though his heart would break.

For, after all, he was only six years old.

O. P. W.

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION. ‖ *Start To-day.*

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

and 25 Gramophones.

THIS IS AN ENTIRELY NEW COMPETITION AND IS NOW PLACED BEFORE THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT IS EXCEEDINGLY SIMPLE, AND IS OPEN TO EVERY PERSON WHO READS "SHORT STORIES."

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated.

The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A third list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

SECOND LIST.

7. You might send Brown down for the cape Lucy Timmins left at the Manor, she will brook no delay.

8. The mallow, rose, mountain ash, berried plants, and Indian corn would make any garden pretty.

9. They wrestled for a star, crossing over after every genuine round. O'Connor O'Cluny was victorious.

10. Several shots were fired on a Monday morning, so scenting danger, on the succeeding mornings I departed earlier than usual for business.

11. He carved four crosses, one on each of the four stones; he also said he was willing to number Lizzie Claxby's flock of sheep.

12. We conned over the manual of Ho-Lang-Ho, the Chinaman. It contained pictures of the Botanic Gardens and its famous pear tree.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

Digitized by Google

With His Own Words.

Telling of How Love Was Revealed.

Stephen Annerly and Ethelwyn Macey had grown up side by side in the old provincial town that was a mere village when they were born.

He was older than she by three years, but they had been schoolfellows and playmates during their earlier years, when a difference of thirty-six months does not count.

He had been the first to leave the old school, and, as he worked in the field he had watched her tripping across the meadow on her way to the little house in which instruction was imparted.

Somehow, neither of them had been exactly like other village children. Each was endowed with feelings far above the ordinary level, and was regarded with suspicion and defiance by those who should have been their playmates also.

As time went on the difference of three years became more apparent, and the two former playmates stood aloof from one another, hesitating and shy.

Stephen had left the fields and entered the warehouse in the rapidly-growing town. She had left school and was acting as companion to the daughter of a well-to-do business man who had made his home in Belsham, just outside the lower portion of the borough, for the sake of his child's health.

The familiar meadow had vanished, and in its place stood rows of houses; a great change had come over Belsham, but the feeling that had existed within the recesses of Stephen's heart had not changed except insomuch as it had become stronger.

Ethelwyn Macey! All he did or thought was for her or because of her! He took up his pen and felt himself transformed into a poet when he permitted himself to reflect on the vision of the girl tripping across the meadow.

He wrote poetry—heartfelt, moving verses, full of subtle sentiment and not the maudlin doggerel that so often passes for it. There was talent within him, and this talent found expression only when he thought of her.

He wrote of the dawn, and told her that she resembled it; he wrote of storm and darkness, and tried to make her understand that, without her, his life would be as the tempest and the night. He sent the verses to her, and waited for some sign from this budding woman, but none came.

Then the business man removed elsewhere, and Ethelwyn went with the family. Never a word of acknowledgment reached him, only a timid glance in his direction when their paths crossed. So she went, and with his teeth set hard Stephen Annerly turned his attention to the warehouse and laid aside his poetic pen.

He sought distraction in hard work, and he found himself at the end of seven years at the head of a growing business nearly two hundred miles from the place of his birth.

Business had at first afforded him all the scope he needed for his superabundant energy, but nothing succeeded like success, and he saw his business increasing almost without effort on his part. He had time to spare.

He furnished a large flat and lived in it with a manservant, wondering why he had no desire to demand in marriage the hand of one of the many ladies with whom he came in contact. Other people wondered also, but they were unlike Stephen in one respect—they had no answer to their questions, but the reply came readily enough to him. It was Ethelwyn Macey, and that reply was all-sufficing!

In the meantime Ethelwyn had left the family with which she had lived for so long and had gone abroad. In the land of music, Italy, she revealed herself. Her whole being was music; it throbbed in every nerve. It had been crushed, oppressed, by her surroundings, although she had had opportunities of satisfying her longing to the extent of learning to play and sing, and acquiring a knowledge of the laws of harmony.

Thus it came about that the sojourn in Italy was like setting a blazing torch to a pile of timber; there was a sudden flame, and Ethelwyn Macey was an altered woman.

She worked to support herself and studied at the same time; then she began to compose, and little by little her compositions gained celebrity and her assumed name became a household word in her own country. Her songs were sung in halls all over the kingdom and hummed by thousands; they were full of passion and soul-stirring music.

The words were not hers; sometimes they were taken from a poem by an old or a new writer, and not especially written for her, at others they were anonymous, and sometimes they were penned expressly.

Everyone wanted to know who she was, but her identity remained a mystery; the critics made conjectures as to the personality of this gifted composer, but none guessed that she was spending her days in solitude, hundreds of miles away, in an Italian village.

"I say, Annerly, you can do me a service and give yourself a little pleasure at the same time!" said Dick Brandon. "I've promised my sister that I would take her to the Harmonic Hall this evening, to hear Madame Sefton sing a new song by that clever composer who is taking the musical world by storm, and I can't go. Mary wants someone to take her, and you're the only man I care to ask to act as my substitute. What do you say?"

Stephen Annerly laughed good-naturedly.

"It's against my principles, you know, to act as cavalier, Dick!" he responded. "I'm a sworn bachelor, and you're placing me in danger!"

"I don't think so," observed Dick drily. "I think that you and sis are about the most unlikely persons to fall in love with one another, although I believe you would make a good match, 'pon my word! But sis is anxious not to lose this treat, so I hope you won't disappoint me!"

"I shall be delighted to accompany Miss Brandon to the Harmonic," said Annerly, with a profound bow. "Joking apart, though, I rather like the idea. That woman who composes the music for those songs and other pieces is wonderful. A woman composer is an exception, anyhow, but this one is doubly so. You may count on me, my friend, so hand over the tickets and don't go away with them in your pocket, leaving us in the lurch!"

"Just what I should have done if you hadn't reminded me!" cried Dick. "Here you are, and I'll tell sis that you'll call for her in a cab——"

"In a brougham, please! I never do things by halves!"

Punctually at the appointed time Stephen Annerly was waiting for Miss Brandon. She also was punctual, and they were at the Harmonic Hall in good time. They had excellent seats, and Stephen Annerly made up his mind that he was about to enjoy himself.

The first items on the programme were executed, and then came Madame Sefton, a magnificent singer.

She warbled the notes in entrancing style, and held her audience spellbound.

She sang two songs by the new lady composer; the first was one that had been heard before, while the other was entirely new to the lovers of songs and the frequenters of the concert halls. Stephen waited in eager expectation for this new song.

Digitized by Google

The first verse set him thinking, but the second made him sit bolt upright and stare vacantly in the direction of the singer, although not at her. The words were familiar to him; they recalled the old village and Ethelwyn Macey tripping over the meadow.

He forgot the charming girl by his side, he forgot the personality of the singer, he knew nothing of the audience. He was far away, yet listening with intense emotion to every word that was sung.

He knew those lines! His blood tingled. That was a poem of love which he had written and sent to his former playmate!

It seemed to him that the girl who had never given the least sign that she returned the affection which he had lavished upon her, was now answering him, telling him by means of beautiful music, and through the medium of his own poetic declaration, that she loved him.

There was a forcible beating of his heart, and a throbbing in his ears; he wanted to rush out when the singer had finished, and hasten back to the old place in the hope of still seeing her trip across the meadow, of catching her in his arms and asking her why she had not told him all this long ago!

He stifled a groan as memory came back and told him that the meadow was gone, and that Ethelwyn was there no longer. He sat out the rest of the programme, but he knew nothing of what passed, and Miss Brandon confidentially informed her brother on the following day that she had rarely seen an educated man so dull as Stephen Annerly had been at the concert.

"Perhaps he wasn't well?" suggested Dick. "I'll go and see! I have to formally thank him for taking you, of course, so I must go to his office."

Mr. Annerly had gone out of town, the manager told him. Yes, it was rather a sudden departure, but Mr. Annerly said he had received an urgent summons to the town where he was born, and must be off without delay. No, he hadn't explained the nature of the summons, so the manager could not say whether Mr. Annerly had lost a near relation quite suddenly.

Stephen Annerly was the only person who knew exactly why Stephen Annerly had left town so unexpectedly. He wanted to find one of Ethelwyn's relations, in order to make inquiries concerning her present whereabouts. He found the old lady in his and Ethelwyn's native place, and he plied her with questions.

"Bless me!" ejaculated the old lady. "You want my grandniece's address? Ah, to be sure, I mind you now! It's young Stephen! My eyes are not so sharp as they used to be, and you've grown out of knowledge! Yes, yes! You were always good friends!

"And so you want to find her? Well, I heard from her only last week; she sent me a pretty card from Italy, but she said she was coming back to England, and her address would be at Bournemouth."

She fetched the card, but it was useless. He must go to Bournemouth and seek her there.

He returned to the Metropolis without delay, and then caught the next train to Bournemouth. It was late at night when he arrived, but he was happy to be in the same place as Ethelwyn. He went to bed in a comfortable room in the best hotel, but he slept very little, and was up betimes and out, seeking for the shy maiden who had inspired him with such poetic feeling.

He was unlucky. For three days he walked about without catching the slightest glimpse of anyone who even remotely resembled Ethelwyn; she would be changed in figure, that was certain, and he was alive to that fact.

It was a lovely evening on the fourth day. Stephen Annerly, tired of his quest, approached a lonely portion of the beach on his return to the hotel. Seated on a piece of rock he saw a woman, at the mere sight of whom he stopped and pressed his hand to his heart to quiet its tumultuous throbbing.

He could not well distinguish the features, but he knew that it was Ethelwyn, and that his search was rewarded at last.

Recovering his self-possession by an effort, he drew near to her and cried: "Ethelwyn!"

She had not heard his approach, so deep were her meditations. At the sound of that name she awoke from her day-dreaming with a start, and glanced quickly up at the newcomer.

"It's Ste—Mr. Annerly!" she cried, rising and holding out her hand with a glad smile, which testified to the pleasure afforded to her by this unexpected meeting.

As she took the proffered hand, however, she seemed to recollect, and the old, shy, shrinking manner returned.

"Why not let it be 'Stephen,' as in the old schooldays?" he asked gently. He was mystified by the rapid change in her look. "Let us sit here and talk of those days and of the later ones."

"I thought you had forgotten me," she said, keeping her eyes averted. She did not call him by his Christian name, but he was glad to see that she did not use the formal "Mr. Annerley."

"Forgotten you?" he cried. "How could I? I have kept the vision of Ethelwyn Macey in my memory ever since, but I was sad because I believed that *you* had forgotten *me!*"

"You have remembered me all these years!" she said softly. "Yet you—I have never heard of you. What has made you come now?"

"A song! A new song by a celebrated lady composer! I went to hear it and the words aroused all the slumbering passion in my heart, for they were the words I had written to a girl long before!

"I thought that she had never cared for the poems, never cared for the writer, for she had given him none of the signs for which he was waiting so eagerly! When I heard those words sung with lovely music I said to myself that the girl did care after all.

"I told myself that I must find her, and ask her if my conjecture were correct or false! I sought tidings of her in the dear village where love sprang into existence for me, and I sought my love here. I have tramped here and there for four days in search of the composer who set my words to music, but I have only just found her!"

"I am residing inland," she explained, "and under my own name, not under that adopted for compositions; that is why you did not find me."

She was gazing at the sea. What a beautiful woman she had become! She did not reply to his revelation of love for her, but she did not shrink from him.

"Ethelwyn, why did you not tell me that the verses pleased you?"

"People said that you were mad on writing poetry, so I believed that you wrote just as the mood seized you, and that you would write the same to anyone else. I could not guess that they were written for me especially."

"They were written for you, because you were the only creature who inspired me with poetry! No other woman has ever awakened within me the poetic passion which—I realise better now than ever—which runs through those verses addressed to you. Ethelwyn, why did you set those words to music, after so long? Was it merely because the words were suitable for the purpose?"

She did not answer, and he continued, with subdued passion.

"Was it because you had treasured those lines through all the years of separation, and were at last compelled by your own love to set them to the responsive music that was vibrating in your own soul? Was it because you have loved me, as I have loved you, in secret all this long time?"

He had taken her hands and drawn her nearer, so that he could gaze into those expressive eyes, which had drooped under the searching glance.

"It is not fair to me to make me speak!" she protested, meekly, with burning cheeks. "Can you not guess, and so spare me? It is the woman's part to listen, not to answer questions!"

"Except one!" he cried, with a ring of joy in his voice. He folded her in his arms, careless of being noticed by anyone who chanced to be near. He lifted the drooping face till she was forced to look straight into his eyes. Then he asked her the old, old question, and she answered, "Yes, Stephen!"

E. Powles.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES. YOU CAN BEGIN HERE.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

MY HEART'S DESIRE.

I AM a native of a seaside village in Cornwall. As I grew up I began to tire of the monotony of the life and determined to go out into the world and make a name for myself.

One day when I was in the ruins of the Old Keep, which is on the cliffs, meditating upon what I should do were I free to carve out my own destiny, two strangers appeared—evidently tourists, I thought. They told me they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood for a few days, and asked if I knew of any lodgings. I said that my father would be glad to put them up at the farm, and accordingly they came home with me.

Their names were the Honourable Robert Lestrange (commonly called Bobbie) and Di Northcote.

I told these two Londoners of my desire to see the world. Bobbie encouraged me in my ambitions, but Di advised me to stay at home. This, however, was not at all in my line, as I told him, and when he saw that nothing would shake me from my resolve, he promised to try to find something for me to do when I arrived in the great city.

Bobbie met me on my arrival in London. Owing to a fog we got separated, and as I stood on the steps of a house I heard a man's voice asking me to come inside and wait until the fog cleared. Feeling that it would be hopeless to find Bobbie, I accepted the invitation. I remained there some time when Di happened to call, and he took me to my lodgings in Bloomsbury, where Bobbie was waiting; he told me that the man in whose rooms I had been was Lord Cecil Trevor, one of the worst "men about town."

Di came in next morning to tell me he had found me a place as trier-on in the firm of Philips and Philips, mantle and jacket makers. He also gave me some advice which I rather resented. I didn't like my work at all, and as I felt I ought not to live alone I got Lizzie Brown, a new girl, to share rooms with me.

I met Lord Cecil Trevor on several occasions, and Di and I fell out because of my friendship with him. I accepted an engagement for a small part on the stage at the suggestion of Lord Cecil. He was just leaving my rooms one evening when Di appeared at the door. They saw each other though they did not meet, and I wondered what Di would do about it.

An Encounter in a Restaurant.

FOR just two months Di did nothing.

Apparently he completely ignored my existence, and left me to go my own sweet way, though afterwards I found this was far from being the case.

Not that that way was sweet by any means, quite the contrary. What I endured during my first few weeks on the stage I shall never forget.

Fortunately for me the manager was always fairly polite on Lord Cecil's account, but he was most insulting to many of the girls, and I do not know how they ever put up with it.

My dear reader, if you are dying to go on the stage, and look upon it as a life of bliss; before you take the initial step picture to yourself the possibilities of vulgar, even dirty, companions, with whom you will probably share a dressing-room; the wearing of half-soiled dresses, whose previous wearers may have left a good deal to be desired; much familiarity from young men who ought to know better; possible insults from the manager which you dare not resent if you want to keep your post, and very likely existence in cheap and nasty lodgings indefinitely.

The picture you no doubt see of beautiful clothes, heaps of money and admirers, costly gifts, and a speedy ascent to fame, *remember*, is only for the *few*.

For one that succeeds, how many are there who fail—nay, worse—who sink out of the reach of all self-respect for ever? I am afraid to say.

I am not saying that the stage is all evil; I know there are admirable men and women in the profession, but I do say unless a girl has "the strength of ten" to keep her heart pure and her aims high, let her take any lowly walk in life and any salary offered, sooner than risk all for the precarious chance of doing well on the stage.

I certainly did not have to go through the worst, but my experiences were quite bad enough, and again and again I meditated throwing it up.

Had I not resigned my post at Philips and Philips, and estranged my best friend, I no doubt should have done. As it was I dare not.

I was too proud to go to Di and ask him to help me. Bobbie was travelling abroad, and I had no one to go to but Cecil Trevor.

If I had chosen to lift my little finger he would have given me half his income, but that was one of the temptations my natural strength of mind saved me from.

I realised that to accept anything further from him would

Digitized by Google

be a step downward I might never be able to retrieve, and one which might lead to irreparable results.

I did not then know any definite harm of him, beyond what Di Northcote had implied, but the latter had not spoken altogether in vain, and I kept continually on the defensive whenever I saw him, which was fairly often.

Certainly in a way he was good to me, for he took me out to dinner many a time when I was actually in need of food; and after discovering by accident that I could not afford a good fire, he ordered in coal regularly, without saying anything about it.

At the same time he did all in his power to make himself necessary to me, and to get me so involved with him that I could not free myself.

When I think of all the subtle, unsuspected designs with which a clever man tries to entrap a girl who is friendless and alone, I shudder at the thought of my own risk.

It ended in his proposing marriage, though I am bound to confess I do not think he had the least intention of carrying out his suggestion at the time. It was merely the last stone left unturned, and it is quite likely he would have deceived me somehow.

As it was, I began by refusing to listen, and growing angry, but he merely waited a little, and watched his opportunity to return to the attack. In choosing his time he showed diabolical insight. Never once, I think, did I know him to speak out of season.

One of the worst attacks of all came when I was laid up with influenza. A girl, who was in the same company, and who was good to me in a way of her own, came round to see if she could do anything.

She found me sobbing helplessly from weakness, and loneliness, and misery. No one had come near me since Lizzie went out except the landlady, who had brought up some beef-tea scarcely fit to drink, and got me some quinine, then left me to my own devices.

I felt too ill to read, so lay picturing the waves and the cliffs at home, until I did not know how to bear it.

Then Jessie Ward came.

Poor Jessie! I must always feel grateful to her, although she was such a rough diamond, and ended in being one of those who go under.

She set to work at once to make my bed and wash my face and hands, then she went out to buy some beef jelly with her own money.

"Where's that fine young spark of yours all this time?" she asked, when I had eaten and recovered a little. "Why isn't he looking after you now? It's what he ought to be doing."

"Oh, no!" I said. "I shouldn't like it at all. I wouldn't have him near."

She grinned at that and shook her head knowingly, then remarked laconically, "Rats!"

"He is nothing to me," I reiterated wearily. "Please go away now, I want to try to get to sleep; but I hope you'll come again if you've nothing better to do. I shall get up to-morrow morning."

She promised readily and went off. When she next returned she did not come alone.

"I'm glad to find you up," she said. "I've brought someone to see you," and she looked very pleased with herself. "I thought it would do you good," and she beckoned Lord Cecil into the room, shortly after retiring herself.

I felt very angry, but felt too weak to expostulate, and I must admit he was very kind. He had brought me beautiful fruit and flowers, and jelly, all bought on the way, after Jessie had succeeded in finding him and telling him of my illness.

"I was just going to join a party at Prince's," he said, "when Miss Ward came to tell me about you. I don't know how she ever discovered my address, but I just jumped into a hansom and came.

"You mustn't be angry, Maud, I only want to take care of you while you're down; and it must be awful to sit here alone," and he too glanced expressively round my dingy little sitting-room.

"Do let me take you away," he urged, "just until you are better. I'll find a nice room and a nice nurse, and then you'll be taken care of properly."

I smiled faintly, for it was undoubtedly very pleasant to be taken care of, but I refused to be moved.

"I shall be all right to-morrow or the next day," I said, "it is only this wretched cold I have caught somehow."

After he had gone again I sat thinking about him for a long time, and about the future.

What was I to do?

I hated my present existence, and began to feel it was a vain hope to think of success. I wondered whether I would write to Bobbie, and half decided to do so, but my stupid pride again stepped in and prevented me.

I had chosen my own way, and would not weakly cry out because it was a failure. If I hung on a little longer things would probably improve, and then I should be so glad I had not spoken.

As for Di, I imagined he had given me up altogether, and would never speak to me again. I felt vexed with him, although I knew I had given him good cause, and indulged in a pleasing picture of myself at the top of the profession, scornfully ignoring his attempts at a reconciliation.

But when the night came and I lay in a sleepless fever, trying in vain to rest, all my bravado forsook me, and I broke down again into helpless weeping. Finally I decided to ask Cecil Trevor to send me back to my home the next day.

But when he came he would not hear of it. Again he had brought me exquisite flowers and fruit, and while he arranged them on a little table near the couch he spoke encouragingly of all I was to achieve by-and-bye.

"Only you can't go on alone, Maud," he said, changing his voice to lover's tones. "You must come to me and let me take care of you always."

"No, no," I breathed. "It would be madness. By-and-bye you would weary of me, and then I believe you are the kind of man to desert one."

"Never," he urged. "You are cruel to say a thing like that. I have never changed to you for one second since I first met you."

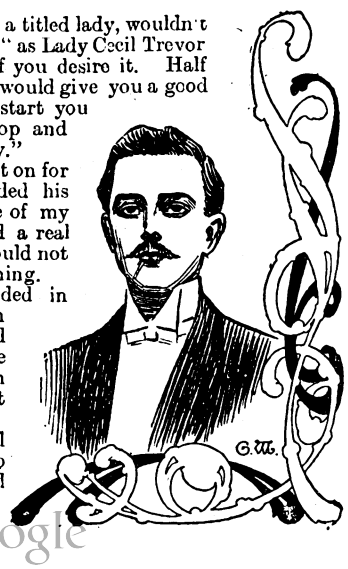
"Not to me, perhaps, but what of other women?"

He walked down the room and came back and stood beside me.

"Look here, Maud," he said, "you're so clear-sighted I don't suppose I could blind you if I tried, and I don't know that I want to. I suppose I have been a rake in my time, but if you'll marry me I'll turn over a new leaf and begin again. I never cared for anyone in my life as I do for you; you can do what you like with me."

He pressed nearer.

"You would like to be a titled lady, wouldn't you, Maud?" he urged; "as Lady Cecil Trevor success is at your feet if you desire it. Half the managers in London would give you a good part, and with such a start you would soon run to the top and have it all you own way."



In this manner he went on for some time, and he pleaded his cause well. But in spite of my antagonism to Di, I had a real respect for him, and I would not let myself forget his warning.

All Lord Cecil succeeded in wringing from me then was a half hearted promise to think the matter over, and with that he had to be content for the present.

I got well quickly, and prepared to go back to the theatre, but at Lord Cecil's request the manager gave me a

Digitized by Google

week's holiday to completely recover.

During that week he insisted upon taking me out every day, and one afternoon he arrived in a beautiful little motor to take me into the country. I was delighted, and we started off at once, heading for the north, with the idea of going round by Bushey and Stanmore.

It was a part of the country I had not seen, and it pleased me exceedingly. Lord Cecil was in a gay, entertaining mood, and, for a wonder, refrained from worrying me with his usual plea.

I have never been able to discover if the ending of that day were a planned affair or not, but certainly it savoured of being so.

The evenings were not very long yet, and it began to grow dusk some time before we were near London. Lord Cecil lit the lamps, and remarking carelessly that we should be rather late home, resumed his driving.

At about 9.30, when it was pitch dark and commencing to rain, something went wrong with the motor. At first my companion assured me it was all right, but presently he began to appear anxious. Several times we stopped for him to try to remedy matters, but at last he gave it up, and confessed he could do nothing.

"Then we must catch a train," I said at once, rather relieved than otherwise to have escaped the long, cold drive home.

"There is no train anywhere near here," he answered.

"But there must be," I exclaimed, with something like a gasp.

"Unfortunately the railroad builders did not think so," he said lightly. "The nearest station is about four miles distant, and there would scarcely be likely to be a train."

"Then we must hire a trap and drive home," I said firmly.

"Drive twenty miles to-night?" he asked. "Why, it will be raining cats and dogs directly."

"But what else can we do?" I urged.

"We must go to a hotel for the night," he said, calmly.

"It is quite impossible," I asserted indignantly, "I should not dream of such a thing."

"But you have no choice," and he could not quite conceal the latent triumph in his voice. "It is absolutely the only thing possible."

"I can go to a cottage," I said, "and you can go to the hotel."

"What difference would that make beyond being far less comfortable for you? You would probably get your clothes stolen or something, to say nothing of possible smallpox."

That last settled me, for I had an intense horror of any infection, and would have risked a good deal before possible contact with it. Accordingly we went together to the village inn, and ordered rooms and a hot supper.

While they were preparing Lord Trevor returned with someone to the motor, and they succeeded in getting it as far as the inn yard. Then he joined me in the little old-fashioned sitting-room where our supper was laid for us.

I was in an icy mood, and scarcely spoke to him the whole meal, and directly we had finished I announced my intention of going to bed and turned to the door, without offering to say "Good night."

"Wait a minute," he said. "It is very early yet. You are not angry with me about this, are you?"

I bit my lip a moment.

"I think you have managed very badly," I said frigidly.

"But I couldn't help it," he urged, "on my oath I couldn't, Maud. It is just Fate that is throwing us together."

He had got hold of my hand, and I tried to draw it away.

"No, don't," he said; "it is no use fighting against Fate. If ever two people were meant for each other it is you and I."

I broke away, but he stood against the door and would not let me pass. He grew wild, and reviled his fate, and me, and everything else. He said much that I cannot remember, but I have great cause to be thankful to the good Providence that gave me a strong and fearless heart for any time of stress.

He tried to frighten me with the consequences of our being thus waylaid together, and I knew that it was a very serious business, but I held my ground firmly in spite of him.

Finally, knowing I was not to be conquered, he opened the door for me, but as I passed out he snatched my hand and kissed it passionately.

I drew it away hastily and fled; but when I had carefully locked my door I threw myself on the bed and burst into tears, completely overcome.

Two days later he came to me with the news that the story was out. As a matter of fact, I knew it, for I had returned to the theatre the evening before, and the jokes fired at me and at my expense left me no room for doubt.

All the evening my face had burnt with shame and indignation, and when at last I got home I had cried myself to sleep.

At first when he came I was so angry with him I hardly knew what I said; but when my anger had spent itself he returned to the charge with fourfold energy.

He pointed out how I was now involved; how nothing I could do or say could alter anything; and what an untenable position I held.

I was very tired and very miserable, and I let him talk. I had got into that fatal mood when nothing seems to matter, and the more he talked the stronger hold it gained upon me.

I believed my reputation was ruined, that I was a dead failure, and that the sooner I was out of it all the better. Meanwhile it seemed that I might as well marry him as not, since nothing mattered; and anyhow it would be better than going on as we were.

He saw the signs of relenting, and drove in his keen-edged barbs with faultless dexterity, dwelling upon just those points he knew most likely to affect me.

In the end I gave way.

"It doesn't matter," I said wearily. "I know I am a dead failure, and if I went back home I could never feel the same again. I will marry you as soon as you like."

After that he was exceedingly good to me, and I grew more hopeful again. He would not let me go back to the theatre, but promised I should take a part as soon as we were married if I still wished it, and meanwhile he insisted on taking good rooms for Lizzie and myself.

I used to wonder sometimes what Bobbie and Di would say, but on the whole I thought very little, just enjoying the sudden release from the miseries of the last two months.

As a matter of fact, Di was out of town just then, as well as Bobbie, having been called away to a young cousin who was taken dangerously ill in France and had no other relative. He has told me since how he hated going while I was on such friendly terms with Lord Cecil, but was unable to help himself.

Meanwhile the day for our marriage drew near. It was to take place very early, and immediately afterwards we were going away for two months.

Again and again during the last week I had anxious qualms, and once I even went so far as to consider writing to Di at the address he had given me. But my pride still ruled me, and what I had undertaken I said I would go through with.

It was about two evenings before the date fixed that I went with Cecil Trevor to one of the quiet restaurants we usually chose for dinner.

I remember there were more people present than usual that evening, and I could not help feeling a sense of discomfort at the evident interest bestowed upon us.

I did not feel somehow that it was my appearance, or the fact that we were a striking-looking pair, but I had an uncomfortable sensation of something quite out of the ordinary. So it proved a little later on.

Digitized by Google

We had just got to the sweets when a tall, handsome, gipsy-faced woman walked leisurely into the room, and sat down a little behind Lord Cecil, where she could have a full view of me without being seen by him.

For quite ten minutes I do not think she took her eyes off me, and at last, in desperation, I drew Lord Cecil's attention to her. He turned round, and instantly, before he could collect himself, gave a muttered exclamation, and grew ashy white.

The girl did not stir, but she looked at him with a bold, supercilious stare and an ugly expression on her mouth. It was impossible not to see that there was something between them, and they were not strangers. However, Lord Cecil turned back to the table and took up his fork again, with an attempt to appear perfectly at ease.

"She seems to know you," I said, not willing to let the incident pass.

"Yes," he answered at once, "but she is a perfect stranger to me. She either mistakes me for someone else or is mad. If she continues to annoy you I will ask the manager to have her removed."

I was silent a few moments, then looked in her direction again. She was still gazing at me, but now her eyes were less hard, and much of the scorn in them had given place to a certain degree of interest. At last she got up and came to our table.

"So you're here, my fine fellow, are you!" she said in a low, clear voice. "I've run you to earth at last."

Immediately many eyes were upon us, and I felt myself turning scarlet with mortification. Lord Cecil, however, kept his face well. He looked up at her coolly and remarked:

"You must be mad, woman; or you have mistaken me for someone else."

"A pretty tale!" she retorted. "Certainly if you are not Lord Cecil Trevor I have mistaken you for someone else."

He blanched then, but held his ground.

"Yes," he said, "I am Lord Cecil Trevor, so I can only conclude you are mad."

"Waiter," he added; "I think you had better call in a policeman, for this woman is either drunk or insane."

The waiter took her by the arm and attempted to lead her away; but she was a majestic being, and waved him off as if he had been a child.

"No," she said; "I am neither drunk nor mad. I came here to find Cecil Trevor, and having found him I have got something to say to him." And she seated herself at our table.

Cecil Trevor got up then, and turned to the head waiter angrily.

"Will you remove this woman," he said peremptorily; "or am I to leave your restaurant because you do not know how to protect a lady from insult? Are you all cowards here?"

The head waiter fussed and fumed as foreigners do when in a quandary, but still something about the strange woman seemed to quell them all and compel attention.

"Listen to me, Cecil Trevor," she said; "I will not keep you long. When I last saw you, I told you I would frustrate every fresh scheme of villainy on your part I had any power to, as long as I lived.

"Last week I heard you were going to be married, and the one who told me spoke well of the girl. That is why I am here. Had she been one of the bad ones I would have left you in peace, but I have sworn an oath to myself that you shall never harm an innocent girl if I can help it."

While she spoke this in clear, rich tones, Lord Cecil grew yet more deathly white, and fidgeted uneasily, in spite of his frantic efforts to appear unconcerned.

"The poor thing is quite mad," he said; "if you like we will retire while they call a policeman." And he got up.

"No, don't go," she said to me, and something in her voice made me sit still.

"I have been watching you purposely, because I wanted to see what kind of girl you were. I like you, so I will save you. You can't marry Lord Cecil. He is a married man."

(I will tell this woman's strange story and its result next Tuesday.)

BETRAYED BY THE RONTGEN RAYS.

Telling of the Shattering of a Love Affair.

Ponpon Mortgage, the renowned financier, sat in his sumptuously-furnished library in his Park Lane mansion thinking bitter, hard thoughts. Deep lines furrowed his brow, and his fingers twitched nervously as he turned a letter over and over in his hands, and read again the lines therein.

"Never have I tried to thwart my daughter's slightest wish," he said at last; "but this thing is too serious. Upon it depends her whole future happiness. This letter from Reggy Ordinaire tells me that he loves her, and that she returns his affection. Hah! is it so? Then I must, and shall, cure her of this absurd passion. Thompson!"

A footman entered the room and bowed to the great financier.

"Go to this address and tell the Professor to call at my house to-night at eight o'clock and bring a Rumkorff coil and a Crooke's tube with him."

The footman bowed again and left the room.

"Once more will I save my fortunes by the use of the cathode rays," muttered the banker. "Hah! Reggy Ordinaire, I doubt me if you can stand that test!"

* * * * *

Reggy Ordinaire and Mildred Mortgage sat in the yellow drawing-room of the financier's palatial mansion. Reggy was in faultless evening dress and Mildred wore a wonderful gown of some filmy material of a lovely soft colour.

Suddenly the lights went out and the subtle cathode rays from a Crooke's tube were directed full on Reggy. Neither he nor Mildred noticed it, because they were too deeply engaged in the sweet dreams of perfect love.

* * * * *

"Mildred, darling, hear me. I swear to you that——"

"Stop!" The beautiful girl raised her arm with an imperious gesture.

"Stop, Reginald Tabbledote Ordinaire! It is useless for you to attempt to deny the evidence of a Röntgen process cathode photograph. See for yourself!" and the proud girl held out a large photograph.

Reggy looked at it and then turned as white as he conveniently could.

There in the horrible cathode picture was his face and form in evening dress, but standing out with startling clearness were the pictures of three of his other girls which he had in an inside pocket—five love letters written by Mildred's rival, sixpence-halfpenny in coin in his vest pocket, nine pawn tickets, and a dunning letter for his room rent.

He also noticed with horror that the outlines of his dickey, or false shirt-front, were standing out with cruel distinctness in the photograph.

"I could have, perhaps, forgiven the rest," cried Mildred with a proud toss of her shapely head, "but the dickey—never!"

And Reginald Tabbledote Ordinaire darted into the cheerless night—a broken man.

A. H. W.

ON PAGES 421 AND 431 YOU WILL FIND SOMETHING TO INTEREST YOU VERY MUCH. TURN TO THEM NOW.

Digitized by Google

CAUGHT IN THE ACT;

or, Sinning through Love.

"And this is the old study, eh? I remember carrying your little daughter across the lawn the last time I was here. She was about six then, so that fact tells us how many years it is since we met, Dick!"

Mr. John Penton, just home after a residence of several years in the East, in which part of the world he had served his country in the Consular Service, laughed softly at the recollection. It would have sounded strange to others to have heard the stern old solicitor called "Dick," but Mr. Penton had not forgotten the college days and he had not grown so hard as Richard Mortimer.

"Quite a woman now, eh?" pursued Penton suavely. "Yes, you had her baby portrait up there—it's gone! How is she, Dick? You haven't mentioned her for two years or so, if my memory serves me well. I believe I asked you about her some months ago, but you didn't reply."

"I have no daughter; she is gone!" answered Mortimer harshly.

The tone in which the words were uttered told Penton more than five minutes' explanation would have done. Instinctively he grasped the situation; Joyce Mortimer had disobeyed her father and had been thrust out from his life. He was just the kind of man who would steel his heart against all affection and ruthlessly drive away the son or the daughter who dared to cross his desires in any important matter.

"These are some first-rate 'first editions,' John," said Mortimer in a matter-of-fact tone, devoid of emotion. "You know that I was always a keen collector of old books."

He motioned to one partition of his book-case, but Penton, although he pretended to show great interest in the books, was thinking of Joyce Mortimer. She would be about twenty-four, so it was likely enough that the separation had been caused by a love affair.

"I am open to bet that Joyce fell in love with a man who didn't suit her father," thought Penton. "She has just enough of her father's character to make her refuse to give him up, and—well, that settles it! I wonder how it has turned out? I must make it my business to find out!"

John Penton's visit—it was rather a call than a visit—was not so pleasant as he had anticipated, and it was with something very much like a sentiment of relief that he took leave of Richard Mortimer at nine o'clock in the evening. Some intangible restraint was upon both men; the conversation did not flow easily; the thoughts of both wandered towards the daughter, and Richard Mortimer found it impossible to shut her out as completely as he contrived to do on other occasions.

Perhaps it was the mysterious force of magnetism that was working upon him, for Joyce was thinking of him—thinking deeply of him as she sat in the small room, scantily furnished, and waited for her husband to return. How greatly things had changed in less than three years! She had fallen in love with Clifford Hatton; her father had disapproved of her choice, because he wished her to marry the son of a great judge. Joyce had argued and pleaded with her father, but the old man was obdurate, and demanded implicit obedience. He was incapable of comprehending so great a love as that of Joyce for the man of her selection; he could regard her refusal to do as he desired simply in the light of gross disobedience, and he told her that she must yield or leave his roof. He was almost overwhelmed when she chose the latter course, but he did not relent and he had not heard from her since that day.

Joyce had married Clifford and the first few months of married life had been very happy. Clifford had a small income from investments left to him by his father, and he was a rising star in the operatic world—he would be a second Sims Reeves, said the critics. The young tenor—he was nearly thirty—and his lovable wife bade fair to become the pets of Society when Cliff was taken ill with the influenza, and when he recovered his voice was gone.

From that time their troubles seemed to come thick and fast. The investments upon which they were relying till Cliff could find another profession or till his voice should come back, failed utterly, and they found themselves in very straitened circumstances.

Their great love for each other buoyed them up, and they faced the sudden change of fortune with calmness; the baby, too, drew them closer together, although its advent increased their monetary troubles.

"I shall get some occupation, some appointment, soon, and all will go well again, dearest Joyce!" declared Cliff cheerfully.

And Joyce smiled and whispered words of encouragement.

Fate, however, was not kind to them, and the strength of their love was tested to the utmost. Occupation did not come as Cliff expected; try as he might, he could get no appointment, for he had received no training that fitted him for any other sphere in life. He was glad to accept work in almost any capacity, but he obtained no regular employment, and the home was gradually sold, till they were reduced to three small rooms in a middle-class locality.

Joyce never complained, although her love for her husband must have been severely tested when she recalled the luxury she had given up for him. At times, Cliff referred to the fact in remorseful tones, but she always stopped him.

"It is every bit as hard for you, Cliff," she would say energetically. "Your lot in life has changed, and you would be better off if you only had yourself to think about. I have nothing to regret!"

"I should not have been better off, Joyce dear," he would return, "for I should not be the possessor of your love!"

The crisis came one day when Joyce suggested that she might be able to get a situation in an office as a lady clerk.

"I have done some work for my father, you know, Cliff, and I understand a good deal of the work of a solicitor's office. Lady clerks seem to have a better chance than men, and I shall probably get a post. At any rate, it is worth trying. I know you have tried the same thing, dear, but have not had a chance. You see, you know nothing of the work, whereas I have acquired quite the correct style of hand-writing and really know a great deal. Our joint attempts to get music pupils are not successful. Yes, yes!" she added gently, as he pronounced against the idea. "You must let me try!"

"Wait a little longer, Joyce, and I shall get something, I feel sure of it!" he protested.

There was such a pained expression on his face that she gave way. She recognised how bitter it would be for him to see her go out to work, while he—who ought to be the bread-winner—was forced to be idle. She yielded in order to give him time to become accustomed to the painful thought, but she was determined to carry out the idea if their prospects did not improve.

Cliff's face was white when he left her, and there was a strained look on it; the pallor seemed to grow in intensity as the next day or two passed and the strained appearance

Digitized by Google

of his usually handsome face was more noticeable than at first.

Joyce's heart seemed to be pierced with anguish as she observed this change in him; she knew that it was on her account; his love for her caused him agony whenever he thought of the position to which they were reduced, and she began to fear that the mental suffering would bring about some illness. She always presented a cheerful exterior when he was in, and tried to make him happy by playing with the baby and in many little ways.

He began to sit up at night, "to practise writing and learn something of book-keeping," he told her with a sad smile. He would creep into bed after midnight and sleep uneasily, starting violently now and then. One morning, a fortnight after he had begun this practice, he arose in a very agitated condition.

"What is it, Cliff?" asked Joyce anxiously. "You are upset and I am afraid you will be ill."

Cliff laughed mirthlessly.

"The office work is affecting my nerves," he said evasively. "I mean the study of hand-writing and book-keeping. I have good hopes that I shall get something to-day, Joyce! I cannot tell you more now, but we shall see. I hope that this misery will soon be over!"

He returned in the afternoon, looking happier, yet with an uneasiness evident in his face and eyes.

"I have some money, Joyce!" he cried, drawing out ten sovereigns. "And that is only the beginning of the better times, I hope."

"Oh, Cliff!" she gasped. She was so thankful, and now that the long strain appeared to be over, she sank down into a chair and sobbed. "It is so—I mean, I am so thankful, Cliff, for your sake and the baby's."

"I am glad, for your sweet sake, Joyce! It has cut me to the heart, to watch you drooping. I could scarcely bear it, dear! It was driving me mad!"

He spoke earnestly, so very gravely, that she sobbed the more. It was not like the light-hearted Cliff of old.

"How was it, Cliff? How did you get the money? Have you got a situation, and this is an advance of salary?"

There was a pause; Cliff did not answer at once; something seemed to be choking him.

"I have done a desperate thing!" he said at length. "But desperate diseases require desperate remedies! I speculated on the Stock Exchange. I bought under 'cover.' You do not know what that means, dear. I can buy a few shares by paying only a couple of pounds, and I got that advance from someone. I was lucky; almost as soon as I bought, a rumour sent the shares up in value and I sold! I can go on doing that now; some call it gambling," he added hastily, as he saw the look in her uplifted eyes, "but business is just as much a gamble. It is fair, and I shall have my losses as well as my gains, but in the end I shall win, if I watch the markets."

"I don't like it, Cliff!" she began, but he stopped her.

"I will still try to get other employment, and in the rush of business on 'Change I may succeed there and get into an office, but we must live in the meantime!"

Cliff went out regularly every morning after that, and he brought home a small salary at the close of each week. It was just enough to keep them going in the modest style to which they had been reduced, but that was sufficient. Joyce was relieved of the necessity of finding a situation, at which Cliff expressed himself as delighted; while Joyce herself began to assume a happier look.

"If my husband goes, I go with him," cried Joyce, going to the side of the shrinking man.

At the end of the first fortnight, however, Joyce spoke to her husband seriously.

"You are not looking well, Cliff, dear! I have been hoping that the pallor and the anxious appearance would leave your face now that you have work and we can keep afloat. Oh, Cliff! Don't worry about me! I do not mind, so long as I have you and the baby. It grieves me to think that you are worrying about me. I would willingly give up all for your sake!"

"You are a good, brave woman, Joyce, and I will try to be more cheerful; but it *does*——"

She placed a delicate hand over his mouth, then withdrew it and kissed his lips. The subject was dropped, for Cliff could not endure the look of tender reproach in her eyes. He became more cheerful in manner, but Joyce was not deceived. Something was worrying him and she was not happy.

Nearly another month went by, and Cliff resumed his practice of sitting up late. Joyce said nothing on the first occasion, but on the second night she told him not to be long and retired to the bedroom where she sat down without attempting to undress. Cliff did not suspect that she had not gone straight to bed.

Joyce waited for nearly an hour, but Clifford had not moved, so far as she could judge. She was uneasy; an indefinable feeling of impending trouble took possession of her. It was not late, for Cliff had pressed her to retire early, as she was tired, and she had left him at the early hour of nine. The house was still; the occupants of the lower apartments were out for the night

Digitized by Google

At length Joyce rose from her seat and moved quietly towards the door, an inner one, permitting the occupants to pass from one room to the other without going across the landing. The door was shut, but the handle turned quietly, and the door opened noiselessly.

She scarcely comprehended why she moved so silently; she wished to see what her husband was doing, yet she did not desire to disturb him. He must not work day and night to the injury of his health on her account!

He was bending over the table, writing; he was doing it very slowly and carefully. On the table, rather to the side, she could see a sheet of paper with scraps of writing on it. Poor Cliff! He was still practising the "office hand"! Yet she thought he had acquired a good style lately. She approached him on tip-toe, intending to bend over him from behind, see what he was writing, kiss him and remonstrate.

She reached the back of the chair and bent over the bowed form. Before him lay a cheque and Cliff was just finishing the signature, "Richard Mortimer." Her head seemed to swim; it was a cheque for five hundred pounds, payable to "self or bearer," and Cliff had written it, and was forging her father's name!

"Oh, Cliff, how could you?" she moaned in a low voice, grasping the back of the chair to save herself from falling.

She was pointing to the tell-tale slip of paper on the table, and the anguish indicated by her look was terrible to behold.

"Cliff," she asked huskily, "Cliff, did the other money come in that way?"

He bent his head, he could not answer; but the gesture was sufficient.

"Why, oh, why did you do it? Oh, my husband, my husband, I could have borne poverty!"

"I did it to save you and the child, Joyce! I could not endure to see you suffer! If I have sinned, it is my great love for you that made me sin! But have I committed any crime? The law may say so, but justice should say that I have not! Your father brought you up to luxury and gave you your own way; then, when you wanted your own way on the most important occasion in life, he would not let you have it, and he cast you off, leaving you to misfortune. He knows how you have suffered, so he has not the excuse of ignorance, for I humbled myself to him and told him—for your sake! He brought you up in luxury, I say, and it is his moral duty to support you in that state if you need it, and he can give it! You do need it and he *can* give it! If I have taken his money, to save you from want, it is but justice!"

"No! no! no!" cried Joyce vehemently. "It is not right; you are guilty of the crime of forgery, and the wrath of God and man will fall upon you and yours—upon us, whom you love and would save! Oh, what can I do to save *you?*"

A sharp knock on the outer door made them start. A voice called out sternly to open.

"The police!" cried Joyce in a whisper. "Quick, Cliff, you must fly! I will keep them out till you get away!"

The wife's love conquered all other sentiments now. She knew that a felon's doom awaited him, and her only thought was to save him from it.

"Quick!" she cried again, as the knock was repeated and the voice muttered a threat to break the door in. "Through there, to the back, and along the coping! You can drop to the roof of the low house at the end, and from there you ought to get clear!"

She snatched up the cheque and the sheet of paper on which were imitations of her father's signature, and thrust them into her pocket. She caught him by the arm in order to hurry him away, when the door gave way under a sudden push, and in walked Richard Mortimer, followed by John Penton.

The latter closed the door behind him, after whispering something to two men who remained outside.

"Father!" cried Joyce. "Father, spare him!"

Mortimer waved her aside imperiously.

"The police officers outside have a warrant for the arrest of that man on a charge of forging my name on a cheque for fifty pounds!" he cried. "They will take the good-for-nothing scoundrel and you will come back with me to the home which you should never have left! Penton, let them in. What on earth are you keeping them out for?"

"If my husband goes, I go with him!" cried Joyce, taking her place by the side of the shrinking man. "If he has done wrong, he has done it on my account, and as I have shared the gain, so will I share the penalty! I will never return to your house under such conditions!"

Penton stepped forward and placed a restraining arm on Mortimer.

"There is something wrong here, Dick!" he cried sternly. "You have given me to understand that your daughter's husband was a blackguard, but I see by the very look of the man that that was wrong. Your imperious temperament has led you to a gross injustice. Nay," he continued, as Mortimer interrupted, and his tone was judicial in its authority, "listen and let me get to the bottom of this!"

The commanding figure of John Penton seemed to overawe all, even the autocratic Mortimer. He bade them be seated while he himself stood and put clever leading questions. In three minutes he had the whole story.

"Dick," he said impressively, "a crime is a crime and cannot be overlooked, the law says, but there are crimes and crimes. There are some acts which the law cannot touch, although they be sins as great as any in the penal code. You owed a duty to your daughter and you have not fulfilled it! Her husband is right in what he says, so far. You deserve more punishment for your heard-hearted conduct than he does for his crime! And if I were a judge," he added hotly, "I'd give it to you—by George, I would!"

Mortimer cowered under the scathing words of his old college chum. Penton reflected for a few seconds, and then he spoke again.

"The guilty should always be punished, but the punishment should be in accordance with the circumstances under which the sin was committed. I can imagine that Hatton has suffered already—suffered in a manner that cannot be equalled by any sentence that might be passed upon him. Further, I consider that Richard Mortimer has something to suffer, for his sorry conduct towards his daughter. Don't plead for your father, my dear; it's no use! We must try to get Hatton off as lightly as we can, and if Mortimer looks foolish or suffers in other ways, in endeavouring to get out of the consequences of having a warrant issued, that's part of his punishment! I'll pay the fifty pounds, and we must say that some blunder has been committed, or that there has been a mistake! I expect you'll have to go with the police now, but I'll come and bail you out!"

Hatton clasped his weeping wife in his arms; then he imprinted a kiss on the brow of his still sleeping daughter, and left the room with Penton and the officers.

When they were gone, Mortimer raised his eyes to Joyce and held out his hands in mute appeal for forgiveness. Joyce sank on her knees in front of him, burying her face in her hands and weeping hysterically, yet with a strange feeling of joy. Was it all coming right?

The police superintendent would not take bail; but on the following morning, when Hatton was brought before the magistrate, Penton appeared and stated that a serious mistake had been made and that the prosecutor was too ill to attend. Ultimately the case was allowed to escape from public notice.

Joyce and Clifford retired to a large farm in the east of England, where they lived down the memory of those dark days. John Penton is an occasional visitor and is always made welcome. Mortimer was ashamed to meet them for a long time, but he finally overcame the feeling and paid them a visit. He goes there once a year for a holiday. Joyce is not likely to feel the need of money again, for Richard Mortimer has settled most of his estate on her.

They are happy, Joyce and her husband, but at times the shadow of the sin makes itself felt, for no sin can be completely obliterated. When Cliff is depressed, Joyce knows what is causing this sentiment, and she kisses him fondly as if to assure him that all is forgiven.

F. Brewster.

Digitized by Google

THE FRESH AIR FUND.

What is the F.A.F.?

The Fresh Air Fund is an organisation which exists to, so far as may be, brighten the dull, joyless lives of the children in the slums of our great cities.

It has been described as "The Cheapest Charity," and this it is in two senses.

I.—The F.A.F. devotes the whole of the moneys subscribed to the purpose for which their donors intend them. There are no deductions for rent or salaries or postage, or the thousand and one expenses which make so big a hole in many other excellent charities. The whole of the expenses are paid by Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., and by the Ragged School Union, which places its great organisation at the disposal of the Fund.

2.—There is no such charity in the case of which so little buys so much. Ninepence pays for a day's delight for a child. Eight pounds two shillings provides all that is necessary for the enjoyment of a complete party of 200 children, with the needful complement of attendants.

As a broad rule, threepence pays for a child's fare, and sixpence more buys it food enough for two good meals.

Every penny subscribed is spent on those two wonder-workers, food and fares. God's green country and the kindly help of willing friends do what else is needed to make a day's real happiness for a little prisoner of the great, gloomy city.

There are no distinctions of creed. Need and the improbability of any other holiday are the only qualifications.

Why was the F.A.F. Started?

Just because there seemed to be nothing more pitiful than to see little children in a steamy, smelly slum trying to make-believe that they were in the green fields, which are the natural and only proper summer playground for children.

Most of you haven't even seen this. If you had, there would be no need to ask you to subscribe to the F.A.F. You would be asking where you could send your subscriptions.

Childhood should be the happy time of life. There isn't too much happiness for most of us when we are grown up. The well-to-do of us try all we know to make our children happy.

These little people of the slums have no one trying to make them happy.

So the F.A.F. was started to try to bring just one day's happiness into as many dull little lives as possible. It isn't really only one day, though. There are the days before and the days after, and if you had heard the grimy mites discuss the joys of anticipation and of retrospection you would know that the great day itself is only part of the joy.

The excursion parties are made up generally of from 600 to 800 children, and three adults are allowed to every hundred children. This brings the total cost of a party of 600 up to £24 6s., but if anyone forwards a cheque for £8 2s., sufficient to pay for 200, the day is known by whatever name the donor cares to mention.

Each year is worked independently of any other, all the money subscribed during any one summer being used up before the end of September. Then the accounts are made up and a report published.

What has the F.A.F. done?

Quite a lot. It was started in *Pearson's Weekly* in the summer of 1892, and, with the aid of the practical advice of Mr. John Kirk, Secretary of the Ragged School Union, and the assistance of his Council, succeeded the first year in giving a day's outing to 24,000 London children. The movement is now assisted by other publications issued from the same office, and by the Daily Express, Midland Express, and North Mail.

This wasn't half a bad start, and after one year more of work in London it was found possible to extend the scheme of operations to other large towns. First, 5,000 children were given a day in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Birmingham, and then the scheme was extended, until it now includes the thirty-two biggest towns in the Kingdom, and the districts known as the Potteries and the Rhondda. The towns are:—

Aberdeen, Belfast, Blackburn, Birmingham, Bristol, Bradford, Bolton, Cardiff, Dublin, Derby, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Gateshead, Hull, Halifax, London, Leeds, Liverpool, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle, Norwich, Oldham, Portsmouth, Preston, Plymouth, Sheffield, Sunderland, Southampton, Wolverhampton.

In each of these places the excursions are arranged and looked after by a local committee of well-known ladies and gentlemen formed for that purpose, and at the end of the year each secretary forwards a certificate stating the amount of money received by the committee, and showing that it was spent according to the conditions laid down for the working of the Fund.

Nine hundred thousand children have enjoyed an F.A.F. day in the past ten summers. And you may take it those 900,000 units of happiness would roll up into a mountain of joy that would dwarf all the fun in all the slums as completely as Mount Everest dwarfs a mole-hill.

That's what it has done.

And it's going to do lots more—to take millions more children from the slums to the country. You are asked to help.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Sec., F.A.F., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. They will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Remember that—

There are no expenses of management for the Fresh Air Fund.

Every penny subscribed goes to the children in food and fares.

All expenses are borne by the promoters—Pearson's and the Ragged School Union.

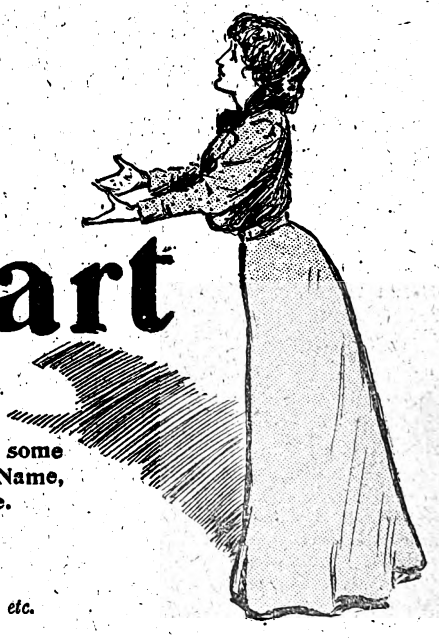
There are no distinctions of class or creed.

Ninepence pays for a day's happiness for a child; £8 2s. pays for a complete party of 200 with the necessary attendants.

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL. **START TO-DAY.**

Held Apart



The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Moira Davenal is sitting in the little cottage on Groudle Quay busy with her ribbon work. Sir Guy Vanbrugh is talking to her.

"Moira, I love you so much," he says. "Won't you——"

He pauses. There is a heavy step in the hallway of the cottage, and a burly figure enters the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal. I'm off to London for the week-end and was just leaving a message for you with your daughter. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph*?"

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," says John Davenal, who is a diver engaged in raising Sir Guy's yacht. "She'll soon be afloat."

After Sir Guy has gone a sailor appears at the door singing in drunken tones the scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

The diver rises to his feet.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarks loudly. "Glad to see you. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

While Moira goes out on an errand a conversation takes place between the two men, from which it appears that Moira is really Hartigan's daughter.

The sailor—who is a ship's steward—sits back in his chair and begins to sing again the drunken chorus.

He halts abruptly, for the door slowly opens, and a blind woman comes in.

Dennis Hartigan recognises her as his sister Kate. She tells her brother that she heard the song he was singing—sung in just the same way—once when she was sitting on a breakwater at Groudle. She also adds that the man who was singing said, evidently to someone with him: "This is out far enough. In with it;" after which there was a splash.

Hannah Davenal (Hartigan's wife and the diver's sister) is maid to Lady Tarleton. She is possessed of a secret with which she continually blackmails her mistress.

One afternoon Lady Tarleton and Hannah Davenal go down to Groudle Tower, and together they make a mysterious journey at midnight.

Two mornings later Hannah is found dead in bed, a towel smelling of chloroform is on her face, and over that a pillow on which are some dirty finger marks.

The police are informed of the tragedy, and Detective-Sergeant Ussher is sent from Scotland Yard to investigate.

Edward Stormont, the owner of Groudle Tower, and Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law, now arrives at Groudle with his friend Paul Jerome, a war-correspondent, and the following day Irene Tarleton comes in response to her mother's summons.

Dennis Hartigan is arrested on suspicion of causing his wife's death, but is soon released. He has a mysterious conversation with Lady Tarleton regarding a child.

"If—if the child were no longer in my path," Lady Tarleton murmurs, "I would give ten thousand pounds—to the man who told me so. Think it well over."

"I will, my lady," Hartigan answers.

On his way back to Groudle Tower Hartigan encounters his sister Kate. They return by way of the level-crossing. A train is in sight, rounding the curve. Dennis leaves his blind sister standing in between the metals along which the train is coming. She is rescued just in time by Paul Jerome, who is out riding. He leaps one gate, picks Kate up, and then leaps the other gate.

After leaving Kate in safety Jerome comes up with Hartigan, and tells him that he saw all that happened, and leaves him with a warning.

Lady Tarleton discovers that her daughter is very friendly with Jerome, and takes her to task about it. She does not know that Irene and Guy Vanbrugh have each agreed to go their own way. Jerome and Sir Guy meet in Groudle—they are old friends—and walk towards the Tower. On their way they pass a curious building which Sir Guy tells Jerome is the family mausoleum of the Lennoxes.

"Lennoxes?" repeats Paul Jerome, questioningly.

"Yes," rejoins Guy Vanbrugh, "Stormont's wife was a Lennox. Lady Tarleton is a Lennox. Stormont enjoys for life the Lennox estates and fortune. But as for the mausoleum it has not been opened for many a long year."

"Hasn't it?" queries the war-correspondent drily, "well, it's open now."

He points to a door that had been brought into sight by their onward progress. It was a low and massive portal, giving access to the lightless interior of the mausoleum. And against the blackness flickered a yellow spark, like a stricken match. While they looked, it went out.

Digitized by Google

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

What Paul Jerome Found.

Guy Vanbrugh strained his eyes towards the small, dark portal in the gloomy little pile of masonry; another flickering spark had showed abruptly against the solid obscurity that hid the interior of the mausoleum. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose some repairs are going on," he said; "two or three hundred years of weather, in an open country like this, must tell even on granite."

The war-correspondent moved in the direction of the low structure. "Forgive my curiosity," he remarked, "but I am a journalist, and a journalist is inquisitive both by birth and training. As it happens, I have never seen the inside of a mausoleum."

He reached the moss-grown steps that went down into the grassy basin, at whose centre stood the silent resting-place of so many departed generations, and descended leisurely. Guy Vanbrugh followed him.

As they gained the lower level at a point opposite the entrance of the mausoleum, a man emerged from it, pulling the door to behind him. Paul Jerome started. It was Edward Stormont, and he was gazing at them with an air of surprise.

"Hullo, Jerome!" he said, "so you are exploring the grounds of Groudle Tower, eh?"

He stood with one hand on the stout ring of the solid metal door behind him, his glance lingering on the war-correspondent's companion. Jerome perceived that Guy Vanbrugh apparently did not recognise the speaker.

"You know Mr. Stormont, Vanbrugh?" he observed questioningly.

Edward Stormont's face changed. "Vanbrugh!" he exclaimed. "Guy, is it you, you rascal? How you young beggars do grow! Last time I saw you, you were a red-cheeked rogue on a Shetland pony."

Guy Vanbrugh clasped warmly the hand held out to him. "And you had not cultivated a beard, Mr. Stormont," he answered; "but I know you now by your eyes. I am very glad to meet you again."

Edward Stormont studied him gravely. "You are like your father, Guy," he added; "I was sorry, very sorry, to hear of his death. I read of it up in the Himalayas, in a chance copy of the *Times* that had been sent me. And I asked myself why Fate, that refused me death, had taken away a better man."

He turned to the war-correspondent. "I expect," he said, "you are wondering what I'm doing out here." He motioned to the sombre building at his back. "My ultimate refuge," he remarked; "as it has been that of many a grey head and grey heart before mine."

Paul Jerome did not reply. There was a reflection of profound bitterness in Edward Stormont's tones which repulsed sympathy no less than it did a conventional response. Edward Stormont roused himself.

"I—I did not know, Jerome," he said, "that you and Vanbrugh were acquainted." The war-correspondent reflected.

"No," he owned, "I don't fancy I have mentioned it. We met in London and on the Continent. I had, indeed, forgotten that the Vanbrughs are a Cumberland family, and that his place, the 'Close,' of which I had heard him speak, is near Groudle. Judge of my surprise when I met him just now, *en route* to call on Lady Tarleton."

"In pursuance of which object, Mr. Stormont," said Guy Vanbrugh, "I showed Jerome the short cut across the plantation, and, in passing the mausoleum, pointed it out to him. He has eyes like a hawk's, and noticed that the door was open. A spark within attracted our attention and curiosity drew us hither."

"Quite so," commented Stormont brusquely. "I—I did strike a match or two." He pushed wide the door of the mausoleum. "There is nothing to see," he said, "and yet, I believe, the scoundrelly people my sister-in-law leaves in charge of the Tower have been making a show-place of it, for I discovered, on paying a visit to the neighbourhood, that the door was unlocked and slightly ajar. Naturally, I investigated, and though the place proved empty, there are half-burnt matches on the floor inside. It is desecration to bring a parcel of gaping rustics to chuckle and stare under such a roof."

Running on irritably he led the way into the building, striking a vesta as he did so. Guy Vanbrugh and the war-correspondent found themselves in a roughly-circular space, floored and walled with polished granite, the latter honeycombed by regular recesses, almost all tenanted by the great leaden caskets for which they were devised.

"Ten generations of Lennoxes lie here," said the master of Groudle Tower. He paused, and they stood silently, the glow of the vesta shining on their faces. Edward Stormont threw it down.

"Shall we go?" he queried harshly.

The query was more a command than a request. Guy Vanbrugh and the war-correspondent obeyed. The fresh, cool air of the evening came pleasantly to their nostrils as they passed out.

Edward Stormont drew the door to and tried to close it firmly into its deep metal jambs. It resisted, he pushed it open again and examined the hinges. The door was of gun-metal, and they had not rusted in the least.

"I think I can see what is wrong," said Paul Jerome. He stooped down and swept the threshold clear of a twig or two and some gravel. The door thus eased fell solidly into its frame and Edward Stormont twisted the huge ring that shot its safe-like latch.

"I must send down and have it properly locked," he observed grimly; "nor shall it be invaded again, as I presume it has been, by local sightseers."

The set of his bearded jaw and the subdued gleam in his blue eyes said more than the words. Then he changed the subject, and the three walked away together, talking of indifferent matters. It was dusk when they reached the Tower.

Guy Vanbrugh's phaeton was standing outside the embattled entrance; he looked at his watch.

"I—I only drove over to see if I could be of any use," he said; "I had heard that some untoward event had occurred. But really it is far too late for a call, and your presence, Mr. Stormont, makes my offer unnecessary. Perhaps you will give my respects to my aunt and to Irene."

"Nonsense!" retorted Edward Stormont; "you must come in and have some dinner."

"I'm sorry!" he was told, "but I have some people dining at the 'Close' to-night. I had no idea it was so late."

Edward Stormont shook hands with him, and watched him drive down the avenue, after bidding the war-correspondent a hasty adieu.

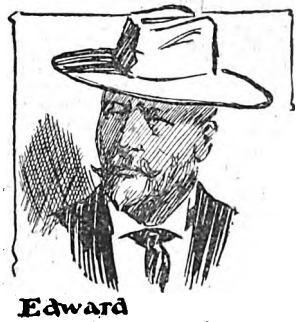
"A nice lad!" he said; "Vanbrugh was a lucky beggar to have such a son!"

He sighed and entered the hall. The first of the dinner-bells was ringing; the war-correspondent went on to his room. Arrived there, he opened his left hand; he had kept it lightly closed since he had swept free the threshold of the mausoleum. In it lay a small, tortoiseshell hairpin—broken.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

"I'm a Hard Man to Frighten."

Upon the windy wharves and quays of Groudle, in the darkness of the March evening, two men were walking up and down, aimlessly, as though they had no more definite object than that of keeping in motion. They were John Davenal and Dennis Hartigan. The ex-steward's cigar had burnt



Edward Stormont

Digitized by Google

to a stump, its combustion hastened by the strong breeze. The red tip waxed and waned like a star. John Davenal's pipe had gone out. He bit restlessly at its mouthpiece as he walked.

"I'm afraid you got into yon trouble with the police on my account, Dennis," he said, suddenly breaking the silence; "if you hadn't bought that chloroform to doctor my pains with, there'd have been nought to bother you about."

Dennis Hartigan took his cigar out of his mouth. He paused a moment before speaking.

"What's the odds?" he growled; "all's well that ends well!"

The diver put his arm in the speaker's.

"It's good of you to look at it in that way, Dennis," he said; "very good."

The ex-steward glanced at his brother-in-law. John Davenal's tones had a curious ring in them—a ring that somehow suggested ingratiation. The diver drew his companion past the head of the little harbour and they went along the breakwater.

"You—you remember," pursued John Davenal, in the same tremulous, almost fawning fashion, "our arrangement about Moira? The allowance I was to make you while she stayed with me and remained in ignorance that you—that you were her father?"

"Yes," said Dennis Hartigan; "well, what of it?"

"N—nothing," answered the diver; "but I thought perhaps that now—now Hannah is dead, you would be going away—from Groudle, if not to sea—and that you might like some more money."

"Oh!" retorted the ex-steward. "Well, you can bet your bottom dollar money never comes amiss to me. But I'm not so sure that I want yours, John Davenal, not on those terms."

"I—I scarcely understand, Dennis," faltered the other. "What terms do you mean?" Dennis Hartigan released himself from the other's clasp upon his arm.

"About leaving Moira with you," he said; "it strikes me I shall need to take her away."

John Davenal paused in the windy dark of the breakwater.

He was leaning on his stick and swaying as if he were a very much older man.

"Take her away?" he gasped. "Why—why should you do that, what reason can you have?" Dennis Hartigan flung his cigar stump into the bay.

"My reasons are my business," he responded; "but if you've got to have one, let us say that I'm going to settle down somewhere further south, and that I want my daughter to manage the house for me."

The diver shook his head.

"You're not a home-keeping man, Dennis," he said; "besides, if that be so, you can have Kit; Kit is a rare little housekeeper. And then we might as well all move. I can retire now, and Plymouth or Southampton, or even Liverpool or Cardiff or Bristol, are nice places enough. You could live with us, Dennis, and it would cost you nothing."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the ex-steward; "co-operative housekeeping don't suit me, and I can't stand Kit groping about and pawing me—I never could. If the reason I've given you isn't sufficient, choose another, or invent one of your own. Anyhow, I'm Moira's father, and I mean to have her."

John Davenal stood up abruptly and lifted his stick, instead of leaning on it. His powerful fingers were contracting and his nostrils dilated.

"Don't bully me, Dennis," he said sternly. "Perhaps I know more than you think for. I know that your reason—as you call it—is no better than a lie. Hannah threatened me, the—the very day she died, to take Moira away. But she told the truth, she owned that a mystery hung over the lass, that it had been allowed to hang for other folks' purposes. That was why she was going to take Moira from me, as, no doubt, it was why she had been given to me."

He raised his stick, quivering it passionately in his hand.

"Listen to me, Dennis," he continued. "I love Moira, and she loves me, and you are a wastrel and a drunkard. You shall not have Moira from me—no one can prove anything about her now that Hannah is dead; I will not even admit that she is your daughter."

The ex-steward sneered.

"I can easily prove she isn't yours," he snarled. "How will Moira like that, John Davenal? Your wife never had any babies. You've managed cleverly enough so far, pretending Moira had been left with a wet-nurse when you brought the missus home to Groudle to die. But I can soon prick that bubble."

John Davenal set his strong, white teeth.

"Prove away," he said, "you can't prove Moira into your evil charge. I'm not a poor man—I'll go to law. There's the Lord Chancellor of England, Dennis, to be a father to her till the law's made up its mind, and where's the man that dares touch her till it has? I'll have the law on you for two or three years, Dennis, if it brings me to the poor-house. But before I'm broke she'll be twenty-one and—*married!*"

A savage ejaculation burst from Dennis Hartigan's lips.

"You obstinate old fool!" he cried. "Don't think you can play the sea-lawyer with me. When I say I'll have the girl, I will have her, sweetheart or no sweetheart, or I'll make you and her rue the hour you said me nay."

The diver faced him unflinchingly.

"Threaten and swear as much as you like, Dennis," he said. "I'm a hard man to frighten, and Moira's more to me than life or money, or peace of mind. I told Hannah she shouldn't have her, and now she's dead, I tell you the same. I'll pay you fair and honest, what I said I would, and, if you speak a word to Moira or to the lawyers, you'll not get that. Make up your mind which it's to be, Dennis, and good night to you."

He turned on his heel and went back along the breakwater. The ex-steward stood silent, his lips distorted in a sneer, his eyes glittering. Then, with a short, forced expiration like the snarl of a cat, he darted down one of the triple flights of landing steps towards the black water.

To a ring in one of the landing platforms, a string of boats was moored, they floated peacefully some distance from the breakwater in the harbour basin. Dennis Hartigan drew the leading boat into the shadow of the stairs, loosed it from the line, slid in, and sculled himself noiselessly up the harbour, keeping in the shadow.

On the further side of the quiet pool he landed, secured the boat, crawled up on to a deserted wharf, and, speeding along it, reached the cobble-stoned level of Groudle Quay.

Approaching stealthily the side fence of the diver's cottage, he climbed over and crawled along inside the large garden, screening himself dexterously, till he gained the vicinity of the entrance-wicket. Here he crouched down, hidden by a row of privet bushes. He had drawn a sailor's knife from his pocket, and fastened it open by a spring. So he waited.

Digitized by Google

At length the latch of the wicket clicked. It swung wide, and John Davenal came in. As he passed, Dennis Hartigan leant out and buried the knife-blade in his back. The diver fell with a groan. There was the crackle of a twig or two under foot, a rustle of bushes on the other side of the garden, and Dennis Hartigan was gone.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
"How Very Romantic!"

"Morning, Ussher!"

"Good morning, sir!"

The detective paused before the high-backed oaken settle that flanked the huge, carved fire-place in the hall of Groudle Tower. On it, his feet stretched out to the blaze, his arms folded, sat Paul Jerome; he had looked up as Mr. Ussher passed across the hall, and called out a cheerful if brusque greeting.

He smiled thoughtfully as he noticed the signs of importance in the detective's bearing—the tightly-buttoned overcoat, the pursed lips, the drooped eyelids, and, above all, the red-bound note-book carried with a finger between the leaves, and the others clasping it jealously.

"I believe your inquest comes off to-day, Ussher?" he said. The detective put his right hand to his hip, and stood with the left standing stiffly at his side, holding the note-book.

"It does, sir," he answered, drily. The war-correspondent surveyed him with provoking amusement.

"Going to arrest anyone on the coroner's warrant?" he demanded.

Mr. Ussher drew himself up.

"No, sir," he said, "only formal evidence will be given, and then the inquest will be adjourned."

"So you own yourself beaten, so far?" observed Jerome.

The detective glanced at him between his half-closed lids.

"Scarcely that, sir," he said. "The case has assumed even more importance than before. Last night John Davenal, the brother of the deceased woman, was found lying in his own garden, stabbed in the back."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the war-correspondent, starting up; "what an extraordinary thing!"

Mr. Ussher showed the whites of his eyes in a flash of gratification at the effect of his news. The sternly official expression returned to his large, plump features.

"The fact serves to confirm my view," he added loftily, "that the murderer of Hannah Davenal was not a member of the Tower household. It is probable that some person, with or without good reason, had a grudge against both the Davenals. As, in neither case, had robbery taken place, or been attempted, and as each attack was most deliberate, the motive cannot be other than revenge."

"Admirably deduced!" exclaimed Paul Jerome, with an impenetrable assumption of enthusiasm, "but about this stabbing business, do I understand that Davenal is dead, or dying?"

Mr. Ussher put his head on one side.

"Hard to say, sir," he responded, "the poor fellow has lost a lot of blood—the knife glanced off the shoulder-blade, and made a great gash in the chest-wall, cutting into the substance of the lung, the doctor reports. There has been internal hæmorrhage, he is in a dangerous condition."

The war-correspondent knitted his brows.

"And there is no clue to his assailant?" he asked.

The detective answered in the negative.

"He went out with his brother-in-law," Paul Jerome was told, "for a walk and a smoke. They parted at the head of the breakwater, after strolling in its neighbourhood for some while. An hour after, Davenal's daughter fancied she heard the click of the gate-latch. Not hearing anyone knock, she looked out at the front door, and saw her father lying on the path."

"His brother-in-law," said the war-correspondent, reflectively, "that is the man you arrested, Ussher—Hartigan, wasn't it?"

Mr. Ussher frowned.

"It was, sir," he replied, "but the man seems to bear no malice. I found him quite willing to give me every assistance in his power. He even asked me if I wanted to arrest him again, for the attack on his brother-in-law." And the detective smiled grimly.

"And didn't you?" queried the war-correspondent.

The detective bit his lip.

"You will have your little joke, Mr. Jerome," he said. "No, I didn't—Hartigan had gone straight to a public-house on the quay by the breakwater, and ordered some supper. On his way back to the Half Brick Inn, where he has been lodging, he called at Hawthorn Cottage, his brother-in-law's place, to speak to his sister, a blind girl, who lives with the Davenals. Finding what had happened, and that Davenal was practically at the point of death, he insisted on the police being informed, and himself came to the station."

"Very proper," commented the war-correspondent, "and very discreet."

Mr. Ussher adjusted the elastic band about his note-book.

"Oh," he answered, "the fellow is hard-headed enough, and yet he is communicative too, when he is handled tactfully. He tells me that his wife was eccentric and avaricious to a degree, and that her brother, John Davenal, is not unlike her in eccentricity, though he is by no means ungenerous. Hartigan thinks that they may jointly have excited the hatred of some third party, both being extremely obstinate, not to say cantankerous."

"A feasible theory," said Paul Jerome. "By the way, I suppose this last remark was after you had broached to him your view that his wife's death and the attempted murder of his brother-in-law might be due to the same agent?"

"Y—yes," answered Mr. Ussher, reflectively; "I believe I did mention it."

The war-correspondent nodded.

"I only wondered," he said, "if the idea were exclusively yours."

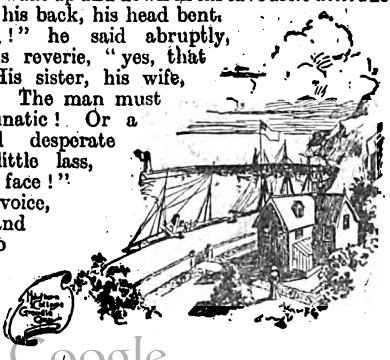
The detective put his note-book in his pocket.

"Oh, yes," he said, "my own exclusively," and, with an added "Good morning!" and a semi-military salute, moved off across the hall and vanished into the offices at its rear.

Paul Jerome gazed after him with a quizzical expression on his sunburnt countenance. The humorous tremor about the corners of his mouth disappeared suddenly, he sat down on the settle again, and fell to contemplating the red hollows in the glowing coals.

The ancient clock in the hall ticked away the moments, and still the war-correspondent seemed to chew the cud of his thoughts, and his face grew graver and graver. At length he rose and began to walk up and down in his favourite attitude—his hands behind his back, his head bent.

"Kate Hartigan!" he said abruptly, speaking out of his reverie, "yes, that was her name. His sister, his wife, his brother-in-law. The man must be a homicidal lunatic! Or a very daring and desperate scoundrel. Poor little lass, she had a sweet face!"



A clear, girlish voice, somewhat raised and sharpened, cut into his soliloquy.

"How very romantic!" it said, and Paul Jerome

Digitized by Google

wakened out of his brooding, to find himself confronted by Irene Tarleton. Irene's mouth was mirthful, and her cheeks flushed, but her eyes lacked their usual softness and vivacity. She wore a riding-habit, and played with a slender bamboo whip.

"So this is where you come to dream your day-dreams?" she went on. "Excuse my eavesdropping, I couldn't help it, really, and I didn't hear the lady's name. But perhaps you didn't mention it. Never mind, I'm not curious."

The war-correspondent flushed, but under his moustaches his lips were twitching.

"I'm afraid you wouldn't know—ahem—the lady's name if I were to mention it," he said, "and yet, to use the language of the melodramatist, her humble cottage lies within sight of your castle windows. She is, to be exact, the sister-in-law of your mother's luckless maid, Davenal. Her name is Kate Hartigan, and she is blind.

"Yesterday, as it happened, I was able to do her a chance service, she was within an ace of being run down at the level-crossing. I was out riding, and managed to get her off it in the nick of time."

Irene paled. "And risked your life, I've no doubt," he was told, half-admiringly, half-irritably. "Is she—is she really very pretty?"

"Very," said Paul Jerome, "in a sad, childish, querulous fashion. She is a bit of an oddity, I think, poor little soul."

He took her gloved hand into his. "I believe," he observed, "that I ought to be allowed to say 'how do you do?' Do you know I have not seen you since last night, and at dinner, as well as afterwards, you scarcely spoke to me."

"Did I," murmured Irene, plucking at the loop of her habit, "well, you see, Mr. Jerome, my aunt in Yorkshire is really a most unendurable person."

The war-correspondent stared; then a light broke into his face, and he smiled.

"I'm very much flattered," he replied; "if I could I would reassure Lady Tarleton. But I—I can't."

Irene blushed to her eyebrows.

"Really, Mr. Jerome!" she said.

Paul Jerome was imperturbable.

"You are going out riding?" he asked.

Irene nodded.

"With a groom to chaperon me," she said, a suspicion of school-girlish malice in her tone.

The war-correspondent looked at his watch.

"Stormont is engaged with his steward," he remarked; "ride round by the place they call the 'Half Brick Inn.' I will commandeer old Buckshot, Stormont's hunter, and ride him across country. I will be there as soon as you. Do you mind?"

Irene laughed.

"If I go to Yorkshire," she said, "I shall blame you for it."

And she caught up her habit and left him alone. But she looked back over her shoulder as she passed out through the side door that led to the stable, and the war-correspondent sprang up the stairs, three steps at the time, to dress.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Guy Vanbrugh is Detected.

"Mr. Davenal anywhere about?"

Guy Vanbrugh called the question to a burly, authoritative-looking personage in muddy blue overalls, who was standing on the wet and sandy deck of a very dank and bedraggled yet well-shaped little steam-vessel. It was the ill-fated *Sylph*, safely ensconced in dry dock, and awaiting the attentions of the repairers.

The foreman came down the gang-plank to the dockside.

"No, sir," Guy Vanbrugh was told, "he calculated to leave the job to us once she was high and dry again. Besides, sir, haven't you heard about him?"

The Baronet started.

"No," he said, "what's wrong? I—I was going up to the cottage, but thought I might find him here, I—I wanted a word with him personally."

"You'll scarcely have that for a while, sir," replied the foreman; "John Davenal's fighting for his life, sir. He was struck down at his own gates last night, sir—stabbed in the back by some hound, him that's as well liked as any man in Groudle."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Guy Vanbrugh aghast.

"Yes, sir," added the other; "and not even in a fight, or after a word or two of argument, but by some cowardly brute who daren't meet him face to face, and must steal up behind to run a knife into him. It's touch and go, the doctor's say, whether the poor fellow'll win through it."

Guy Vanbrugh collected his scattered senses.

"I—I will go round at once," he said, and continued hastily, "I may be able to help in some way."

The foreman sighed.

"I'm afraid not, sir," he rejoined, "though it's kind of you to think of it. But John Davenal is one that's thriven, and they do tell me he's had the best doctor in Groudle and a couple of hospital nurses with him turn about. The end of it's out of our hands, sir, it must be for his own strength to pull him through now. They say the hæmorrhage is very bad, sir, that's the trouble."

Guy Vanbrugh murmured something in reply, and hastened off, out of the small shipyard and through the waterside shed and wharves of Groudle to the less active quarter where the diver's cottage fronted the bay, across a rough cobble-stoned level, and the calm surface of the sheltered harbour.

He shivered slightly as he passed in at the wicket—it was there, if he had been correctly informed, that the diver had been stricken down by his unseen enemy—and closed it heedfully that it might not click or shriek. Then he went on through the neat garden and tapped cautiously upon the door. The blind girl opened it. She was very pale, and her eyelids were flushed as if by weeping.

"Yes?" she said questioningly.

"It is I, Sir Guy Vanbrugh," answered the visitor gently; he knew her well by sight—"I have only just heard of Mr. Davenal's sad condition. May I see Miss Davenal for a moment—perhaps I may be of some use."

Kate Hartigan drew the door wide.

"Will you come in, sir?" she said, and retreated.

Guy Vanbrugh acted on the invitation, took off his hat and entered the pleasant kitchen beyond the diminutive ante-room; Kit had pushed open the door of that also.

"Moira," she said, "here is Sir Guy Vanbrugh, to ask about your father."

The Baronet stepped forward. The room was empty save for Moira, himself, and the blind girl, and the lovers had no need to restrain the language of the eye and hand.

Moira had risen from the couch by the window, she came and put her hands in his, and the tears overran her long lashes. Sir Guy Vanbrugh lifted her small, strong fingers to his lips, and kissed them silently.

"I—I went round to the yard," he observed, trying to speak conventionally, "to see how they were getting on with the *Sylph*—and also to have a word with your father

Digitized by Google

about another matter. And, of course, they told me. It is very strange and terrible."

"Yes," answered Moira, unsteadily "we—we can't understand it at all."

She was trembling, as though the sight of him had unnerved her. The eyes of each were fastened upon those of the other, in a gaze more eloquent than words. Kit stood silently by, listening to their forced and halting exchanges of conversation.

"I—I fancied perhaps I might be of some assistance," said Guy Vanbrugh awkwardly.

Moira shook her head.

"No—no, thank you, Sir Guy," she replied, lingering upon his name with a caressing intonation, "the doctor is an old friend of father's, he sent in two hospital nurses, and a specialist was here this morning from Liverpool. But—but they say it all depends upon father's strength."

Her voice broke, and she smothered a sob.

Her lover could not bear to see her fighting so desperately for self-control.

"I will not say more then," he murmured, "than that I am very much grieved. I will drive down to-night and see how your father gets on. We—we must hope for the best."

"I am trying," faltered Moira, "but you see, it is so hard. He was not going down any more, he was so happy to think that he could pass nearly all his time with—with us."

Guy Vanbrugh had stepped towards the door, he cast a significant glance at it, and Moira moved to show him out. As they passed into the little ante-room, he drew her to him. For the moment they were practically alone together.

"My darling," he whispered, "what a horrible thing!"

Moira buried her face in his breast.

"I—I nearly told him last night about—about us," she sobbed; "but we were interrupted."

"Is there any reason to suspect someone in particular?" queried her lover.

Moira choked back her sobs.

"No," she said, "we can think of no one, and the doctors will not let the police go near him so long as there is a chance of his getting better. They say it might kill him."

Guy Vanbrugh patted the hand that she had laid on his shoulder.

"Your father has a fine constitution, dear," he told her; "and he has lived a very regular and temperate life. That is all in his favour."

Moira brushed the tears out of her eyes.

"If—if only the diving were not so bad for people's hearts," she said, "that is what makes them all so anxious."

Her lover kissed a wet, white cheek that was very near his own, and whispered soothing words of love and tenderness. He did not notice that the outer door had swung ajar, and that someone was approaching it up the path, someone who had just stepped out of a smart victoria at the gate.

Suddenly the wicket-latch clicked, and Moira looked up. It was too late. Lady Tarleton, pausing on the threshold of Hawthorn Cottage, had glanced into the small entrance-hall, and perceived none other than Sir Guy Vanbrugh with a fair and ruffled head pillowed on his breast.

(Another long instalment next week.)

Mrs. Younglove: "See this beautiful ring John bought me." Mrs. Oldbird: "What has he been up to now?"

"What do you think you will make out of my daughter's talent?" Professor (absent-mindedly): "About half-a-guinea a lesson, if the piano lasts."

He (at parting): "Oh, Ethel! You have broken my——" She (interrupting): "Not your heart surely!" He (sadly): "No; my whole pocketful of cigars."

Nell: "Did you enjoy the performance last night?" Belle: "No. It was stupid. Nearly every woman in the house took her hat off, and there was nothing to look at but the play."

Your Editor Chats.

The second list in our great new competition appears on page 421. I take this opportunity of advising readers who have not yet entered it to do so without further delay; they are sure to regret it if they let the opportunity slip by. In addition to being a profitable occupation from the monetary point of view, the solving of puzzles is both interesting and instructive. It is really astonishing how much one learns from them.

Fifty pounds in cash, which is being given away as the first prize, is a sum which would be acceptable to anyone, and it is not often possible to obtain so much money in such an easy manner. There are two other cash prizes of £25 and £10 each, in addition to which twenty-five of our much-appreciated Gramophones will be awarded.

As an entertainer a Gramophone is unrivalled, and it is so simple to manipulate. All you have to do to get the sounds out of the instrument is to put the record in position, then set the machine in motion. It will continue to reproduce the sounds engraved on the record just as long as you wish it to do so. Each of the Gramophones offered in the competition is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, which brings out the tone of the instrument much more loudly and clearly.

Those readers who did not decide to enter the competition until it was too late to obtain a copy of last week's Short Stories may enter now by purchasing a copy of last Friday's *Pearson's Weekly* or *Home Notes*, both of which contain the first list of sentences. The price of each of these papers is one penny.

The day after this paper is in your hands the Boat-Race between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge will be decided. The tale of a love affair which came out of one of these events is recorded on pages 438 and 439. The title of it is "True Blue."

Next week's cover will consist of a picture illustrating a very dramatic incident from our splendid new serial "Held Apart," concerning which so many favourable opinions are expressed. The picture is the work of Mr. Albert Morrow, the well-known artist. It will be beautifully printed in green and gold.

On page 431 you will find something about the Fresh Air Fund, that great institution for giving children a day in the country, with plenty to eat and drink, for the small sum of ninepence for each child. I hope all my readers will contribute generously to it this year. All contributions will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. If every person who reads the notices about the Fund were to send only ninepence there would be no disappointed faces among the thousands of children in the large towns of the British Isles. They would all be able to have their day in the country—the one bright spot in the whole year to many who never see anything but bricks and mortar. If you can't spare ninepence smaller sums will be accepted gratefully; they all go to swell the big total which it is hoped to reach this year.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

True - - Blue.

A Boat Race Love Story.

Millie Grahame was in a high state of excitement. She had never seen the boat race before, but now at last she had got her wish, and her brother had promised to take her.

Besides this, Ethel Fortescue, her greatest friend, had persuaded her brother to take her, and was going too.

Millie and Ethel had been friends since childhood; but although Ethel knew Millie's brother Gus very well, yet Millie had never met Wilfred Fortescue, and she felt very glad that he was coming to make a fourth, for she knew from experience that Gus always monopolised Ethel.

She thought to herself, "If only those two boys chum in well together I shall have a chance of a good old confab. with Ethel. I have such lots to tell her, and I want to hear what she thinks of my idea of having my new frock for the dance to-night pale blue in honour of the victors, for of course Cambridge will win; that goes without saying."

At this point Millie snipped the ends of a pale blue rosette she had just completed, and surveyed it with admiring eyes.

Just then her brother Gus entered the room, and seeing her work, cried out—

"'Hullo, you are not going to wear that washed out old cabbage stalk, are you? That the right colour for you," and he pointed to a little swallow of Oxford blue in his buttonhole, and held out a similar one to his sister.

Millie refused it with a great show of indignation.

"You wretched boy," she said, with withering scorn.

"Oh, you do rise so beautifully," teased her brother, diving into her work basket. "Where's my rosette? I suppose you've made me one like yours."

"I have," replied his sister, somewhat mollified, for she was a staunch light blue. "One just like mine, and I've made one for Ethel, too."

"You can give me that," said Gus, hastily, "I'll give it her myself; and now do go and get ready, and look sharp, there's a good girl, or we shall never get our train, and the Fortescues are going to wait for us on the railway bridge."

The Fortescues were already waiting for them on the bridge when they arrived. Gus sprang up, schoolboy fashion, four steps at a time, and Millie followed him as quickly as might be.

Ethel Fortescue was only a year older than Millie, and they had both only just left school; but somehow during these last few weeks of separation she seemed to Millie to have grown out of all recognition, and to have become quite the woman.

Millie was not conscious that Ethel was observing the same alteration in herself, and she turned from scrutinising her friend to glance at her brother Wilfred, and met his eyes very gravely regarding her in his turn.

The impression she received was that she had never seen anyone quite so determined-looking in her life; but she liked his face, and thought him quite as good-looking as his sister.

She did not trouble to bestow further thought upon him, and little imagined that she had made a very deep impression on him.

By the time Millie had reached the top of the bridge and joined the others, Gus had already taken complete possession of Ethel, who now, after affectionately greeting Millie, casually introduced her brother, and proceeded to march off with Gus, leaving Milly and Wilfred to bring up the rear.

Wilfred was most certainly bent on doing his best to please and interest his companion, but Millie was not in a very amiable temper.

Firstly, she was disappointed at not being able to walk with Ethel, and secondly she noticed, with severest disapproval, that Wilfred had in his buttonhole a bird of Oxford blue identical with the ones she and Gus had so disdained.

She responded coldly to Wilfred's overtures, and in despair he reverted to the weather for the third time, and added—

"I hope it will be a good race. By the way, you're Cambridge, I see, like Ethel. I'm Oxford myself."

"I'm not," said Millie. "Gus and Ethel and I are all Cambridge. At school we used to have tugs of war, the Oxford girls against the Cambridge girls, and Ethel and I always pulled for Cambridge, and we always won."

"I think most girls are Cambridge," said Wilfred thoughtlessly, "unless they have a special reason for being Oxford. It's the pale blue takes their fancy, and they think the colour suits them; at least, it suits you," he said, looking admiringly at Milly.

She had on a black coat and skirt and a pale blue scarf, and trimmings of the same in her hat, and knew that they became her amazingly, but she chose to put on an offended air, and was quite childishly indignant with him for assigning such a ridiculous reason to her sex for its choice of favours.

At the last they all had to hurry up for their train, and were packed into a compartment together with a dozen other people of very "assorted sizes," as Wilfred whispered to Millie, making her laugh in spite of herself.

After that she relaxed her dignity a little, to Fortescue's immense relief and delight, and even condescended to beg him to throw away the Oxford swallow, but he laughed at that and shook his head.

"I've got a cousin rowing stroke in the Oxford boat," he said, "and I'm going to Trinity College, Oxford, myself later on; but I'll tell you what, I'll wear your colour if you'll wear mine."

But to this Millie would by no means consent.

The four of them secured good places along the bank, where they had a capital view of the finish. Cambridge won, to Millie's unbounded delight and triumph.

Gus and Ethel seemed by this time to have become too absorbed in each other to be properly interested in the proceedings, and even Wilfred was not nearly so cast down as Millie had fondly hoped.

"I should have been bitterly disappointed if Cambridge had lost," she declared, "and *I* know no one rowing, and *you* have a cousin in the Oxford boat. Aren't you ashamed of him?"

Wilfred laughed.

"Better luck next time," he said. "Wait till *I* row stroke," he added confidently. "*You'll see.*"

Millie looked at him contemptuously, and a cloud came over his face.

During the years that followed Millie often thought of this day. In the meantime she and Ethel had gone to be "finished" abroad, and had since spent most of their time travelling on the Continent.

Very little had they seen of their respective brothers. Millie had seen Gus hardly at all, and Wilfred only at intervals, for he was usually away in outlandish parts or busy with his tutor.

But now once again they were all in England, and Wilfred was completing his last year at Oxford. He had done well.

too, in his work, and was to row stroke—as he had told Millie he would—in the next boat race.

The boat race day had come round again, and found Millie and Gus staying with the Fortescues.

Ethel was engaged to be married in the summer, though she was still the best of friends with Gus, who was fond of referring to his "blighted affections," but still continued to fall in love on an average once a fortnight.

Gus was now on the Thames Conservancy, and his was the proud privilege of following the race in the Umpire's boat.

Millie and Ethel were to watch from a friend's house overlooking the course.

Millie's interest in the race was far greater than it had ever been before. She knew someone in the boats, the wrong boat certainly, and although she had religiously decorated herself with light blue, she was not so sure after all whether, in her heart of hearts, she wished it to be the winning colour.

Ethel, since her engagement to an Oxford man, had gone over to the enemy completely, and was openly sporting dark blue as if she had worn it all her life.

She told Millie she was very silly to stick to Cambridge now there were so many reasons she should be Oxford. "And I am sure Fred will be very hurt about it," she added.

Millie did not take much notice of what her friend said; she was giving all her attention to the crews, and she actually drew a breath of delight as Oxford shot past, and reached the winning post, and the crowd started cheering—"Hurrah for Oxford. Oxford wins! Oxford, Oxford!"

"Well, I *am* glad," exclaimed Ethel; "indeed, it is quite a relief to me that it's all over. I declare I don't want excitement like this every day. I do hope Fred won't be quite done up with his exertions. You know we are having a sort of reception to-morrow, and we don't want to be disappointed of our 'lion.'

"By the way, Millie, you won't wear Cambridge blue to-morrow after this triumph, will you? It would be like a slap in the face to Fred."

"It won't make any difference to him," declared Millie, "and of course I shall; that new blouse is the only decent thing I've got. And Fred's sure to be all right, Ethel," she added, "so you need not be afraid of his disappointing us."

Millie was feeling very gay and light-hearted, unaccountably so, in view of Cambridge's defeat; but the next day as she completed her toilette, she did almost wish her dress had been any other colour.

As she clasped her bracelets she took a final peep at herself in the glass, and really pale blue suited her so admirably that already she felt reconciled.

Wilfred's words of so long ago, "It's the colour that fetches the girls," recurred to her, and she laughed to herself, and determined to be very nice to him for once.

She came downstairs, and found Wilfred standing somewhat gloomily by the fireplace.

"Cambridge for ever!" she laughed, as she greeted him.

"By Jove! You'll win me over to that colour before you've done," he said, his face brightening at her friendly manner.

"Nonsense, why I'm going to congratulate you on your splendid success," she said, holding out her little hand to him which he took eagerly, and held fast in both his own, as if he would never let it go.

"Do you remember," he said, with his eyes fastened on her, "I asked you once to give me your Cambridge rosette for my Oxford bird? Will you give me one of your ribbons now?" He touched the dainty pale blue bow at her wrist. "I won't ask you to wear my colour in return this time," he said.

"Suppose," she said, colouring under his ardent gaze, "that I won't give it under any other condition?"

"Oh, Millie, do you mean what you say? Do you care for me a little bit at last?"

Millie's head drooped lower, and Fred drew her unresisting into his arms.

"I'll be true blue to you, my darling," he said, with his lips pressed to her hair, "true blue as long as I live!"

Ellice Beere.

Stop a Cough in One Night.

Take Veno's Lightning Cough Cure. This Marvellously Successful Remedy Surpasses anything in the Healing Art and has the Largest Sale in the World.

The remarkable rapidity with which Veno's Lightning Cough Cure absolutely cures the worst cases of Coughs, Colds, Bronchitis, Asthma, Influenza, Catarrh, and Children's Coughs has gained for it scientific recognition throughout the world.

Granville H. Sharpe, F.C.S., Analyst, 11 and 12 Great Tower Street, London, says in his certificate of analysis:—"I am of opinion that Veno's Lightning Cough Cure will prove a valuable remedy in the cure of coughs, colds, asthma, and all bronchial complaints."

Geo. Knox, M.D., 256 Second Avenue, Pittsburg, writes:—"Veno's Lightning Cough Cure excels in chronic coughs and bronchitis, and is especially good for children."

Ask for Veno's Lightning Cough Cure at Chemists, price 1/1½ and 2/9, or post free from the Veno Drug Co., Hulme, Manchester.

Seaweed as a Medicine.

Its Marvellous Effect upon the Stomach, Liver, Kidneys, and Bowels.

Seaweed possesses a natural strengthening, healing and purifying power far greater than other known remedies. This is now conceded by recognised authorities. It was first introduced by Mr. Veno, as one of the ingredients of Veno's Seaweed Tonic, since which time Veno's Seaweed Tonic has been used in hospitals and by doctors themselves because of its superior curative properties. Its most brilliant effect is produced in stomach, liver and kidney diseases, and the extraordinary cures it performs, even in the worst cases, is positive proof of its great therapeutic value. It is a god-send to sufferers from indigestion, wind, headache, weakness, kidney trouble, weak and painful back, torpid liver, female troubles, poorness of blood and Habitual Constipation. Ask for Veno's Seaweed Tonic, price 1/1½ & 2/9 at chemists and medicine vendors.

Free Trial Bottles—A free trial bottle of either Veno's Seaweed Tonic or Veno's Lightning Cough Cure, and a free copy of "The People's Medical Instructor," an indispensable treatise on diseases for the household, a complete family doctor in itself, will be sent to any address on receipt of 3d. for postage from the Veno Drug Co., Hulme, Manchester, England.

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%

repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

A Third Party.

Proving that 'Tis the Unexpected that Happens.

"This is what I call a most outrageous interference with the liberty of the subject!" mused Miss Kate Wheatley, who did not look so indignant as her remark would have led anyone to suppose.

She frowned, however, as she raised the letter in order to peruse it again.

"This is how it stands," she continued, after a second perusal, shaking the paper at an imaginary individual in the corner. "Aunt Eliza, called 'Liza, for short, has some money—a fair amount of it, as I understand.

"Like most people who have money, she thinks that everybody else wants to handle it when she has gone to—to where they don't use that sort of thing, I must say, for lack of knowledge concerning the exact destination of Aunt 'Liza.

"So, like many more people once again, she thinks she can use that money, and the desire of others to have it, by forcing them to do something which pleases her; it may not please the others, but they do not count in Aunt 'Liza's calculations.

"Very well! Now, Aunt 'Liza thinks that it will be much better to keep that money in one sum than to divide it between the only two relatives she has. It happens that one of these relatives is a woman, myself, to wit!—and the other is a man!

"I didn't know of his existence till I received this disagreeable communication, and he is possibly in a like position. So, Aunt 'Liza, good lady, decrees that we must marry one another, and so keep the money in the family. If not, she will carry out her desire to keep it one sum and in the family by giving it to an orphanage.

"I don't see the logic of that decision, but then, I'm not Aunt 'Liza. Both she and I ought to be thankful for that! I am!"

She twisted the sheet of notepaper in her fingers, her brows knitted in reflection.

"Easy circumstances and life with a man not of your own choosing, and who is certain to be somewhat like dear auntie, or she wouldn't take to him; or hard work, with independence and a chance of marrying a man with whom you have fallen in love; that's the affair in a nutshell, and I choose the latter.

"I haven't fallen in love with a man yet, but I may. So here goes to tell Aunt 'Liza. If my reply gets there first, she can't blame the man. I'm sorry for him, but I can't bear the idea that he should be the first to say that he doesn't want me!"

Miss Kate Wheatley wrote the note that settled her future career and then turned her attention to the necessity of gaining a livelihood for herself. She revolved in her mind the prospects of a governess' life as against those of an amanuensis to a literary man and a position as a lady clerk.

Without coming to any proper decision, she bought the current issue of the largest circulation in the world, and deliberately wrote letters in application for all three positions.

"If I were a man, I should toss for it, probably," she remarked. "Being a woman, I adopt a much more sensible course and try all three. I could fill all three positions, and my choice will most likely be made for me!"

She received a reply to the letter answering the advertisement for an amanuensis, but she found that her prospective employer was a doctor; he was a man of means, retired from practice (in which he could not have made much of a mark), and devoting himself to municipal affairs.

"You are very young," he observed, looking at her over his glasses.

"I shall get out of that, sir!" replied Miss Wheatley demurely, and the retired medico hardly knew how to take it.

"You say you can do all I want," he resumed blandly. "I should like to test you at shorthand and also your skill on this new-fangled machine which people say is equal to lengthening your life because it saves time." He waved his hand towards the typewriter.

He was sarcastic, and this aroused Kate to answer in the same strain.

"It is better than medicine, then! I prefer the typewriter to drugs! Suppose you dictate something to me and see what I can do?"

Dr. William Banks cast a quick glance at the girl; it was new to him to be spoken to in that manner, and he could not feel certain whether it was innocence or impudence. However, he tried her skill both in shorthand and typewriting, and was delighted.

She spoke French and German, too, which was very convenient. He engaged her at a salary of £2 a month, with board and lodging, to begin with; Kate accepted, and the retired medico chuckled at having made so good a bargain.

"She is well educated," he said gleefully, rubbing his hands. "It will make me appear big in the eyes of those who know me, and that is worth a good deal; besides which, she will prove a useful companion in time!"

From this it may be gleaned that Miss Kate Wheatley had made a slight impression on the elderly gentleman's heart

Digitized by Google

as well as upon his purse; both impressions were equally slight, but both had the chance of improving.

The work was light, and she was made comfortable in the house by an old cook, so she settled down to life as secretary to Dr. William Banks, and lost even the vestige of regret which had remained with her in connection with Aunt 'Liza's money.

Dr. Banks' appreciation of his secretary's qualifications increased as the days passed.

At the end of the first week he asked her to sit with him in the evening, dividing her time between reading to him and to herself, or doing other little things for either, as occasion offered. This was just as agreeable to Kate as to him, and she was pleased.

After a month he doubled her salary, and at the end of the third month he had decided that Kate bore so striking a resemblance to the lamented Mrs. Banks that he must seriously make up his mind to instal her as that inestimable lady's successor.

Mrs. Banks, it may be stated, had been somewhat rotund in figure, very full-faced—some rude persons called it fat—and had scanty red hair; Kate was slim, with golden-brown hair, and well-formed features.

A charming complexion and vivacious expression, instead of Mrs. Banks' florid tint and stolid look, completed the contrast; the fact that the doctor saw a great likeness is another proof of the power of the tender passion over an old man. He would pass his hand over his head, at the particular spot where the hair was thin, and sigh. Kate noticed this one evening, and smiled behind her book.

"Probably he is sighing as he remembers that the late Mrs. B. used to pull his hair just there!" she said to herself. "It is very touching when a woman leaves behind her so much—or is it so little?—to be remembered by!" The true state of affairs never entered her head, although she was more than ordinarily observant.

The condition of the susceptible portion of Dr. Banks' anatomy had arrived at that condition when someone else appeared on the scene; this was Dr. William Banks, Jr., who had been practising in a small country town and had sold his business in order to return to the Metropolis and secure a more lucrative one.

He was introduced to the secretary, and it did not take him long to grasp the situation, especially when his father tried to point out that Kate's hair was like that of the late lamented.

"It's a good thing I turned up!" declared Dr. William when he retired for the night. "The old gentleman is making a perfect fool of himself with that girl, who, I must say, doesn't encourage him, so far as I can see. I must put a stop to it! Dear me! Once a man, twice a child; that's what the proverb says, and I fear that my respected father is getting into his second childhood!"

Three days later, William the younger reasoned thus with himself:

"She's the best girl it has been my luck to come across, and it would be a sin for her to waste her young life tied to an old man like father. I don't care to do it, but I'll cut him out with her, for the girl's own sake. I think we should make a good, well-matched couple!"

He surveyed himself in the glass and saw a man who—well, he "took after" his mother, as people say. His expression was more deserving of that name, as there was some expression in it. He smiled complacently, and proceeded to sketch out a plan of campaign.

He joined the party in the evening and made himself agreeable to the secretary, conversing with her on educational and social topics, on which she was well informed.

Dr. William the elder was not displeased; he was so confident of his own conquest that he saw no danger, but rather accepted it as a good omen. William the younger would welcome his stepmother very heartily and be glad to retain so charming a lady in the family.

The wooing of William the younger did not proceed as he had hoped; it was not conducive to progress to have Miss

(*Continued overleaf.*)

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

"My husband suffered from acute indigestion for over five years. His chest was so raw he could eat next to nothing. Seigel's Syrup wrought a complete cure. (Mrs.) H. Mansell, The Scrubbs, Bisley, Stroud."

"For months I suffered from indigestion, anæmia, lassitude and disfiguring spots on my face. Seigel's Syrup absolutely cured me when everything else had failed. (Miss) Rose Newton, 1 Brighton Grove, New Cross, S.E."

The condition of the blood governs the health. Pure, rich blood is the product of well-digested food, conveys nourishment to brain and body tissues, carries away their poisonous waste substances, sustains life. Rheumatism and Gout are caused by the deposit of Uric Acid in the blood, Anæmia by the reduction of red blood corpuscles through absorption of fæcal poisons in constipation. Biliousness by absorption of bile into the blood. To avoid these complaints and secure good health, maintain perfect digestion, pure blood, an active liver, and efficient kidneys by the regular use of Seigel's Syrup. Backed by 34 years' unbroken success in 16 countries.

PURIFIES THE BLOOD.

Kate attending to William the elder during the day, and then to have him interjecting his remarks in the conversation during the evening just where that remark was not desirable. William stood it for a time, but finally resolved that he must bring up some reinforcements in order to enable him to defeat his father.

He reflected, and an idea occurred to him. He had a friend, a young man studying at the Bar; this friend would have his evenings free, no doubt, and could come to the house and play chess or two-handed whist with William the elder, while his son played at whispers with the secretary. Good idea! He wrote off at once and the friend made his appearance that very evening.

"I say, old man," said William the younger, confidentially, when he welcomed the friend, "I want your assistance. The old gentleman is doing his level best to make an ass of himself. I want your help."

"To accelerate the progress?" asked the friend, without the ghost of a smile. "I should have thought that he could get all the help he would ever be likely to want at home!"

"So he can! So don't try to be funny!" retorted William the younger. "But the assistance is unconscious! That's too much for you, isn't it? Well, listen, and don't be too sharp!"

"Go on!" encouraged the friend.

"The old gentleman has engaged a secretary, and if I don't look smart she'll be engaged in another capacity! He is in love with her. So am I! She's got to marry me, and I want you to play chess or something with him to keep him quiet while I lay siege to the maiden's heart! See?"

"It looks rather complicated."

"Are you willing?" asked William anxiously.

"Yes, Will, I am!" was the double-meaning answer; but William was too full of his subject to see the joke.

"That's right!" cried William, shaking his hand effusively. "We shall circumvent the old fellow between us. It would be such a pity, you know!"

The friend came regularly every evening and William the younger contrived that he should play cards or chess with the elder, thus leaving the way open for his own campaign with the lady secretary.

Miss Kate Wheatley talked very cleverly with the son of her employer, and occasionally the friend of William the younger missed a point through listening to the whispered, but animated, conversation of the other occupants of the room.

Before a week had slipped away, Dr. William, Jr. was convinced that victory was certain; she seemed to enjoy these evenings so much!

Dr. William, Sr. was equally confident that Miss Kate Wheatley was ready to accept him as soon as he should make her a definite proposal; he was waiting for his son to remove himself and his effects to another place, which the said son seemed in no hurry to do, before proposing. The friend also appeared to thoroughly enjoy the evenings at Dr. Banks' residence, so everybody was pleased.

One morning William the younger caught Miss Kate Wheatley gazing with unfeigned delight at a magnificent bouquet, and an uncomfortable feeling took possession of him.

That bouquet was not purchased under ten shillings, at that time of the year, he thought, but upon consideration he concluded that it might have been obtained for half that sum. The matter was more serious than he had imagined; the old gentleman was buying her flowers and she was accepting them!

This occurred for several days and finally William the younger determined to ask her who sent the floral offering. This was an artful move; he expected to see her blush and confess that she thought it was he, William the younger, who had sent them; that is, she would do so if she were in love with him.

If she had fallen in love with his father, and knew that the old gentleman was sending the flowers, she would betray the fact in some way.

Now suppose she really thought that he, the son, was the donor? He would make ambiguous remarks that would confirm the opinion, thus taking advantage of the situation and hoaxing the old fellow.

The father paying for the flowers to advance the wooing of the son! That would be getting the best of his respected parent indeed, and it would teach the old gentleman not to be so foolish as to fall in love with a young girl.

"Good morning, Miss Wheatley!" he said blandly, popping in upon her just as she was inhaling the scent of the latest bouquet. "What splendid flowers! Who sends them?"

"I have not the remotest idea!" she asseverated with such emphasis that William was bound to believe her. "Aren't they nice? It is very good of whoever sent them!"

"But surely you have asked the messenger who was the giver?" he asked, trying to assume a conscious air.

"The boy from the florist's brought them, and I couldn't ask *him!*" explained Miss Kate. "They come every day, so I suppose I shall learn before long who it is that sends them!"

William murmured: "Oh, of course!" and retired. He hoped that he had created the desired impression, but at the same time he was not happy about that daily offering. If the old gentleman were paying five shillings a day for flowers, that was thirty shillings a week, for six days, and that made nearly £80 a year.

"I'm positive they cost more than that!" was his muttered opinion. "It's nearer £200 a year that the old idiot is spending! If he goes on like that, where do I come in? He has made his will in my favour, but there won't be any more to inherit, at this rate, than if he married her himself! I'll talk to him!

"I don't like to say anything against your actions, sir," he began; "but if you're going to keep up that nonsense of spending all that money on flowers for a girl, I must protest! It isn't fair to me!"

"William," replied the elder, severely; "if I choose to do a thing I shall do it, but I haven't done it! I was waiting for you to come in so that I might remonstrate with you for doing the same thing to a young lady whom I intend to make my wife!"

"I intend to do the same, sir!" retorted William the younger, staring at William the elder. "I didn't send the flowers; do you mean to say, on your word, that you didn't send them?"

"Of course not!" exclaimed his father.

"Then there's another!" gasped the son.

The two men glared at each other in blank surprise. This was a development which neither had anticipated; it was too much to bear!

"We must find out who he is, William!" said the elder decisively. "We'll go to the florist and demand his name!"

A common enemy compelled them to unite their forces; they forgot their own differences in the face of this danger, and sallied forth together to demand information of the florist.

Miss Kate Wheatley was in the drawing-room when she heard a soft knock at the door and called out: "Come in!" The friend entered in response to her invitation.

"I saw them both go out, and I blessed my lucky stars!"

(*Concluded on page 444.*)

Digitized by Google

Alfosco Regd

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

Alfosco Regd

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 793. 10/6

Design No. 793. 10/6.

The Fashionable Coat and Skirt for Spring and Summer Wear. It has a short full Sacque Coat, single breasted, bell sleeves. The Skirt is a good shape and carefully made. Produced in ALLEN FOSTER & Co.'s new **Zibeline Cloth**, also in their celebrated **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth**. Colours: Black, Green, Light and Dark Grey, Royal, Fawn, Brown, Red, and Navy. Patterns post free. This excellent Costume complete, only **10/6**; carriage 6d., or Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d. If lined throughout the price will be **16/6**; carriage 6d. A Bargain.

7/11 7/11

Design No. 746. 7/11.

Exceptional Value in Costume Skirts. Made in good **Vicuna Cloth**, and trimmed 18 rows corded tucks; also trimmed with strappings tastefully arranged. Cut full and well-finished. A marvellous production for **7/11**; carriage paid; 6d. extra. Satisfaction guaranteed.

Design No 443. 10/6.

New Design for Spring. One of ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s latest productions, and by far the cheapest and smartest Half-Guinea Costume on the market. Made in A. F. & Co.'s new **Zibeline Cloth** (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect) or in either their **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth**—all colours. The bodice is lined and made in the Russian style. New collar and small cape tastefully trimmed braid. Well finished Skirt trimmed round hips with braid; very stylish. Price only **10/6**; carriage, 6d. ex. Skirt alone **6/6**; carriage 5d. When ordering, please give bust measure under arms, size of waist, and length of skirt in front. Satisfaction guaranteed.

Design No. 443. 10/6

Send Post-card for **PATTERNS AND NEW SKETCH BOOK** of Latest Fashions in Ladies' Costumes and Jackets. Free on Application. Call or write.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles**, and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers, Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc.

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6 0 0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN**, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

From Factory to Rider.

How Does This Suit You?

Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. **£14 14s** Grade for **£6 10s** Write, H Dept, Williams' Direct Supply Mfg., Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

Ten Days Free Trial

is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way. 1903 Models, fully warranted,

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample cycle at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44A,

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

"In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

he informed her joyfully. "I wanted to bring the flowers myself this morning, and I was scheming a way to do it without letting them know. There!" (handing her the floral tribute), "Do you like them?"

"Oh, so much!" declared Miss Kate Wheatley, blushing charmingly under his look of ardent admiration. "I didn't know that it was *you* who gave them!"

"You didn't?" he inquired in surprise. "Who did you think it was, then? I've been in love with you ever since that first evening, but I couldn't get a fair chance of telling you so. Well, I've told you now!"

He took her hands in his as if assured of her answer, and she allowed him to press her close to him and kiss her.

"I think it must have been like that with me!" she admitted, her cheeks becoming more red. "But I'm afraid I am not well enough off to——"

"Nonsense! I haven't much to boast of, but I shall make more when I am a full-fledged barrister. It might have been different if that old lady relative of mine hadn't made such a ridiculous will!"

"Oh, have you got a relative like that? So have I! She wanted me to marry a man whose very name was unknown to me, or she would disinherit me altogether! But I don't mind a bit!" And Kate hid her blushes on her lover's breast.

"What's that?" demanded her friend. "I say, what's the name of your relative?"

"My aunt's name is Miss Eliza Platt. I call her aunt 'Liza."

"Well, I'm delighted!" exclaimed the friend. "That's my relation, too! So we've actually done of our own free will what we wouldn't do at her command. We shall have to go to Aunt 'Liza and do the penitent dodge!"

"Hallo! You're here!" cried William the younger as he entered with his father at his heels. "Perhaps you can help us to solve the mystery. Someone has been sending to Miss Wheatley here"—Kate had released herself from the friend's grasp just in time—"and she does not know who it is.

"We have been to the florist's to ascertain the name of the author of this—this outrage, but all he can say is that the flowers are ordered and paid for every day by a youngish sort of a man, a sort of——"

"An odd-looking man, neither old nor young, dressed like most people, that's what he tells us!" chimed in William the elder. "Do you know anyone answering that description?"

"Don't recognise the description," replied the friend, meditatively. "Appears to be in love with her, doesn't he?"

"That's just it!" cried the Williams in a breath, forgetting the presence of Kate in their anxiety. "I am sure," added William the elder impressively, "that Miss Wheatley wouldn't fall in love with somebody she didn't know!"

This was so extremely probable that the friend assented.

"I am glad that the florist acknowledged that I paid for the flowers," he added, with assumed simplicity of countenance.

"*You!*" gasped the father and son in unison.

"Yes! I have discovered by accident that Miss Wheatley and I are relations. Before we made that discovery, we made another—that we are very much in love with each other! This proves to be a fortunate circumstance, for it enables us to carry out the wishes of a venerated aunt!"

William the elder and William the younger gazed mournfully at the pattern of the carpet. It was quite two minutes before either of the medical gentlemen spoke.

"I hope you will be very happy!" the elder said earnestly. "That wish comes straight from my heart!"

"Miss Kate must stay with us till the marriage," said the younger William softly. "We should not like to lose her all at once!"

It was lucky that the managers of a certain charitable institution never knew the contents of the last will but one made by Miss Eliza Platt, for they would have been saddened by the fact that they had lost a legacy of twenty thousand pounds. Miss Platt's solicitor earned a few more guineas by making a fresh will, in which she bequeathed the said sum to two persons whom the clergyman had just made one.

Edward Gardiner.

"I do not believe that I have a true friend in the world." "So you have been trying to borrow money, too, have you?"

"Can you show me the way to the dentist's?" "Yes. Go down that little street, then turn the corner, and listen till you hear a shriek."

"Ah, Charley, I hear you have written a book." "Yes." "What is your publisher's name?" "Can't tell yet; I've only tried three-quarters of the list so far."

Mabel: "What an interesting talker Mr. Gusher is. He always holds one when he speaks." Mrs. Gusher: "Does he? That accounts for the hair I found on his shoulder last night."

Husband: "Woo! Hoo! Good gracious! Why do you set that alarm clock so it will go off like that just at bedtime?" Wife: "That is to remind me that it's time to wind it up, my dear."

Old Skrooge: "Do you think, young man, you could support my daughter in the style to which she has been accustomed?" Her Suitor: "I could, but I'm not mean enough to do it."

"Isn't Mrs. Jarvis an agreeable neighbour?" "No; she's horrid. I gave a dinner and didn't invite her, and the mean creature lent me a lot of spoons and forks, and then sent her little boy over for them when we were just starting the second course."

"You should never point, Johnnie," said Mrs. Brown as they left the shop; "it is very rude." "But what are you going to do, ma, when you don't know the name of the thing you want to see?" "Why, let the man show you everything in the shop till he comes to the right one."

THE ETIQUETTE OF ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE.

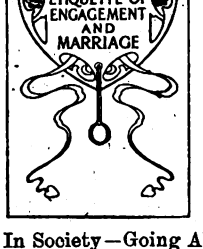
By G. R. M. DEVEREUX.

Price 1s., Post Free 1s. 2d.

A Volume of Sensible Advice to All.

Some of the subjects dealt with are:

The Beginnings of Courtship—Social Intercourse—Introductions—Recognition of Affinity, or Love at First Sight—How to Follow up an Acquaintance—Intercourse between Unconfessed Lovers—The Question of Presents—Friends who Become Lovers—Flirts—Male and Female—How she may Give Encouragement or Ward off an Unwelcome Offer—The Question of Age—Young Lovers—Proposals—Some Things to Avoid—Vaguely Worded Offers—Engagements—The Attitude of Parents and Guardians—Making it Known—Congratulations—The Choice and Giving of the Ring—His Visits to her Home—The Engaged Couple in Public—In Society—Going About Together—The Question of Expenses—Love Letters—Long or Short Engagements—Marriage—Fixing the Day—Preparations—Trousseau—Invitations—Wedding Presents, etc., etc.



S. S. **ORDER FORM.**

To The Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "Etiquette of Engagement and Marriage," for which I inclose 1s. 2d.

Name _____

Address _____

Digitized by Google

"Worth a Guinea a Box."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Sick Headache, *Constipation,*

Wind and Pains in Stomach,

Impaired Digestion.

Disordered Liver, and

Female Ailments.

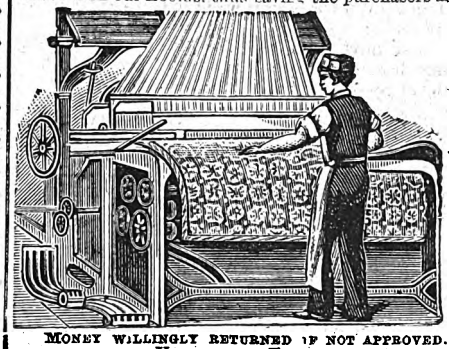
In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

CONTAINING 56 AND 168 PILLS RESPECTIVELY.

10,000 RUGS GIVEN AWAY

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

This Phenomenal Offer is made to the readers of *Short Stories* (4/4/1903) only. On receipt of Postal Order for **5/-**, or **62** stamps, we will forward, DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS,** suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an Advertisement for our goods, *below the Actual Cost of production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our Looms, thus saving the purchasers all middle profits.



With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very Handsome Rug to match, or we will send Two Carpets and Two Rugs for **9/6.**

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED. THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

CALAXY ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, ETC., POST FREE,

if mentioning *Short Stories* (4/4/1903) while writing.
Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SONS (Dept. S.T.S.) Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,
WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Do you not envy the woman with a "pearl-like" skin? Then use "**Peralia**" regularly. It soothes, refreshes, clears and beautifies, making the skin smooth and healthy. Preserves a fine complexion and restores a faded one. Makes the hands and arms like velvet. Endorsed by society and professional women all over the world. Gentlemen find it extremely pleasant after shaving; relieves irritation—cools the skin. Use it for Spots, Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, and especially for Red Nose.

Doctor's certificate guaranteeing its purity, and testimonials, sent with each bottle.

In Bottles, 1/- 1/6 2/6
Postage, 3d. extra

IF you buy another Cycle and afterwards see a **MERLIN,** you will be very sorry that you have purchased. Catalogue Free:

MERLIN CYCLE CO.,
Martineau Street, BIRMINGHAM.

ARE YOU LITTLE?

Or Flat Footed? If so, try our Elevators, which will increase your height from 1 to 4 inches without detection. Comfortable to wear. Price from 5/6, Lady's; 6/6 Gent's, per pair. Send stamps for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73, Camden Street, North Shields.**

NOSE If your nose is large or badly-shaped in any way, use our Nose Machine, price 10/-. Cheek Plumpers for thin or sunken cheeks, 10/- pair. Ear Instruments for standing-out ears, 10/- each. Send stamp for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73 Camden St., North Shields.**

CRIMPOLINE
HAIR CURLING FLUID.

Curls the hair naturally in a few days, and, what is more, the hair will keep in curl. Does not change the colour or destroy the hair but makes it soft and silky, and will curl or fris into natural curls. No tongs needed. Not sticky or greasy like other curling fluids, which only keep the hair in curl. After the hair has become curly it is not necessary to continue using Crimpoline. Give Crimpoline a trial—the result will astonish you. Use it for Ladies', Gents', and Children's Hair. **1/9 and 2/6 per Bottle, Postage 3d.** Ask your Chemist or Hair Dresser to get above preparations for you; if they are out of stock, we will send it direct to you secretly packed.

Have no other or you will be disappointed.

Under Royal Patronage. Used by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc.

PERALIA PERFUMERY CO.
(Dept. 14), **72 and 73 Camden Street, North Shields.**

FOR LADIES **SYMONDS' CYCLES**

They are GOOD machines. Thousands of voluntary testimonials. Cheapest genuinely guaranteed cycles in the world. Prices £4 to £8. Cash or easy payments. Sent anywhere. Full particulars free. Mention this paper.
Symonds' London Stores, 125-128, City Rd., London, E.C.

Order
E. & T.
PINK'S JAM
Undoubtedly the Best.
PURE.
No Artificial Colouring
or
Chemical Preservative.

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas AND **15 Guineas** Or from a Guinea per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.
TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.
& 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester

Digitized by Google

Indigestion

"EVER since I was a young girl I have been subject to severe attacks of biliousness and indigestion," said Mrs. Rose Broad, of 10 Alfred's Place, Icknield Street, Birmingham, to a *Birmingham Telegram* reporter. "About seven years ago these attacks increased in severity, and I began to suffer ceaseless excruciating pains in the head accompanied with nervous tremor of such a character that I dared not go about alone. I so frequently swooned and fell that I have cuts and marks about my body that will never die out. One day I was trying to do a little washing, and, swooning beside my work, remained insensible until a neighbour found me, carried me to bed, and eventually I recovered through the efforts of my medical attendant, but had to remain in bed for a few weeks. This nervous tremor eventually became such a terror that I feared losing my reason. I wasted to a shadow, became weaker every day, and the efforts of physicians, attendance at hospitals, prescriptions, medical advice and medicines, all proved useless; it was at this time (when everything pointed to my being a life-long sufferer) my daughter suggested trying Bile Beans. I did so, and felt much easier and brighter after the first dose. Carefully following the directions and persevering in a proper course of the medicine I continued to improve, the nervous fits ceased, I rapidly grew strong, recovered a good appetite, was free from pain, and my complete cure (through the efficacy of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness) is a matter of common knowledge."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are the product of modern scientific research and therefore thoroughly up-to-date. They do not merely purge, giving temporary relief, and leaving the patient weakened like the out-of-date, so-called remedies of forty or fifty years ago which contain probably aloes, mercury, and other harmful drugs. Bile Beans without the slightest discomfort prompt the liver and digestive organs to act in Nature's normal way, leaving those organs strengthened and stimulated to continue the performance of their duties without further assistance. They produce a gentle action on the bowels, curing or preventing constipation, cleansing the stomach and ridding the system of all impurities. Do not be misled by claims of half a hundred pills in the box where probably four to six constitutes a dose, and the doses cannot be discontinued. ONE BILE BEAN IS ONE DOSE. They can be discontinued after the cure is effected; they are purely vegetable; they do not contain any harmful drugs; and are the safest family medicine. Bile Beans for Biliousness cure Headache, Constipation, Piles, Liver Troubles, Bad Breath, Liver Chill, Indigestion, Flatulence, Dizziness, Buzzing in the Head, Pimples, Blood Impurities, Spring Ailments, Debility, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Medicine Vendors, price 1/1½d. and 2/9 per box.

Bile Beans FOR Biliousness

Digitized by Google

Sister's Hint.

"If you don't give me a shilling," said little Willie, "I'm going to tell about you kissing sister." "But I hadn't even thought of kissing your sister," protested the young man. "You ain't?" said Willie, puzzled. "Then I wonder what she told me to say that to you for?"

The Modern Way.

She (as he finishes mending her tyre): "Oh, thank you so much. What should I have done without you?" He: "Don't mention it. I wish I could always carry the repair kit for you." Tenderly: "May I, Eleanor?" And the two bicycles continued to lean against the grassy bank.

A Broken Melody.

"Dearest," he said, as he swung to and fro upon the gate, "I wish I might linger here for ever." She was about to say something encouraging when he got his finger caught in the hinge, and began yelling so hard that the entire neighbourhood turned out to help him loose. Then all was over between them.

Knows What It Is.

"Oh, Henry," exclaimed his wife, as she threw her arms rapturously about his neck, "I do love you so! Don't forget to leave me five pounds when you go to town this morning, will you, dear?" "And this," muttered Henry, softly disengaging himself from her fond embrace, "this is what you might call being hard pressed for money."

Love at First Sight.

Friend: "So yours was a case of love at first sight?" Mrs. Lovejoy: "Yes, indeed. I fell desperately in love with my dear husband the moment I set eyes upon him. I remember it all distinctly as if it were yesterday. I was walking with papa on the promenade at Brighton, when suddenly papa stopped and, pointing him out, said: 'There, my dear, is a man worth £120,000.'"

No Encouragement Intended.

He (in the conservatory): "Why did you lead me on to a proposal if you intended to refuse me?" She: "You do me great injustice. What have I done to make you think I loved you?" He: "In every waltz with other men you kept them almost at arm's length, but when waltzing with me you leant your head on my shoulder, and let me almost carry you." She: "That was to keep my feet off the floor, so that you wouldn't step on my toes."

At His Own Expense.

Mr. Bluff: "Look here, young man, you're always going about with my daughter, and I want to know what your intentions are regarding her?" Young Man: "I really have no intentions, sir." Mr. Bluff (angrily): "Then what do you mean by amusing yourself at my daughter's expense?" Young Man (airily): "I'm not amusing myself at your daughter's expense, sir, but at my own expense. I always pay for the theatre tickets and refreshments."

Lack of Confidence.

"May I kiss you, Miss Jane?" "I am sorry to see, Mr. Briggs, that you, too, are affected by the prevailing cause of business depression." "And that is?" "Lack of confidence." Then he kissed her.

Too Dreadful to Contemplate.

Angelina: "When one of us dies I shall go and live somewhere in the country, all among the woods and wild flowers." Edwin: "But, dearest, supposing that you were to die first?" Angelina: "Oh, don't let us think of anything so dreadful."

That Made a Difference.

Husband: "I really think you might have had that ball dress made a little bit higher in the neck—to say nothing of the back." Wife: "I'll have it changed if you wish; but the stuff cost two guineas a yard." Husband: "U'm—well, never mind."

Brutal Behaviour.

Ancient Brute: "Er, excuse me, but doesn't my open window trouble you?" Lady Passenger: "Oh, thank you! I was feeling it a little." Ancient Brute: "Well, I wouldn't run any risk of catching cold. There are some empty carriages forward."

Man's Heavy Burden.

Mrs. De Science: "If I am able to carry the baby about, I should think you ought to be." Professor De Science: "You forget, my dear, that an average man has to carry an atmospheric pressure of fifteen tons, while woman, being smaller, does not have to carry over ten or twelve tons."

Why She Didn't Bow.

"Have I done anything to offend you, darling?" he asked brokenly. "To-day you passed me without bowing, and now you sit there with such an air of hauteur and pride that——" "Arthur," interrupted the girl with an unbending air, but in her voice a cadence sweeter than music in the night, "I have a stiff neck."

In a Good Cause.

Wife: "George, this burning of the candle at both ends means an untimely grave. It is nearly twelve o'clock. Come to bed." George: "But I'm doing this night work in order to find money enough to buy your birthday present." Wife: "Well, if you will persist in working, of course, I can't stop it. Good-night, dear."

A Thoughtful Girl.

"No wonder the pleasures of courting have declined," said the stout youth. "Just look at the flimsiness of these modern chairs." And he pointed to a slender affair of white bamboo touched with gilt. "You mustn't judge by appearances," said the stout girl softly. "I've had that chair thoroughly braced with the very best of steel rods, and it is now guaranteed to stand a pressure of sixty pounds to the square inch." Then they both sat down on it as a final test.

On the Benches in the Park.

Mr. Rice: "May—may we sit here, sir?" Confirmed Celibate: "If you're perfectly sure that you love each other just as much as ever you did, and that you ain't sorry a bit, and that you never did love anybody else as you do her, and that it ain't too cold for popsy-wopsy in this night air—why I can stand it. But don't you try me too hard, young man. I've been here for six weeks and encountered seventy-nine couples."

His Business-Like Way.

Young Mr. Bizz (briskly, to fair proprietor of photograph gallery): "I've dropped in, Miss Frame, without much preparation, in the style I usually do when I make up my mind I want anything. Can you take me just as I am?" Miss Frame: "Certainly, Mr. Bizz. What style do you wish—cabinet or carte?" Mr. Bizz: "What style? Great Cæsar! Did you think I'd come in with these clothes on to have my photograph taken? I'm asking you to marry me, Miss Frame."

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of Short Stories.*]*

The Absent Lover.

Depressed is engaged to a young American girl, whom he met while in the States. She stayed here for several months with some friends, and was on the most intimate terms with her lover. However, Depressed believes the girl's parents are not in favour of the match, though they did not object when it was announced.

* * * * *

Some weeks ago the girl returned to America. She has now been there some weeks, and to the concern of Depressed her letters to him have been couched in the coolest of terms—quite different from the tone which marked their own meetings.

* * * * *

Depressed believes the girl's parents have been saying things against him, and, as he is three thousand miles away, and has no direct evidence, he does not know what to do. Can I advise him of a course of action? He fears that if something is not done, the girl may be induced not to return to Britain.

* * * * *

Before you jump to conclusions, be sure you are right about the mischief-making you suspect. When people are abroad—particularly in such a hurrying country as America—they are apt to neglect such necessary things as letter-writing altogether, or else they write in a hasty manner.

* * * * *

Perhaps your sweetheart is having a very busy time, and is therefore not giving you as much attention as you might expect in her correspondence. That is, of course, inexplicable in a case where there is real love, though it is not so serious a matter that you can regard it as dangerous. I should write to her, hinting that your affection for her has not altered in any way, and hope that it is the same with her.

* * * * *

I quite understand that the whole thing must be causing you great anxiety, and can only offer you my sympathy. Unless you are yourself able to go to America to see things put right, you are handicapped. If you have an intimate friend over there, he might be able to do a diplomatic service to you by inquiring how things are working.

* * * * *

I cannot believe that if the girl really loves you, as evidently she does, she would be turned away from you. If so she must be a very weak, changeable character. Girls away from their lovers are rather apt to go to the extreme of writing to them too often, to the neglect of their friends. I hope you will find things will turn out all right. The next mail or so may put an entirely new complexion on matters.

A Wedding Problem.

John A. has been invited to a wedding. He believes a girl will also be there to whom he was once engaged. They, however, have spoken scarcely at all since the breaking-off. He believes she would like a reunion, but fears it would not be so acceptable to himself. Would I recommend his going to the wedding?

* * * * *

Weddings have a strange influence over love affairs generally. They have often been known to hurry on other weddings, and to bring about reconciliations. I should go. You do not know how you may feel towards the girl when you see her again under such conditions. I should give it a trial, at any rate. Do not be too sure as to your own feelings.

Should He Emigrate?

"Crypt" is engaged to a young man, and as they cannot foresee any prospect of being married for many years, he wishes to go out to Canada in order to better himself. "Crypt" wants to know whether it would be selfish of her not to let him go, and whether she ought to promise to bind herself to him for an indefinite time.

* * * * *

I can quite understand you find it hard to let your *fiancé* go "Crypt," but though Canada may sound attractive it will not be well for him to go unless he has a definite situation there. In Canada well paid work is just as hard to obtain as here. I would advise you to wait until prospects here seem more favourable—even though it be a matter of years—unless he can get a definite post abroad.

* * * * *

Regarding your question as to whether you should promise to wait for him if he really does go away, that is a matter in which you yourselves should be the best judges. It will be more comfortable, I think, for both of you, if no definite agreement is come to, as so many things may happen during years of absence, and though in many cases "absence makes the heart grow fonder," such does not always follow.

The Persistent Lover and Indifferent Girl.

"Heartsick" is in love with a girl who apparently does not return the affection. He is a most persistent lover, however, and for a time she seemed as though she really loved him, but now she is quite indifferent to all his attentions, though her friends tell him that she does care for him. What is he to do?

* * * * *

I think your best plan, "Heartsick," will be to settle the matter once and for all by stating your intentions to the girl, letting her see that you are quite serious, and then abiding by what she says. From what you say in your letter she is evidently unable to make up her mind, and the sooner you let her see that you mean business the better.

* * * * *

I am sorry to have to acknowledge that some girls like to keep a man dangling in a state of uncertainty, little thinking what his feelings are during the time of probation, and the girl you are fond of may be one of these, though you say that she only accepts your presents under protests. Perhaps she cares for someone else, but does not like to give you your *congé* until she is assured that her affection in that quarter is returned. Anyhow, she will feel bound to give you a definite answer one way or the other, if you let her see that you are serious in your proposal.

Cynthia

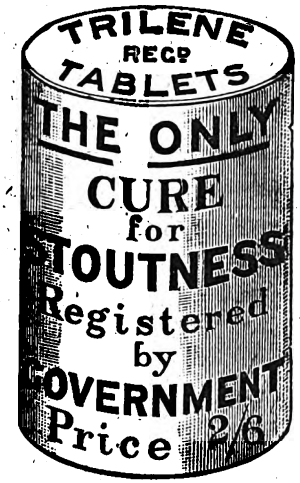
Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

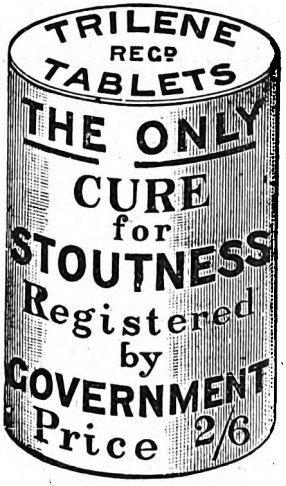
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, s/o Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."
"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Liatorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 8lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Tredol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1901 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest valu I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

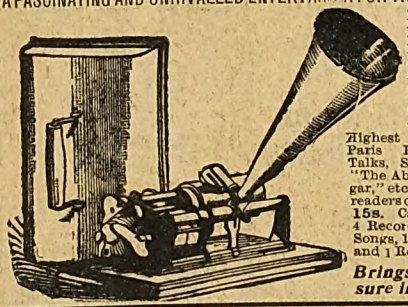
Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

ASK FOR
"G.P." Government Tea
Eighteenpence Everywhere.
RICH, RIPE, REFRESHING.
You May Know It by Its Red Tape and Seal.
WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE TO G.P. GOVERNMENT TEA CO., 16 AMERICA SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.

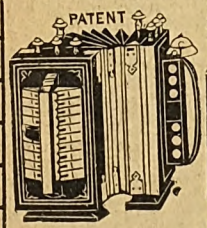
"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."
CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.
A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.



CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.
CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. **No Home should be without one.** *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.
200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*
Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, „ 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, „ 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, „ 16/6
Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount
Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—
CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW.
Established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

MACKINTOSH'S
IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*
EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

ASK YOUR BUTCHER
FOR
Swift's
AMERICAN
BEEF
Choice and Tender.

BRITANNIA CLEANS HER HELMET WITH
"MATCHLESS"
METAL
POLISH
AND EVERY BRITISH HOUSEWIFE SHOULD POLISH ALL METALS WITH IT TOO.
Manufacturers: THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co. Ltd., LIVERPOOL.

EASTER HOLIDAY NUMBER. GREAT NEW COMPETITION.

SHORT STORIES.

No. 745.] Week ending April 11th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

HE GAVE A START. THE HEAD OF THE DIVER WAS THAT OF A YOUNG AND LOVELY WOMAN!

Digitized by Google

(A Dramatic Incident from our Serial, "HELD APART." See inside.)

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ Inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 Brownie is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2½ Inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

GRAVES'

"SAFE AS THE BANK OF ENGLAND."

This is the feeling of those who deal with the firm of J. G. Graves, because all goods are sent out to handle and examine at leisure, and need not be kept unless they give the fullest satisfaction.

THE 'COMMERCIAL'

Sterling Silver Horizontal Watch,

will be forwarded Post Free to any address on receipt of a deposit of only 3/6; the balance can be remitted in nine more MONTHLY payments of 2/6; or, HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment. **25/**

LET'S TALK OF GRAVES

. . The Largest . . Watch-Sales Firm in the World.

SPECIFICATION. Horizontal Movement, Rim Cap, Fully Jewelled Escapement, White Enamelled Dial, Extra Strong Sterling Silver Cases.

This Watch is Warranted for Five Years and will give Perfect Satisfaction.

You would be pleased with our No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Cutlery and Plate, and Fancy Goods, which we supply GRATIS and Post Free to all applicants. Please send Post Card for a copy.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in every town and village. No Risk. Good Commission.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

WATCHES

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely, that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

Carr. Paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s. 15/10 | £9 2s. 17/6
£9 16s. 19/3 | £10 5s. 19/3

Juno Motor Cycle is the King of Motor Cycles, £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lowest prices; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6.

Write for new Season List, 136 pages and 300 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

IF

you buy another Cycle and afterwards see a **MERLIN,** you will be very sorry that you have purchased. Catalogue Free:

MERLIN CYCLE CO.,
Martineau Street, BIRMINGHAM.

SPECIAL BARGAINS

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE £ d $

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased KEYLESS HUNTER, jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, 10/6; approval willingly.

POWERFUL FIELD GLASSES by celebrated optician (Le Gautier, Paris); 30 miles range; 8 achromatic lenses (guaranteed), nickel silver eyeshades, in leather sling case; sacrifice 10/6.

GLADSTONE BAG, 24in., superior quality, real brown cowhide, strong leather straps, nickel silver fittings, &c.; in perfect condition; unsolled; cost 4 guineas; accept 25/-; approval.

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased KEYLESS WATCH, extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, 12/6; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished elegant West End design; sacrifice, 9/6.

MAGNIFICENT 5-ROW PEARL COLLARETTE; finest quality; mounted with four bars of lustrous Orient diamonds, in velvet-lined case, complete; sacrifice, 12/6; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous DIAMOND & RUBY RING, 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, 12/6.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, 7/6; approval.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, 19/6; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent 26/- instrument. 12-fold bellows (metal bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, 10/6; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, 10/6; approval.

FEATHER BOAS; bankrupt stock, special bargains, real Ostrich Feather Boas, beautifully curly, perfectly new, in box colours, grey and white, black and white and natural. Prices 10/6 and 12/6. Original price 30/- and 42/-; each approval willingly.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) KEYLESS WATCH, jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, 21/-.

A full list of Special Bargains, New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, Pawnbroker and Jeweller, 284 Brixton Road, London, S.W.

THE CORNER PICTURES IN THIS NUMBER ARE TYPES OF HANDSOME MEN OF EVERY COUNTRY.

SHORT STORIES

No. 745.] [ONE PENNY.

Week Ending April 11th, 1903.

A RATIONAL WOMAN.

And How She was Won by an Irrational Man.

BERTRAM FERRARS, a rising young barrister, was very much in love with his *fiancée*, Agnes Dalton, in spite of the disparity of years, tastes, and ideas.

Mutual friends marvelled at this engagement; Agnes Dalton was, they thought, so little like the girl on whom such a man would lose his heart.

Studious and reserved, Ferrars had mostly spent his life amongst his books. He hated society, noise and racket of every description, but, suddenly, he reached the turning point in his life, and his views on most subjects changed, owing to the glance of two lovely blue eyes.

Agnes Dalton was the very reverse of Ferrars in every way. Her sunny nature and temperament delighted in the giddy vortex of society; she loved dancing, ping-pong, tennis, and boating, all these pastimes she called rare good fun; her creed was to get the most enjoyment possible out of life.

She was sparkling, full of fun and mischief, and young Ferrars fell head over heels in love with her. She was flattered by the courtship of this clever young man, and, when he proposed, she accepted him without a moment's hesitation; it was a delightful privilege to be envied by every girl she knew.

Like most men who are in love for the first time, he took the malady in its very acutest form; he became Agnes' willing slave, ready to obey her slightest behest; she exercised her new power with childish delight, and soon got to love him almost as deeply as he did her, only, womanlike, she did not show it to him.

One morning, as young Ferrars called round at Laburnum Lodge, the suburban villa where Agnes lived, he was met by his pretty little lady-love dancing down the gravel path in a high state of glee.

"Oh, Bert, Bert! Just guess the lovely present I have received from Uncle Henry!"

"Well, little one, what is it that seems to have given you so much pleasure? My presents to you never seem to produce such exuberant joy!"

"Nasty, jealous wretch!" she murmured, looking up archly at him from under her long lashes, and, as they had reached the privacy of the drawing-room, he at once punished her by catching her round the waist and drawing her close to him till her head rested on his shoulder.

"Now, Aggy, dearest, you are my prisoner, and must pay forfeit as having used disrespectful language to me."

"Pay forfeit! How?"

All rights reserved.]

And she opened her big, blue eyes to their very widest extent, looking the very picture of innocent surprise, as if she could not possibly guess what he wanted.

"Aggy, you're a little fraud!"

"Bertie, that's rude, you will have to pay forfeit to me!"

"All right, as much as ever you like!" and he showered down kisses on the dainty little mouth held up so temptingly close to his face.

She laughingly disengaged herself from his encircling arm, and, flying to the other end of the room, at a safe distance from him, menacingly shook her little pink fist at him.

"Now, now, Bert! do be serious, I want to talk business to you."

"Talk business—*you*, Aggy; well, upon my word, do you want to consult me about the best cut for your doll's dress, or what?"

"Tush, silly man!" and she patted his cheek reprovingly. "This matter is very urgent and very important. Do you bicycle?"

"Bicycle? Well, yes, I rather enjoy a good long spin on a clear, smooth, country road, but I have very little time to indulge in this pastime. But why on earth do you ask?"

"Oh, then it is all right if you do bicycle! I was afraid you would think it too frivolous. The present I have received this morning from Uncle Henry is a beautiful bicycle, and I want to try it this very afternoon. Come and fetch me, please, dear Bert!"

Ferrars never could resist that sweet, childish, pleading voice.

"All right, dearest, I'll put off a rather important engagement, but never mind."

She pouted her rosy lips.

"No engagement ought to be important, compared with the one to me!"

"Dear little goose, of course you are first in all my thoughts, but you must remember that if a barrister does not keep his business engagements, his little wife won't have all the luxuries he means her to have."

Naturally Agnes carried the day, and, punctually at four that same afternoon, young Ferrars turned up at Laburnum Lodge in a neat Norfolk suit and on a well-appointed bicycle. The maid showed him into the drawing-room, telling him Miss Dalton was not quite ready, but would be down in a few minutes. He took up a photograph album and was soon absorbed gazing at different aspects of his little sweetheart at various times of her babyhood and childhood. A slight

Digitized by Google

step, the one he knew so well and loved, made him turn, and Agnes stood before him with a lovely blush crimsoning her cheeks, and even tinting the pallor of her brow. Bertram started to his feet.

"Good gracious, Aggy, what on earth do you mean by this absurd masquerade?"

"Masquerade, indeed!" she indignantly protested. "I had it specially made for me in Paris by one of the best tailors!"

"I might have guessed the horrible thing was French, thank goodness they are not worn in England! I can't think what you mean, Aggy, by donning such an unwomanly attire?"

"Mean? Why, I mean to go for a bicycle ride with you, of course!" Her voice was pitching itself in a dangerously high key as her indignation grew.

"You really thought of going out with *me* in 'bloomers'?" he asked, in the same tone he would have asked if she were going to walk on her head.

"Yes, certainly, this is the rational dress worn by the real up-to-date twentieth century girl."

"Rational fiddlesticks!"

"I think it is a most becoming dress, and it suits me beautifully."

"Why, Aggy, you look positively ugly in this vile get-up!"

"Ugly! You dare call me ugly?" shrieked outraged feminine vanity. The scream of horror ended in a big sob, and she went on piteously—

"I hate you, I shall never, never speak to you again!"

Ferrars, absolutely bewildered by the storm his unwary words had raised, drew near, and tried to take her hand, but she pushed him roughly away.

"Go away, leave me, don't touch me. I never want to see you again! Good-bye for ever, Mr. Ferrars!"

She rushed from the room, leaving him standing speechless with pain. The words she had just uttered in her wrath seemed to enter his heart like a knife, especially did it strike him as an ominous knell to all his hopes—the fact that she had called him *Mr. Ferrars*. After a few moments he rang the bell, and, when the maid appeared, he bid her go to Miss Dalton and tell her he awaited her pleasure in the drawing-room. Within a very short time space of, the servant returned with a curt message from her young mistress—

"Would Mr. Ferrars excuse her coming down, she felt too ill to leave her room."

The young man mournfully left the house. Good Heavens, it could not be that he had sinned past forgiveness, that Aggy meant, as she had said, never to speak to him again, and to break off their engagement. He had been rash, impetuous to denounce this horrible rational dress so very candidly, but then he had been inexpressibly shocked and grieved to see his darling attired in this masculine garb. It seemed to go against all his old-fashioned notions on womanly modesty and feminine dignity. His Agnes, the idol of his heart, his angel of purity and paragon of perfect womanhood, to have donned coarse, vulgar bloomers, the very thought was maddening. And now he had offended her, she declared, past all forgiveness.

He spent a sleepless night and came round early next morning to call at Laburnum Lodge.

"Miss Dalton?" he queried.

"Not at home," was the immediate answer from the maid, Jessie, who tried to convey in her tone and manner as much respectful sympathy as she could express. Ferrars was quick to notice this, he had at least one friend in the camp, and by this one ally, he hoped to gain admission into the presence of his irate little lady-love.

"Come, Jessie, nonsense! Miss Dalton isn't out at this hour of the day! You're telling me a fib!"

Jessie, looking embarrassed, fumbled with the hem of her dainty, spotless apron.

"Well, sir, I'm only telling the fib Miss Aggy told me to say!"

"Ah, I thought as much! What did she say to you?"

"Oh, please, sir, don't ask; if I tell you it will hurt you awfully hard!"

"Never mind, Jessie, I would rather know the worst!"

"Well, Miss Agnes, she never slept all night, I could see it this morning by her poor, sweet, pretty eyes that looked as if she had been crying for hours, with great rings under them, and when I brought her a cup of tea and the dainty, crisp toast she loves, she pushed the tray from her."

"Take it away, Jessie, I am not hungry this morning."

"Poor little lamb," thought I, "she is just breaking her own heart by quarrelling with her young man!"

Then, just as I was leaving the room, she called me back.

"'Jessie?'"

"'Yes, miss!'"

"'If Mr. Ferrars should call to-day at any time, you are always to say I am not at home.'"

"She gulped down a big sob, poor, motherless dear, I felt someone must comfort her, and, though I am only her maid, she had no one else at the time, so I came quite close to the bed and said soothingly—

"'Oh, come, Miss Agnes, dear, you don't mean it! Why, Mr. Ferrars and you are engaged!'"

"'No, we are not engaged,' she snapped, 'and I shall never see him again, never read another of his letters; he told me yesterday I was ugly, yes, positively ugly! Those were his very words'—and she began to cry again as if her poor young heart would break. Oh, sir, how could you say such a thing to my beautiful Miss Agnes?"

"Ah, Jessie, you may well ask, but I was mad, beside myself, it was that horrible dress did all the mischief. But, Jessie, you must admit me, let me see her once more, and I shall crave her pardon on my bended knees. She must, she will forgive me, if I can only see her."

"But, sir, I dare not, she would dismiss me at once."

Bertram fumbled in his pocket and drew out a bright new sovereign, which he tried to slip into the girl's palm, but she drew back with a proud toss of the head.

"No, sir, I wouldn't do it for money; if I let you in to see my young lady, it is only because I think it is for her good. I know she is wretched at having quarrelled with you."

"You're a good girl, Jessie, and I shall find some better means of requiting you."

"Well, sir, it is just this way—my young man, he is a sailor lad in the King's service, and I know if I had fallen out with him I should be ready to pluck my hair from my head, so I can just imagine how bad poor Miss Agnes feels. Come, I shall take you to her, and just trust to your making your peace with her, in which case she won't dismiss me."

"God bless you, Jessie," said Ferrars heartily, as he followed Jessie with a soft and careful tread up the carpeted stairs till they reached the drawing-room. The girl opened the door, and signed to him to go in.

"There, sir," she whispered, "Miss Agnes sits yonder in the morning-room, go in and tell her she is the prettiest girl on earth, and she'll soon forgive you!"

Bertram paid no heed to the maid's parting words of advice, he hurried through the drawing-room, paused on the threshold of the next room, then he gently moved the heavy

Digitized by Google

velvet drapery which hung across the opening and gazed in. Agnes sat on a low couch her eyes red with recent weeping; on a small table at her elbow was placed a cabinet photograph of young Ferrars which he himself had given her; on her knees and on the couch by her were all the letters and notes he had on various occasions written to her, also the sundry presents and souvenirs he had bestowed on her, such as books, music, bouquet-holders, and scent-bottles, fans, and bangles; all the miscellaneous gifts a young fellow thinks of to bestow on the lady of his choice.

A slight movement of his revealed his presence, and she turned hastily. When her eyes met his, a hot flush suffused her cheeks, and she rose angrily to her feet, all the letters fluttering to the ground.

"You here, Mr. Ferrars?"

"Yes, Agnes, darling, I have come to implore you to forgive me."

"I really thought you were gentlemanly enough not to force your way into a lady's presence, when she refuses to hold any sort of intercourse with you in future," she said scornfully, pointedly averting her gaze from him while she spoke.

"Agnes."

"Call me Miss Dalton, please."

He bent his head in acquiescence to her haughty command.

"Be it as you will, but, Miss Dalton, may I inquire if you wish to dismiss me so entirely from your thoughts, why I find you seated with all the little gifts I ever gave you?"

"I was preparing to pack them and send them back to you," came the chilling answer.

"Indeed! And these letters?"

"I was going to burn them."

"And this photo?"

"Was meant to share the fate of the letters."

Quite coolly and deliberately Bertram walked back towards the heavy velvet hanging, waved it back with one hand, then turned and bowed coldly to Agnes.

"I see my best and wisest course, Miss Dalton, is to bid you good-bye, and the sooner I put your name and personality out of my thoughts the better for my peace of mind."

So saying he strode rapidly out of the room, and Agnes thought he had for ever passed out of her life. She was aghast, she never expected him to take his dismissal so calmly, she thought he would beg and implore her forgiveness, instead of which he was content to go at her bidding, and his sudden departure overwhelmed her with despair.

She flung herself on the couch, burying her face on the softly-tinted Liberty silk cushion.

"Oh, Bertie, Bertie, my darling, you never loved me," she moaned piteously.

As she uttered this agonised wail, two strong arms lifted her in a close and tender embrace.

"Aggy, Aggy, my own darling, why your Bertie loves you so, that your cruelty drove him to the brink of despair!"

She gave a little gasp and made a feeble pretence at freeing herself from his encircling arms, but she soon gave up the attempt, and, nestling her head on his shoulder, murmured:

"Oh! Bertie, I thought you were gone for ever, that I should never see you again!"

"Well, little one, and was it not what you desired me to do?"

She looked roguishly up into his face, so dangerously close to hers.

"You dear old goose, don't you know yet that a woman always expects a man to do the opposite of what she bids him do?"

"Indeed, well this is a thing to remember in my married life later on, such scraps of knowledge come in useful when the fetters of wedlock hold a man in their thraldom. By-the-bye, Aggy, I suppose we are to be married after all?"

She pursed up her lovely rosy lips into the most bewitching of pouts.

"I suppose I *must* overlook your atrocious conduct?"

"Ah! so far so good. And must I call you Miss Dalton?"

"Don't be silly, Bertie."

"Aggy, may I kiss you?"

"Certainly not."

The words were hardly out of her mouth ere he kissed her lips, cheeks, and brow. She struggled so to free herself this time, that she accomplished the feat, and, taking up her post by the window, exclaimed:

"Here, at any rate, I am safe, you will hardly venture to kiss me so that all the neighbours over the way can see you!"

"Hang the neighbours; you need not look so indignant at me. Aggy, you ordered me to kiss you!"

"You horrid wretch, telling such a monstrous fib!"

"You told me not to, and that, I have it from your own lips, amounts to an imperative command do to it."

"Nonsense. But tell me, Bert, is it not very generous and Christian-like of me to forgive you, when you have never even apologised?"

"Apologised for what?" innocently queried the offending culprit.

"For what?" she shrieked, "he dares to ask for what, when he brutally avowed to me that he thought me ugly?"

"I absolutely deny the charge! Darling, how could I call my Queen of Beauty ugly! Why, before your charms the golden rays of Phœbus pale, the silver beams of the moon shine dimly when compared with the lustre of your eyes!"

"Flatterer!" But, notwithstanding, Agnes beamed on her appreciative lover. "Still, deny it as you will, you did call me ugly when I wore the rational dress."

"Impossible, my dear girl, you must have dreamt it!"

"Then," she retorted triumphantly, "I shall put it on this afternoon, and you will take me for a ride on my new bike?"

She said this, half fearing this bold and final test of hers to see if his repentance were indeed sincere.

"Good gracious, Aggy! What on earth do you mean by this absurd masquerade!"

Digitized by Google

"Certainly, darling, you are absolutely free to wear whatever attire you think best."

This new-born blind deference to her wishes delighted Agnes. It was worth all the agony of quarrelling with Bertie, if only to come out so triumphantly from the debate.

* * * * *

Punctually at two o'clock that same afternoon, Jessie came up to her young mistress' bedroom, she seemed to be convulsed with suppressed laughter and held her handkerchief well choked over her mouth, as if she feared her unseemly mirth might break forth.

"Please, miss, Mr. Ferrars is in the drawing-room and wants to know if you are ready?"

Aggy was putting the finishing touches to her rational dress.

"Yes, in a few minutes. Jessie, how do I look? Don't you think these bloomers are the sweetest things in the world?"

"Yes, miss, you're all right—but Mr. Ferrars, he *does* look funny," and she giggled audibly.

"Don't be an idiot, Jessie, what's the matter with you laughing in that silly way, and what in the world do you mean talking like that of Mr. Ferrars?"

So saying, as she had just put the finishing touches to her masculine dress, she hurried down to the drawing-room. But she stopped aghast on the threshold thinking her eyes must be playing her false, or else that she was the victim of an extraordinary optical delusion. Bertram stood before the glass over the mantelpiece, complacently admiring the grotesque figure cast back at him by the mirror. Indeed, his get-up was ludicrous in the extreme. His athletic figure was robed in the complete outfit of a lady bicyclist. His dainty pale pink blouse was tucked in at the waist with a belt and buckle, the dark blue serge skirt fell in graceful folds just above the ankles, while on his head was set the jauntiest of white sailor-hats; a white spotted veil shaded his bronzed face, and fell over his hirsute moustaches which protruded in the most aggressive way.

"Bertie!" Aggie exclaimed, her voice bristling with indignation, "what on earth do you mean by this absurd get-up?"

"Mean, my angel, why I mean to take you out for a ride on your new bicycle."

"What! Attired thus?"

"Why not? If you insist on usurping the garb of a man, well then nothing remains for me to do but to sink my personality in that of a woman!"

"Bertie, do give up this nonsense, go and change at once!"

"Impossible, my pet, you see I leave you free to dress as you think best suits you, surely you might leave me the same liberty, and allow me to attire myself as my fancy prompts me to do."

"But, Bertie, this is a mad freak," and she stamped her tiny foot, in her sore vexation at the new and unexpected turn of events.

He bent his head in acquiescence to her haughty command.

"Why so, darling? If you will wear the breeches, nothing remains to me but the distaff and spindle. Come, let us be starting."

"What, do you think I should go out with you so?"

"Well, darling, to tell you the truth, I must confess I really think the pink of this blouse and the white veil suit my complexion to a T. I never thought myself good-looking till I donned all this feminine gear. You ladies have the advantage over us in the way of finery," and he once more turned to the mirror and cast admiring glances at himself.

This was too much for her, she burst into a merry peal of laughter.

"Oh, you excruciating goose; why, Bert, you are as ugly as one of the chimpanzees at the Zoo, and quite as comical!"

"That's better, Aggy, love; I like to see you laugh, because then I know you are not going to vow and protest you don't mean to marry me. Though I am sure you really do."

"Well, I shall certainly not go to the altar with you in this rig out!"

"No doubt for that propitious day you will yourself consent to don a skirt, so that I can wear trousers as the badge of my manhood! Otherwise you could not possibly expect the poor parson to unite in the bonds of holy matrimony two persons wearing men's attire. He would get horribly mixed up in putting the right question to each of us; he might tell *me* perchance to obey you instead of only loving and cherishing you!"

"You are very pat with the service for the solemnisation of matrimony!"

"Well, Aggy, it's only wisdom to prepare one's self for coming events."

"Bertie," she said softly (unwilling to assume the appearance of giving in, and yet she felt there was nothing for it but that) "wilful man must have his way; if I consent to give up wearing my beautiful Paris suit, will you promise me to throw off this grotesque costume and never to let me see you arrayed so?"

"Darling, of course I'm willing to sacrifice all my personal tastes to your wishes. You know connubial bliss consists mainly in reciprocal concessions on the part of husband and wife. The only thing that worries me is to know which character you really mean to assume, the man's or the woman's; take your choice, dearest. I am not particular, I only wish to know definitely, and then to take the part you do not wish to enact."

"Oh! Bert, you are too silly for words." Still, she could not help laughing, "off with you now, and mind you come back in an hour's time properly dressed, and I shall then be ready to go for that long postponed ride, with a bicycling skirt. There, are you satisfied now, oh, most obstinate of men?"

"Delighted, I am sure. The fact is, so long as you insisted on being a rational woman I had to be an irrational man."

Lily Butler.

Digitized by Google

Under False Pretences.

THE TALE OF A DANCE AND ITS SEQUEL.

I WILL endeavour to relate how two foolish mistakes on one occasion resulted most excellently, and brought the first glimpses of romance into the life of Margaret Chalmers.

Pale-faced, underpaid little work-girl, her existence had been grey and monotonous indeed; and trudging wearily along with thin shoes and tired eyes, over Blackfriars Bridge one murky evening, in company with a vast multitude of other brave toilers, she inevitably fell to pondering over the uselessness of it all.

Margaret reached a dingy side street eventually, pushed open a door without knocker or paint, and mounted the stairs towards an attic on the fourth floor.

"Miss Chalmers, is that you?" piped a shrill woman's voice from the basement.

"Yes, Mrs. Muggridge, I shan't want any tea this evening, thank you," she responded, calling to mind the smallness of the funds in hand.

"Oh, very well. There's a letter for you on the mantelshelf."

"A letter for me! Oh, thank you!"

When one receives on an average one per annum, it will be understood that the arrival of a letter is an event of extreme importance. Margaret forgot all her weariness as she eagerly snatched the packet from the mantelshelf. It was an imposing, crested envelope, addressed to "Miss Chalmers," and a myriad of confused, expectant thoughts surged through the girl's mind.

The mysterious communication was as follows:

"*Woodstock,*
"*Grosvenor Terrace,*
"*West Kensington,*
"24.11.'02.

"*Mr. and Mrs. Hartley Mannering are giving a small dance at the Kensington Town Hall on Thursday, 1st January, New Year's Day, and would esteem the pleasure of your company upon that occasion.*
"8 *p.m. until* 3 *a.m.*"

"It must be some mistake, of course," Margaret mused, twisting the letter in her fingers, and examining it minutely. "I've never even heard of the people. Besides, who would dream of asking me to a fashionable dance. If it were a fancy dress, though, I could go as Cinderella, perhaps—in her kitchen rags."

Having reviewed the situation from every possible point of view, an adventurous spirit came over the girl, and she retired that night determined at all hazards—mistake or no mistake—to attend the dance. With infinite care she indited a careful note in the morning, accepting the invitation.

The idea seemed so quaint that she laughed to herself at intervals during the day.

"It will be something to talk about, at all events, I can quite easily manœuvre a dress "for one night only," she went on merrily. "A cab will be absolutely necessary as well. I do hope that no titled personage will be fascinated by my charms. He'll be most grievously disappointed, and terribly cross, methinks. Any way, the invitation is addressed to Miss Chalmers, and Miss Chalmers will endeavour to do herself justice.

* * * * *

On the evening of New Year's Day, it was really a delightful little personage who alighted from a hansom at Kensington Town Hall, and demurely presented herself to Mr. and Mrs. Mannering. They received their guest most graciously, and the only possible obstacle to complete enjoyment was removed.

Margaret, after a time, became quite convinced that no mistake had been perpetrated after all. Someone, perhaps, had heard of her straitened circumstances—even taken a passing fancy for her—and hence the invité.

As a matter of fact, the girl, slim, graceful, with curiously pretty, nut-brown hair, and refined features, distinctly held her own, and found quite a circle of admirers. One young gentleman in particular appeared to be greatly impressed with Miss Chalmers—and introduced as Reginald Cleaver, fair-haired, with well-favoured, clear-cut features, typical of buoyant youth, he became distinctly impudent, and pleaded for the favour of six dances in succession.

"Most decidedly not," piquantly retorted Margaret. "It would be quite unfair to the others, and extremely bad taste in addition."

"Nonsense, Miss Chalmers! Why people should be regulated by a code of absurdly narrow regulations, compiled by old fogies, I have never been able to understand."

"I am much afraid that some people need regulating all the same."

"You are really unkind! I form my own code of rules to correspond with my circumstances and company. Given an elderly spinster as partner, I am content to be strictly orthodox, and have but one dance. Given you, Miss Chalmers, the system is idiotic. We no sooner become interested in conversation, and—in each other, than you are claimed by some apology for a man who will bore you to death."

"Oh, I am not so sure of that! Mr. Woodford is really an excellent fellow, whilst there are——"

Mr. Cleaver became seriously in earnest, and interrupted impetuously.

"I know! There are scores of them, all buzzing round you. For that very reason I ask you what I do. Miss Chalmers, please, please let me have six dances—I have so much to say to you—will you?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes!"

The state of affairs now became somewhat dangerous. During the six dances in question, Mr. Cleaver became annoyingly inquisitive, and Margaret's attempts to evade his thinly-veiled questions were decidedly exciting.

"Have you a great distance to go to reach your home, Miss Chalmers?"

"Oh, no! A cab will take me there for one-and sixpence, I believe. Isn't this a delightful waltz, Mr. Cleaver? Do you remember its title?"

"'The Dance of Pierrot!' It is rather original, distinctly out of the ordinary sort. Have you danced much this season, Miss Chalmers?"

"Oh, yes, very frequently."

Margaret told the fib most elegantly.

"It's wonderfully strange that I have never met you."

"Quite possibly you have. One can't remember everyone one meets."

"That may be, but I have never met you before, Miss Chalmers. No one could dance with you and forget it."

"Do I dance so very badly, then?"

"I do wish you would not treat my remarks as jokes. I feel more serious, somehow, to-night, than I have ever felt in my life."

The conversation continued in a varied strain until supper. As Margaret descended with Mr. Cleaver to the ball-room to resume the programme, the inevitable occurred.

"Miss Chalmers, will you grant me a very great favour? May I escort you home to-night?"

Margaret blushed with confusion. She would have given all her possessions to consent, but the thought of exposure was unendurable.

"I'm afraid not, my father will be here to meet me."

"At least, then, you will introduce me to him?"

"Oh, yes, with pleasure!"

At this critical juncture Miss Chalmers did the only thing she thought possible under the circumstances.

Whilst Mr. Reginald Cleaver was waltzing severely with a stout member of the aristocracy, a cab was hailed, and Miss Chalmers, in Cinderella fashion, was whirled away from the scene of her triumph.

Arrived at the attic, how sordid and gloomy everything appeared after the glittering glamour of the dance.

Margaret surveyed her elegant self in the broken mirror, and laughed with glee. She looked at the dismal surroundings, thought of the morrow, realised that the end of the adventure had come, and burst into tears.

In all the days of her monotonous, weary, work-a-day life, that following the dance was at once the most dreary and dismal. The same pale-faced work-girl trudged wearily home.

"There's another letter for you to-night, miss!" With strange forebodings Margaret absolutely ran upstairs, and tore open the envelope.

From Reginald Cleaver! Her heart beat with joy, for perhaps the end of her delightful escapade had not come, perhaps only the beginning. The letter would show.

"Why had she left so hurriedly without a good-bye? Had he done aught to offend her? To add to his misery he had overheard that she had left alone, her father had not called. She was unkind indeed not to accept his escort. Might he take the great liberty of calling upon her one day? Would Miss Chalmers drop a little note giving permission?" It was a plaintive letter, but the curious part to Margaret was the postscript.

"You will wonder, Miss Chalmers, by what means I obtained your address. Please allow me to call, and I will explain. I also want to impart to you an important secret—not entirely unconnected with myself."

The girl finished the epistle in a state of complete bewilderment. To allow Mr. Cleaver to call upon her in a dingy attic was a preposterous idea. To arrange an interview with him outside would appear mysterious, evasive, and yet it was the only alternative.

She would meet him and confess everything. The matter would end for ever—it was absurd and wicked to carry the deception further. In her secret heart, however, I am afraid that Miss Margaret Chalmers was not quite so convinced that the affair had ended, as she determined to explain to Mr. Cleaver.

* * * * *

A crisp, wintry morning at Kensington Gardens, and a well-set-up young man was pacing vigorously up and down the length of the Flower Walk. Ten minutes late, Margaret appeared, unusually rosy and happy.

"Ah, Miss Chalmers, I am really delighted you have put in an appearance. I began to fear this appointment was another caprice." He looked at her steadily.

"Another caprice? How do you mean, Mr. Cleaver?"

"Your sudden disappearance from the dance, without bidding good-bye to a soul—it was too cruel!"

"I could not help it—I—I—felt suddenly unwell." And then, stifling her confusion with an effort, "What did you wish to see me about—something about—yourself, I believe?"

"Yes, something very important. I ought to have told you before. I have been a cad, Miss Chalmers!"

They were not seated, and the man tapped the gravel uneasily with his stick. Margaret flushed, glanced at him suddenly, and lowered her eyes.

"I don't understand!"

"It would be wonderfully strange if you did!" A slight awkward pause of a few seconds, and Reginald Cleaver turned to the girl suddenly, blurting out—

"Miss Chalmers, I'm not a gentleman, you see!"

Margaret looked inquiringly, and he continued—

"I went to that ball like a cad, under false pretences. I intended it just for a prank—to meet you, Miss Chalmers, forgive me for saying so, is to love you. I commenced by deceiving you, and hadn't the heart to tell you the truth. You see, I'm not a gentleman, Miss Chalmers, only just a valet."

Another long pause, and he glanced cautiously at Margaret.

"Well, Miss Chalmers, what have you to say to me after this confession?"

Margaret laid her hand upon his arm.

"Mr. Cleaver, if I were to tell you that I also went to the dance under false colours, that instead of being a Society girl I am merely an overworked dressmaker, hardly able to live decently, what would you say to me, then?"

"I could say to you, Miss Chalmers, what must have remained hidden for ever otherwise, that I love you!"

"And, because you are a valet, Mr. Cleaver, I can say that I learnt in those six dances to care for you very much indeed."

The remainder of the conversation which passed between these young people on the day in question, is strictly private and confidential. As they strolled arm-in-arm from the Gardens, the crisp, winter sunshine came forth, and the vista of happiness before seemed very bright indeed.

"Reggie, did you ever guess before I confessed, that I was not a lady?"

"I shall always refuse to think you anything but a lady, Meg, but when a fellow in evening-dress chases a cab containing a runaway girl, to a modest district over the water I, pretty well thought——"

"Yes?"

"Well, I thought there might be a little chance of a happy new year for me, after all!"

Harry J. Robinson.

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION. Start To-day.

Cash Down. Cash Down. Cash Down.

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

THIS IS AN ENTIRELY NEW COMPETITION AND IS NOW PLACED BEFORE THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT IS EXCEEDINGLY SIMPLE, AND IS OPEN TO EVERY PERSON WHO READS "SHORT STORIES."

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated.

The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A fourth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

THIRD LIST.

13. The vessel which was floated in the New River would carry considerably more than its present cargo.

14. They fell over the cliff when staying at the sea-side, though warned to look out for the spot which had been a danger to numberless people.

15. We went to the church down in the valley. It was on the border of three counties, was surrounded by a privet fence, and approached by a bridge.

16. There was a large rookery in the grounds of the County School. One boy left owing to the noise the birds made.

17. He made the horse leap a high gate. It then tore across hills and dales until it was exhausted.

18. That table-cover would make twenty mufflers for the crew of the brig which is lying at Swansea now.

NAME_____ **ADDRESS**_____

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES. YOU CAN BEGIN HERE.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

MY HEART'S DESIRE.

I am a native of a seaside village in Cornwall. As I grew up I began to tire of the monotony of the life and determined to go out into the world and make a name for myself.

One day when I was in the ruins of the Old Keep, which is on the cliffs, two strangers—tourists evidently—suddenly appeared. They told me that they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood for a few days, and asked if I knew of any lodgings. I said that my father would be glad to put them up at the farm, and accordingly they came home with me.

Their names were the Honourable Robert Lestrange (commonly called Bobbie) and Di Northcote.

I told these two Londoners of my desire to see the world, Bobbie encouraged me in my ambitions, but Di advised me to stay at home. When he saw that nothing would shake me from my resolve, he promised to try to find something for me to do when I arrived in the great city.

Bobbie met me on my arrival in London. Owing to a fog we got separated, and as I stood on the steps of a house I heard a man's voice asking me to come inside and wait until the fog cleared. Feeling that it would be hopeless to find Bobbie, I accepted the invitation. I remained there some time when Di happened to call, and he took me to my lodgings in Bloomsbury, where Bobbie was waiting; he told me that the man in whose rooms I had been was Lord Cecil Trevor, one of the worst "men about town."

Di came in next morning to tell me he had found me a place as trier-on in the firm of Philips and Philips, mantle and jacket makers. He also gave me some advice which I rather resented. I didn't like my work at all, and as I felt I ought not to live alone I got Lizzie Brown, a new girl, to share rooms with me.

I met Lord Cecil Trevor on several occasions, and Di and I fell out because of my friendship with him. I accepted an engagement for a small part on the stage at the suggestion of Lord Cecil. Soon afterwards we became engaged to be married. We were dining in a restaurant one evening when a woman, who had been eyeing us a good deal, came up and said:

"You can't marry Lord Cecil. He is a married man!"

The Story of Lord Cecil's Wife.

For a moment I was struck dumb with amazement, and could only stare at her stupidly.

"A married man!" I gasped at last, while the room and the people in it grew unsteady to my eyes. "Do you mean that he has a wife living?"

"Yes. She sits before you now!"

"You?" I asked incredulously, conscious for the moment only of her shabby attire and unmistakably gipsy-like appearance.

"Yes," she answered firmly, "I am Lady Cecil Trevor."

Then Lord Cecil broke in angrily.

"This is a positive farce," he said. "You Lady Cecil Trevor, indeed! Come, Maud, let us go away; it is evident no one here has the pluck to give her in charge!"

The girl looked round coolly at the collection of people now watching us breathlessly, and then turning to me, said—

"Ask for a private room if you like, but don't go away with him. He will only tell you lie upon lie."

I looked from one to the other in distress, almost wishing that the floor would open and swallow me.

"Nonsense!" Lord Cecil exclaimed. "I can't allow it, Maud. You must come away with me at once!"

"If you do," said the girl, "I will follow you and proclaim what I have to say in the street."

Again I looked up in bewilderment, utterly at a loss what to do, and almost at the same moment Di's quiet voice said—

"Can I be of any service to you?"

Where he sprang from I do not know, but there he was sure enough.

I glanced at Lord Cecil and saw a scowl of malignant hatred come over his face, but I had quickly regained my self-possession under the instant feeling of security in Di's presence, and said—

"This girl wishes to tell me something. Will you procure a private room and come with us?"

Lord Cecil remonstrated vehemently, but it was no use, and finally he had to follow the three of us.

Then the girl drew a paper from her pocket, carefully guarding it, and, handing it to Di Northcote, said—

"What does that tell you?"

Di read it through in silence and then returned it to her.

"Tell the lady," said the girl, and Di turned to me.

"It states," he said, "that Cecil Trevor went through a ceremony of marriage with Rose Whitehead four years ago in Berlin."

Digitized by Google

"I am glad you said a ceremony," put in Lord Cecil sneeringly. "Ask her to show her marriage certificate!"

"You blackguard!" said Di, with cutting deliberation, and the look Lord Cecil threw at him made me shudder.

"Certificate or no certificate," Di continued unmoved. "This woman is undoubtedly your wife."

"And I say she is not!" he asserted.

The girl laughed, a hard, hopeless laugh that rang in my ears for weeks.

"Oh, he will go on swearing that!" she said. "He would swear his soul away if it suited him. I don't mind, I've had quite enough of him, and as long as I'm well I can earn enough for me and the children. Two there are," she added, "the youngest is nearly two years old, and he's never set eyes on her, nor given a farthing towards her keep!"

I recoiled in horror, while Lord Cecil swore at her under his breath.

"I have many friends," she went on, in a queenly way natural to her, "and I can get along just as well without him, but I have sworn to myself that as long as I live and have the power, I will stand between him and any other woman he would make a victim of."

She turned to me.

"I am of gipsy blood," she said, "but only through my mother, and I have never followed the caravan. Still, the tribe acknowledges me, and partly through this I am here to-night.

"Our ways are not your ways, but we hang together and help each other in all things. I have no more to say. You will take the lady home?" looking at Di, "and I shall vanish again till I am once more needed."

She turned to the door without so much as a glance at Lord Cecil, and with that calm simplicity of purpose that made it impossible for us to doubt her story.

"Wait a moment," said Di, and taking out his pocket-book drew from it a five-pound note.

But she shook her head. "We can do without money," she said proudly, "while we can work."

"For the children," he said simply, and her face changed. She seemed to hesitate, as if torn between conflicting desires, and finally, with a little, sad smile, held out her hand.

"For the children," she repeated slowly, and, taking the bank-note, bowed her head and vanished. As Di handed it to her, he handed with it one of his cards, and on it he had scribbled, "If you are ever in need come to me—for the children's sake," but this I learnt long afterwards.

Meanwhile Cecil Trevor had turned his back upon us, and now stood scowling up at a picture.

As Di and I were about to leave the room, I turned back and looked at him, and, as though led to it by some unseen force, he at the same moment turned to me. I don't know what possessed me, but after a moment's hesitation I said to Di—"Will you wait for me outside. I should like to speak to Lord Cecil alone."

Di did not half like it, but he could not very well do other than comply, and in a few seconds we two were alone in the room.

"Well," he said, "do you want to taunt me?"

"No," I answered, steadying my voice with an effort. "I want to say a word for that poor girl and her children!" I stepped near, and supported myself with a chair back, for the past scene had unnerved me.

"What has passed between you and me, and the wrong you meant to do me, need not come into the question now," I said. "What matters most is your treatment of her."

His face took a sullen expression, but I refused to be daunted and went on.

"Whether you are properly married or not I do not know, but it is certain you went through some form with her which she believed the right one. If it was not, marry her now," and I leant towards him pleadingly in my earnestness.

"Impossible!" he muttered. "I was a boy at the time and did not know what I was doing. Now I am a man I refuse to tie a mill-stone round my neck."

"I think it will be there whether you wish it or not," I said. "You owe this girl a name and a position. She is beautiful still, make her Lady Cecil Trevor, and perhaps you will drop the mill-stone, instead of binding it firmer."

"It is impossible!" he said again. "I do not love her, and I will not be tied to her. It doesn't affect me as you seem to think. I tell you I don't care. I don't care for anything. When a man gets to feel about things as I do, there is no right and wrong!"

"I don't believe it," I said resolutely. "You are not so wicked as you would make out."

"Oh, yes I am," he said, with a little, harsh laugh. "Much worse, in fact." He stopped short suddenly and looked up.

"If I had met you sooner," he said, "it might have been different—I don't know—but if anyone can make a man walk straight I guess it's a woman like you. It's a pity they're so scarce.

"You are the one and only specimen it has been my lot to come across. All the rest were more or less bad, or at any rate, so weak a fellow couldn't possibly care for them except as playthings."

He paused, then added in a voice from which he could not quite stifle the feeling—

"There have been a good many times since I met you when I have been sorry about things, but it's no good now. You came too late, you see; the die was cast and the pattern could not be changed. If you had married me I should have gone straight. Now it's all up with me!"

"Oh, don't say that," I cried. "You are only a young man still."

"No," he answered brusquely, "I am an old one; years go for nothing really; it is only experience that counts. I am going now—good-bye. I have no respect for your sex—it is impossible—if you knew what I know you would understand.

"But there is this difference now, I have met one good woman. I am glad, and I shall not forget. If there were more of you it would be better for all the world. Good-bye!" And without another word he hastily left the room and went out of my life for ever.

But I do not think of him harshly. In spite of everything I am only sorry to think that there are women who so degrade themselves as to give men a bad opinion of our sex.

When I walked home with Di that evening I was very meek indeed. If he had chosen to scold me I should have taken it like a lamb.

As it was, however, he scarcely spoke at all, and I began to be afraid he was mortally offended with me and had only helped me through my recent difficulty for Bobbie's sake.

When we were nearly home, however, he remarked abruptly—"You are looking very thin; I hope you are taking care of yourself?"

"Oh, yes," I replied carelessly, "I'm quite all right." I hesitated, then added, half bitterly, with Cecil Trevor uppermost in my mind, "Of course, I know you think I'm a silly little fool, but, well—" I stopped short.

"Yes?" he said encouragingly.

"No, I won't defend myself," I continued resolutely, "I *was*

Digitized by Google

a silly little fool, only I think it was the illness that did it."

"Have you been ill?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, I had influenza, and Lord Cecil took care of me. He was awfully good."

I saw him bite his lip, but he showed no other sign as to how he felt about it.

"It must have been while I was away in France," he said. "I only returned last week, and heard of your engagement at once."

"I wonder what you thought?" I could not resist remarking.

"I did not stop to think," he replied abruptly. "I set to work at once to find some way of proving to you what kind of a man he was."

"And in the end?" I asked.

"In the end I met with his wife."

"What! You brought her!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, but I did not intend to have a public scene. I meant to bring her to you here to-night. She was too quick for me. I suppose she saw you go to the restaurant and could not wait."

We had reached my door now, and I turned to him impulsively.

"You have been good to me; let me thank you," I said; "but I cannot understand why you take all this trouble about me."

"Do you want an honest answer?" he asked.

"I do," I replied, keeping my eyes fixed on his, in spite of a quickening pulse and sudden, uncontrollable nervousness.

"Then to tell you the honest truth, I don't know," he answered. "I do not believe in any woman very deeply, and as for liking, they are all more or less the same to me. You interest me, and I would like to believe in you, but it is a question for the future to decide."

"Thank you," I replied. "I, at any rate, like an honest friend. If you are inclined to be pals again, I will try to behave better in future," and I held out my hand. I smiled a little as he shook it. "Only you mustn't be too dictatorial," I added, "because my temper wasn't built for that kind of comradeship."

Two days later Bobbie burst into my room, after three months' absence, and the old *régime* began again; that is to say, the old *régime* when Bobbie was my faithful friend and caretaker.

I remained on the stage, but with another, and far better, company, through Di's influence, and the past miserable weeks became like a bad dream.

Looking back now, I think the three months that followed my unfortunate experience with Cecil Trevor were the happiest I remember.

I was so pleased with my new part, small though it was, and with the new order, that my ambitions were lulled to rest for a little, and I gave myself up to enjoyment pure and simple. In this Di only played a very insignificant part.

Beyond helping me when I needed help, he seemed indisposed to have anything more to do with me, and kept out of my way.

I did not feel flattered by any means, but I nursed my determination to make him *feel* some day, and banished him as far as possible from my mind. Indeed it was not difficult, for Flip Harcourt was back in London also, and he and Bobbie between them gave me little enough time to think.

We went about a great deal, in a quiet way, and were more like three happy children than anything.

Then Flip was ordered off to India, and a gloom fell upon us. We did not know what it was—he had been crazy to go a few weeks before—but now everything seemed different.

The last evening but one he fetched me from the theatre, and as Bobbie was engaged at home, we were alone.

He was so quiet that I felt vaguely uncomfortable, and at last it all came out.

Well, I have no mind to tell you just what that dear boy said to me, but no woman need want a sweeter or a truer wooing. When we said "Good-bye," I could not see anything for the tears in my eyes, and I could hardly find voice to speak. I wished so much it had not ended so. I tried to say it, but he interrupted me.

"No, don't wish that," he said. "I would not have an hour different, except you loved me. I shall not forget what splendid times we have had, and from first to last there is not a word or action of yours that anyone could blame.

"I'm glad I'm going out to India though," he ran on, with a catch in his voice; "many poor chaps would have had to stick on here, and grin and bear it. I couldn't do that anyhow, and I'd sooner go to the war than anything."

He broke down a moment then.

"I hope I'll get a bullet through me," he finished, "and die in the firing line."

Ah, poor Flip, poor Flip! and you had your wish dear, only it wasn't merely in the firing line, but winning the Victoria Cross. And I have got the little keepsake you meant for me.

They found it in your breast pocket, with two notes I had scribbled to you, a little curl of hair, and a tiny lace handkerchief marked with my name. I wonder when you stole that little curl, Flip? I wonder if you kissed it sometimes? I wish—oh, I wish I could have given you all you wanted.

Soon after Flip had sailed a new order again commenced for me, and the whirlwind of circumstances swept me forward.

It dated from a certain night when I was so late for the theatre that I jumped into a hansom, and told the man to drive fast. He was practically drunk I soon discovered from the giddy way in which he swerved round corners and across the road, but I had no time to change, so held my seat and hoped for the best.

We reached the theatre safely, but the roads were greasy, and in drawing up sharply the poor horse lost his footing and fell heavily.

I was out in a second to find the driver had shot down from his seat head first, and being quite incapable of picking himself up, remained stupidly on the ground, not much better off than the poor horse.

No one was at hand except a few children, the stage door being in a back street, and everyone else, no doubt, busy in their dressing-rooms.

"Fetch someone quickly," I exclaimed to the biggest child, and went at once to the horse. The poor beast had got nastily twisted, and I could see was in pain, so I set to work at once to unbuckle what harness I could get at.

He kicked a little, but I was not afraid, having had a good deal to do with horses on my father's farm, and just then a big man, who had apparently seen all that passed, came out of the theatre door to help. Before anyone arrived we got the animal free, and coaxed him to his feet, then I looked round anxiously.

"I am horribly late," I said, "and the man is quite incapable. Someone ought to give him in charge."

My companion, who had been watching me more or less closely ever since he came to the rescue, at once signified his willingness to stay, and with a hurried thanks I fled to my dressing-room and thought no more about the incident.

Two days later, much to my surprise, I received a request to present myself at the manager's office in the afternoon at three o'clock.

Hoping I was not in disgrace about anything, but I must

Digitized by Google

confess a little anxiously, I called at the appointed time and was at once ushered into the formidable presence.

A big man, standing at the window, turned as I entered, and while he surveyed me with a quick, keen scrutiny, I recognised my helper of the cab difficulty.

The manager introduced him to me as Mr. Gregory, and after the usual greetings he went on to tell me that he was the manager of a large theatre in New York; that he was going to produce a very successful American play in England, and that his leading lady had just met with a serious accident, and could not fulfil her engagement.

Further that Mr. Gregory had been much struck by my appearance, and my promptness over the cab disaster, and later, by the way in which I played my little part.

Finally that he wished to enter into negotiations with me, with a view to my taking the part of the leading lady in his new play.

I was so astonished at first that I literally gasped. He seemed amused at this, and I conceived a liking for him at once, which only increased steadily throughout our intercourse.

"I am not at all satisfied with Miss Weldon's understudy," he said, "and I have been going the round of the theatres in search of an actress to play the part instead of her. If you will take it home and study it carefully, I should be glad to see you again to-morrow."

The part proved a delightful one, and I am quite sure it will remain my favourite to the last, just as it will doubtless be the one with which my name is chiefly remembered. When I saw Mr. Gregory the next morning I told him at once that I knew I could play it, and my frankness pleased him.

"Confidence in yourself is often half the battle," he said. "I have not the least hesitation is giving you a trial. I have had a talk with Mr. Grange, and he is willing to release you from your engagement with him, to free you to prepare for the rehearsals at once."

When I left the theatre that time I went straight to a telegraph office and wired to Bobbie. I felt as if fame had dropped upon me from the skies, and I must do something out of the ordinary to give vent to my wild, inward elation. He, as I anticipated, was scarcely less excited than I, and ready for anything.

In the end we took stalls at a theatre, and dined at the Carlton. I remember that evening so well. Already I saw myself one of the great actresses of the day, and I'm sure I carried my head an inch higher than I had ever done before.

A new consciousness of beauty and power came to me, and as I met on all sides the usual admiring glances, I felt my heart swell with a new intensity of the joy of being and doing. Bobbie scarcely took his eyes off me.

"I did not think you could look lovelier than I have already seen you," he said; "and yet to-night there is something altogether fresh about you—something that even makes you more beautiful. What is it—you witch? Are you going to have the eyes of all the world upon you, and not be content any longer with poor Bobbie?"

A little later, digging his hands deep in his pockets, and staring moodily at the drop curtain, he remarked:

"I believe I'm beginning to wish old Gregory and his blessed new play at the bottom of the sea."

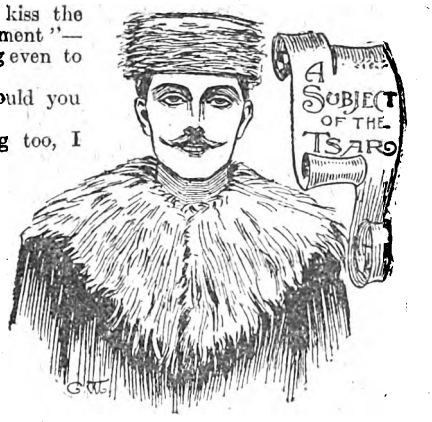
I tried to rally him. "Why?" I asked; "I expected you to be more glad than anyone."

"Then you shouldn't expect anything of the kind," he grumbled. "Good Heavens, Queenie!—am I likely to be glad about anything that robs me of you?"

"Robs you of me?" I repeated vaguely; "whatever are you dreaming of, Bobbie? I'm not going to die young that I know of."

"I know what I'm dreaming of well enough"—in the same disconsolate voice—"I'm seeing a picture of you at the top of the tree, dropping a few favours here and there with great condescension, among a small army of the human species in male attire, grovelling on their knees at your feet."

"Looking for ping-pong balls?" I asked irrelevantly.



"No, trying to kiss the hem of your garment"—not condescending even to smile.

"And where would you be?" I asked.

"Oh, grovelling too, I suppose — unless —unless——"

"Unless you were occupied with some other fair lady?" I inquired, smiling.

"No, unless I was on your right hand as your king, just as you are my queen."

"Oh, Bobbie! Bobbie!" I moaned; "*please* don't get sentimental."

"I can't help it," he said; "I'm madly in love with you, and I'm so beastly afraid all this success will come between us."

I laughed uneasily.

"You really are talking arrant nonsense, Bobbie," I asserted; "I don't know what's happened to you."

"I'm in deadly earnest, anyhow," he said; "right down, thundering, deadly earnest.

"But what about? I don't know what you're driving at."

"Then you're as dense as you are beautiful," he answered; "any girl with the ordinary amount of commonsense, in your place, would know that I wanted to marry her."

For a moment I was taken aback. It was the first time, in anything beyond the most palpable jesting, that Bobbie had spoken to me of love, and naturally I had taken it for granted all our intercourse and familiarity were more or less of a jesting nature.

We were pals pure and simple, and I was always prepared for Bobbie, one day, to confide to me the name of some fine lady he had chosen to be his bride.

Now I could hardly believe my own ears.

"Look here, Queenie," he remarked suddenly, before I had time to say anything; "I hate sentimentality as much as you do; let's be very businesslike. I want you to marry me—of course I do—I have done so for months—and I don't see that there's any reason why you can't. Let's fix it up next week."

"But my dear Bobbie!" I gasped; "what on earth are you going to do with me when you have married me?"

"Well, I didn't think of beating you just yet," he remarked drily.

I was silent a few moments, then I turned to him earnestly.

"No, don't be in earnest, Bobbie," I pleaded, "I like you so much, frivolous and irresponsible, I don't want you ever to be different. We've had such lovely times together—do let us go on just the same."

"No," he said resolutely, "I won't. I tell you I am in deadly earnest, and I intend to remain so. But it's not going to make any difference to the fun. We'll go on just the same, only I shall ask you periodically—in halfpenny numbers, don't you know, to be my wife; and if you don't give way for any other reason, you probably will in the end for peace and quietness."

He spoke half-jestingly, but his face was very white and determined, and I was frightened, for I knew perfectly well I should never marry him.

I felt I must convince him of this at once, I waited until we were going home, however, and then returned to the charge.

"Do you see this picture, Bobbie?" I said, glancing up at it; "it is a bit of Cornwall, and a bit of me. Those cliffs are drawn from life—they are some of the wildest and grandest in England. There is not much shadow of turning about them, is there? Not much wavering or giving up? It doesn't

Digitized by Google

matter how fierce the sea, nor how wild the elements, they just brave them steadily, like adamantine walls."

I went and stood in front of him, stirred to my innermost being by my own strong feelings.

"I was born beside them, Bobbie," I said; "they are some of the first objects I ever remember opening my baby eyes upon; my small brain was almost reared upon thoughts of them. Whatever came and went, whatever befell, those giant cliffs frowned serenely on—steadfast, immutable, sublime.

"They caught my fancy before anything else, and have held it ever since—whatever I own of steadfastness, or resolute purpose, I feel I owe to them.

"Bobbie, just think it out a moment—nothing but an earthquake will make those cliffs change their purpose of holding back the sea. And I drank in the spirit of them, from my earliest infancy!

"Do you understand, Bobbie?—nothing but a miracle will change me now from my set purpose.

"I own a few weeks ago I wavered, but it was largely ill-health and a terrible depression. It is gone now and I am stronger than ever."

I stopped suddenly with a little laugh.

"How I am ranting, Bobbie," I said apologetically; "you must think I've gone off my head.

"But you understand, don't you? By going to the top I don't really mean the top of the theatrical profession—I mean a higher level still—I want to be a peeress, and since I can only become so by marriage, it is evident that I cannot marry you."

He got up then and strode down the room, kicking angrily at anything that came in his way.

"Drivel!" he said, coming back; "pure schoolgirl, mawkish drivel—I'm more than surprised at you—I'm—I'm—disgusted!"

I made no reply, and presently he added—"It's so beastly commonplace, too—every silly fool wants to be a duchess, and Heaven knows!—it's a poor enough game at best. You'll be sick of it in a year, I'll lay a quid. If your precious duke drinks and gambles you'll wish yourself at the bottom of the sea."

"I don't think he'll do that," I said quietly; "I'm not such a fool as you seem to think. I'll take that bet, Bobbie, just register it in your pocket-book.

"Only don't go on thinking about marrying me, because it can never be. I don't believe I could, even if I wanted to—my will wouldn't let me."

He came up to me and put his hands on my shoulders.

"I've got a will, too, Queenie," he said; "we'll just let the two of them fight it out to the end. Whichever way Fortune turns, I am your slave to the last, don't forget that."

(Next Tuesday I will tell you of my first appearance in a leading theatrical part.)

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE FALCON.

An Italian Story of Love and Sacrifice.

In Florence there was once a young man named Federigo, son of Master Filippo Alberighi, esteemed in feats of arms and in courtesy above every other young lord in Tuscany. Once upon a time, as usually befalls gallant men, he fell in love with a noble lady called Mistress Giovanna, in her day ranked among the fairest and most charming women of Florence; and to win her love he jousted and fought, gave feasts and made gifts, and lavished his wealth without measure or check.

But she, no less honourable than beautiful, took no notice of those things done for her, or of him who did them.

As Federigo then spent far beyond his means and gained nothing, it easily follows that his riches came to an end, and he remained poor. There was nothing left him but a little farm of his, on the income from which he lived wretchedly, and besides this a falcon, one of the best in the world.

And so, more in love than ever, and seeing it beyond his power to live in the city as he longed to do, he went to dwell at Campi, where his farm was. Here flying his falcon when he could, and asking no man's help, patiently he endured his poverty.

Now it happened one day, after Federigo had thus come to grief, that Mistress Giovanna's husband fell sick, and seeing death near, made his will. In this, being wealthy, he made his son, a sturdy little fellow, his heir, and then, because he had greatly loved Mistress Giovanna, provided that all should pass to her if the son died without lawful issue; and he died.

Mistress Giovanna, thus left a widow, went in the summer, as the ladies are wont to do, into the country with her son to an estate of hers not far from Federigo's.

So it came about that this lad began to grow intimate with Federigo and to take delight in birds and dogs; and having often seen Federigo's falcon fly he liked it hugely and mightily longed to own it, yet was unwilling to ask for it, seeing it was so dear to its master.

While matters stood thus it happened that the boy fell ill.

His mother, greatly afflicted by this, since she had no one else and loved him with all her heart, remained near him all day long, never ceased comforting him, and often asked him if there were anything he wished, begging him to tell her, for if it were possible to obtain it she would surely see that he had it.

The boy, after hearing these offers many times, said:

"Mother, dear, if you will get me Federigo's falcon I believe I shall get well soon."

When the lady heard this she remained quiet for awhile, and began to think what she ought to do.

She knew that Federigo had long loved her, and had never had from her a single look, so she said:

"How shall I send or go to ask him for this falcon, which, from what I hear, is the best that ever flew, and besides is all that keeps him alive? And how can I be so heartless as to wish to take from a man the last joy that is left him?"

And embarrassed by such thoughts, as she was perfectly sure she would get it, if she asked for it, she did not answer her son, but was silent, not knowing what to say.

Digitized by Google

At last, love of the child so overpowered her that in order to satisfy him, she determined that, whatever came of it, she would not send but would go herself for the bird and bring it to him ; and she answered him :

"Cheer up, my boy, and make up your mind to get well, for I promise you that the first thing I do to-morrow morning I shall go for it and surely bring it to you."

The child, happy in that thought, seemed to grow better the same day.

The next morning, accompanied by a friend, the lady went for a walk to Federigo's cottage and asked for him. Because the weather was not suitable for flying his falcon he was in a field of his, overseeing certain tasks.

Hearing that Mistress Giovanna was at the door asking for him he was greatly astonished, and ran there joyfully. When she saw him approach she rose to meet him with a womanly charm of manner, and when Federigo had courteously greeted her, she said :

"Good morning, Federigo," and went on, "I have come to make amends to you for the harm you have received through me, loving me more than you should have done ; and the compensation is this, that I mean, with my companion here, to breakfast with you in friendly fashion this morning."

Federigo humbly answered her :

"My lady, no harm do I remember ever to have received through you, but rather so much good that if I was ever of any account it was through your worth and through the love I bore you. And surely your generous coming to me now is much dearer to me than it would be if I had the power to spend again as much as I have spent in the past, since you have become a poor man's guest."

And so saying he received her shamefacedly into his house and from there took her into the garden, and having no one else there to entertain her, he said :

"My lady, since there is no one else this good woman, the farmer's wife, will keep you company while I go and have the table set."

Although his poverty was extreme, he had not yet learnt as he ought to have done that he had foolishly spent his wealth.

But this morning, finding nothing with which he could feast that lady, for love of whom he had before feasted countless men, made him think ; and, afflicted beyond measure, he reviled his luck, like a man out of his senses, running this way and that, finding neither money nor a thing that might be pawned.

When it was already late and he was eager to honour the fair lady with something at least, and unwilling to ask of anyone, even his own father, he happened to catch sight of his good falcon upon its perch.

And so, having nothing else to turn to, he took it, and, finding it plump, he decided that it was worthy food for such a lady. Therefore, without more thought, he wrung its neck and had his maid-servant dress it and put it before the fire and roast it carefully ; and having spread the table with white cloths, of which he still had a few, he returned gaily to the lady in the garden and said that such breakfast as he could furnish was ready.

The lady, with her companion, rose and went to the table, and, without knowing what they were eating, together with Federigo, who served them faithfully, they ate up the poor falcon.

When they had risen from the table and lingered awhile in pleasant conversation with him, it seemed to the lady time to say what she had come for, so with a friendly manner towards Federigo, she began :

"Federigo, when you recall your past life and my regard for my honour, which perhaps you considered harshness and cruelty, I have no doubt that you must wonder at my presumption when you hear the principal reason why I come. But if you had children, or had had any, through whom you might know the power of love for them, I should be certain that you would partially excuse me.

"But although you have no child I, who have one, cannot escape the laws which govern other mothers ; and as I must yield to their force, without any regard to my pleasure or to the proprieties, I am constrained to ask of you a gift which I know is precious to you—and rightly so, for your evil fortune has left you no other delight, no other diversion, no other comfort. This gift is your falcon, of which my boy is so fond, that if I do not take it to him I am afraid he will grow so much worse that I shall lose him.

"Therefore, I beg you, not by the love you have for me, which places you under no obligations, but by your noble nature, which seems to make you more courteous than anyone else, consent to give me the bird. Then I may say that by this gift I have kept my son alive and so placed him under eternal obligations to you."

Federigo, hearing what the lady asked, and regretting that he could not serve her, because he had given it to her to eat, began to weep before he could answer a word.

The lady at first believed that this weeping came more from grief at having to give up the good falcon than from anything else; and she was almost on the point of saying that she did not wish it, but she checked herself and waited for Federigo's answer, which came, after many tears :

"My lady, since the time when by God's will I gave you my love I have found Fortune hostile to me in many things, and have complained of her ; but all those things were nothing in comparison with what she is doing to me now—a thing for which I shall never forgive her, when I think that you have come here to my poor house, where you never deigned to come when it was a rich one, and you seek from me a little gift, and Fortune has so contrived that I cannot give it to you ; and I shall tell you briefly why this cannot be.

"When I heard that you—and I thank you for it—wished to breakfast with me, I considered it fit and proper, with regard to your rank and your worth, to honour you with more precious food, so far as lay in my power, than those viands which are generally used for other persons.

"So, when I thought of the falcon which you now ask me for, and of his value, I judged him to be fit food for you, and this morning you have had him roasted upon the platter, and I thought that was an excellent use for him, but now when I see that you have wished for him in another way, I feel such grief because I cannot serve you, that I am sure I shall never give myself a moment's peace about it."

And saying this he had the feathers and feet and head brought forward as a proof.

When the lady saw and heard this, first she blamed him for having slain such a falcon just to give food to a woman ; and then in her heart she praised highly the greatness of his soul which poverty had not been able to lessen. She went away sadly and returned to her son.

The boy, either from grief because he could not have the falcon, or from the natural progress of his sickness, not many days later, to the great grief of his mother, passed from this life. She, after giving herself up to tears and bitterness for a time, being now rich and still young, was often urged by her brothers to marry again.

Although she was reluctant, yet, seeing herself tormented by them, she remembered the noble qualities of Federigo and his last act of generosity—namely, his killing such a falcon to honour her—and she said to her brothers :

"I would rather remain a widow if you were willing ; but if you still wish me to marry I shall certainly never marry again unless it be with Federigo degli Alberighi."

Her brothers in derision said :

"Stupid, what are you saying? How can you want him, when he has nothing in the world ?"

She answered them :

"Brothers, I know that it is just as you say ; but I want a man without wealth, rather than wealth without a man."

Her brothers, hearing her decision and knowing Federigo to be a true man, although he was poor, gave her to him with all her wealth as she desired. And he, finding himself the husband of a lady so beautiful and whom he had so much loved, and besides that being now wealthy, became a careful manager and spent the rest of his life with her in perfect joy.

F. A. Sturt

Digitized by Google

ONLY A WEDDING CARD!

A Love Story with a Sad Ending.

LIGHT of heart, plain even to homeliness, large-nosed, thin-cheeked, square-jawed, with his long limbs hanging loosely to his body, laughing at all hours and places and things, happy apparently from morning to night, and entirely free from business cares and worries, Richard Morrison surely took life as easily as any man in or out of Workingham.

Those jealous of his disposition said he was too well satisfied with himself to be in earnest, and that he was wearisome; but the power he showed at entertaining women and children by the hour, without eliciting a yawn or a depressing lot of condescending monosyllables, would seem to prove him quite the opposite.

A capital dancer and a thorough society-man so far as frothy remarks and subtle flattery went, he found a welcome everywhere, and was considered as indispensable at dances and card-parties as the refreshments themselves. Indeed, some of the lately-opened buds had been heard to remark that he was even more enjoyable than ices and bonbons. But they had not known Dick very long.

If he had been handsome or very wealthy, he would have fallen into some designing mother's hands and have been turned into a benedict; but as his income was only modestly large, and as his face, as inelegantly described by his best friend, Hartman Lawson, would eventually hang him, light-hearted Dick still remained a bachelor, and every indication pointed to his finally filling—I quote Mr. Lawson once more—a bachelor's grave.

Dick had two peculiarities: he did not drink, and he fell in love ever so often. The first, in such a town as Workingham, stamped him as a different being from the rest of mankind; the second made him interesting to every woman he knew.

All the way through the upper, middle, and lower strata of society in and about Workingham Dick penetrated, loving as freely and as often as he laughed, happy and miserable as regularly as he was thrown over or quietly "forgotten," but believing through it all that he would find a girl at last who would care for him enough to marry him and help spend his small income.

* * * * *

"Come in," said Hartman, in answer to a nervous knock on his door one evening.

As the door opened he looked up from under the lamp to see who it is, and his eyes met those of Dick.

"That you, Richard? Take a chair," and he politely kicked one towards his visitor.

"I haven't time to stay," Dick explained, as Hartman pointed silently to the tobacco-jar and array of pipes on the mantel-piece. "I am packing. Eh? Yes, going away."

"Ah," said his friend, finishing a paragraph in his novel and turning it face down on his knees. "Where?"

"Goatstone. I don't suppose you know it, but——" He stopped and going to the door closed it carefully, then he came to his friend's side and rolled up one of his loose sleeves.

"Look at that," he said, bringing his bare arm into the soft light of the shaded lamp. Lawson put on his eye-glasses and looked down at the member; touched the little callous spots which almost covered the forearm, with a gentle thumb and finger; and pursed his lips.

"Too bad, old man!" he said; "how long?"

"A year or more. I first began taking the stuff that time I was so ill and when I couldn't sleep—you'll remember that, because you used to suffer from my everlasting walking up and down the room. I thought it would go away—the desire for it—but I was decidedly mistaken. It's got me fast, and it will end me if I don't end it."

"Sit down," said the other, quietly motioning to the chair again with his pipe, "and tell me all about it."

"Precious little to tell," replied the younger man, the laughter missing from his voice and homely face now. "The fool of a doctor gave it to me in the first place, and hadn't sense enough to warn me about it. You see, I wouldn't know that the thing becomes a habit unless someone told me so every now and then, and he didn't even mention it once—at least, not more than once, anyway.

"It ran on without worrying me till a month or so ago, when I forgot to get some tablets one night. I suffered horrors for twelve hours—not only physically, but mentally; for it was the first time I had realised what a hold the morphine had on me. At daybreak, I got round to the chemist and roused him up, and so slept all the day. But at night I began to make a stand against the stuff, and no one knows how hard I tried to overcome the need for it.

"I walked all night, up and down the streets, fighting every step of the way against the awful appetite for my poison; and when dawn came again, I thought I had conquered, but it fooled me. The minute I got home, I rushed for the syringe, and not ten thousand devils or saints could have kept me from it, though I tried with all the power left in me to stop.

"Yes, it is all up with me. I can't stop it myself, so I'm going to Dr. Harper. It's the only way. What I came to ask you to do for me is to throw the fellows off the track, if they come asking you questions. If they find I have gone to the doctor's hospital, they'll swear it's the D.T.'s; and you know yourself it isn't that, though it is just as bad, if not worse."

Dick stopped abruptly and coloured as he realised what a long speech, for him, he had been making.

"I understand; you want me to put the boys off when they ask me where you are. How long will you be gone?"

"They claim they can cure a man in three weeks; but I'll be there a month. I don't want any half-way business in mine, and this once must be the first and last time I go there. You will do this for me?"

"Of course, old man. You are doing right to go before

Digitized by Google

it is too late, and I certainly hope you'll come out of it all right. But, Dick——"

"Well?"

"I knew it long ago."

"You did? How?"

"Never mind. Only I wanted to tell you that I had an eye on you, and I was thinking to-night of opening the subject with you. Just another case of coincidence."

"Yes. Well, I'm much obliged to you for thinking of me, and I'll be more so if you keep the boys out of the way. I'll be off now; start at seven in the morning, so I won't see you. Take a look in my rooms every now and then, old man, and make yourself at home whenever you feel like it. I'll leave a key for you. I—— Good night," and he held out his hand.

Hartman shook it heartily, and Dick was at the door before he spoke.

"Richard!"

"Well?" again.

"Hadn't you better tell me the rest?"

"The rest?"

"The rest."

"How did you know there was any rest, Hartman?"

Hartman smiled. "Anyone could have told that," he said. "Go on; has she promised to wait until you are—well again?"

"No," said Richard eagerly, the look of hope and love which his friend had seen so often coming into his eyes once more. "I wouldn't let her do that. She started to say something, and there were tears in her eyes, bless her, but I would not stay. I told her everything.

"First I told her how much I loved her"—Hartman smiled, but Dick went on—"and that I wouldn't want her to say she would wait for me. I told her, if I deserved her, I would have her and her love when I got back.

"I know she loves me, but I couldn't stand hearing her say so; it would have broken me up so I wouldn't have been willing to start to-morrow. So, as quick as I got through telling her my plan, and before she could say a word, though she tried, I got away and came home."

"But are you sure of yourself this time?" asked Hartman.

"Sure of myself? I wish I were as sure of Heaven as I am of myself! I love that girl, Hartman, with everything—heart, soul, and body—and I mean to have her in the end, if honest working for her will count. I don't want you to tell me a word about her while I am gone, and she isn't to write to me, because I haven't strength of mind to stay away from her when I think or hear of her too much. When I come back, I'll tell you the rest—all of it."

"That's a good plan; you are right not to make a regular engagement of it, old man; it is more fair to both of you. But are you in earnest this time, Dick?"

"Now, ook here, Hartman," exclaimed his friend impatiently, "every man is in earnest once in his life, even if he is of no account as I am, isn't he? Well, I tell you, this is my earnest time, and no mistake about it. I'm going to prove it to you. Good night," and he was gone before Hartman could even ask him her name.

As Dick's own door closed behind him, Hartman took from his pocket a tiny photograph—the picture of an exceedingly pretty girl. He smiled at the winsome face, and then kissed it once or twice. He was usually a hard, practical man, but very few of us are not foolish once in a while.

One day, about a month after, Dick, free from his trouble and looking much more like the Dick of twelve months ago, came quietly home.

He had not told Hartman even that he would be back that day, and he met no intimate friends as he went to his rooms in the quiet little street. In an hour he was settled as comfortably as ever, and all the afternoon he was answering letters that had come while he had been gone.

After dinner he went for a short walk; and, as he ran down the steps and drew in a breath of the fresh Spring air, he felt that his cup of happiness was almost full. and that soon the tortures he had suffered—hidden under his accustomed gaiety, though none the less deep on that account—would be repaid a thousand-fold.

He started for the club; but his feet took him elsewhere, and ten minutes later he was unlatching the gate at her house.

He found her at a little desk in the corner of the room, writing; and, as she rose to receive him, he saw scattered about on it innumerable envelopes which she had addressed.

She caught his inquiring glance, and a pretty colour came into her face as she laughingly handed him one of them. He opened it with a queer feeling at his heart, which was not relieved when he began to read the plain little engraved sheet within:

"Mr. and Mrs. L. S. Torence request the pleasure of your company at the marriage of their daughter Lizzie——"

Dick read no further. For a moment everything seemed to turn black around him, and he set his teeth hard to keep back the groan which rose to his lips.

But it passed quickly.

He put the card back into its envelope, and that into his pocket; then he turned to her with his old smile.

"I congratulate him, Lizzie," he said, quite steadily.

Late that night, after the theatre, Hartman ran whistling up the stairs to Dick's rooms. He had just heard that he had got back, and he had determined to drop in and scold him a bit for not notifying him, before he himself turned in.

The door was locked; but Hartman had the key he carried while Dick was away, and he put it softly in the lock, and, turning it, stepped quietly into the room.

A slight breath of air, which made the gas-jet burning near the table waver and flare up again, swept past him, laden with the odour of crushed rose-leaves, and it carried him back, as sweet odours only can carry one back into the past.

He smiled thoughtfully and looked down.

Stretched at full length before the long mirror, face downwards, was Dick himself, and the cheerful words of greeting died on Lawson's lips. He closed the door hastily, and, running forward, knelt beside him. No breath, no motion, no sound.

He turned him over slowly, and the wide-open eyes of careless Dick did not smile back into his own as they had always done. He touched his pulse with his finger, but it was still.

In one thin hand the dead man held the fragments of a small bottle which had been crushed under him as he fell; in the other, a crumpled sheet of rich paper.

Lawson took the paper gently from his cold fingers and held it under the gas. He started back when he saw what it was, for it was one of his own wedding-cards.

His hand trembled, and the paper fluttered to the floor.

"Dick!" he whispered hoarsely, touching the body with his foot and springing back in horror again at his own action. "Dick, get up! Why didn't you tell me who it was? How could I know? I did not mean —— Dick, I say! Dick! Oh, Heaven! He is dead, and I——"

He passed his hand quickly over his own white, wet face, and sank down, overcome with his feelings.

For Richard Morrison's earnest time had come—and gone!

M. E. R.

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL. **START TO-DAY.**

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Moira Davenal is sitting in the little cottage on Groudle Quay busy with her ribbon work. Sir Guy Vanbrugh is talking to her.

"Moira, I love you so much," he says. "Won't you——"

He pauses. There is a heavy step in the hallway of the cottage, and a burly figure enters the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal. I'm off to London for the week-end and was just leaving a message for you with your daughter. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph?*"

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," says John Davenal, who is a diver engaged in raising Sir Gu 's yacht. "She'll soon be afloat."

After Sir Guy has gone a sailor appears at the door singing in drunken tones the scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

The diver rises to his feet.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarks loudly. "Glad to see you. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

While Moira goes out on an errand a conversation takes place between the two men, from which it appears that Moira is really Hartigan's daughter.

The sailor—who is a ship's steward—sits back in his chair and begins to sing again the drunken chorus.

He halts abruptly, for the door slowly opens, and a blind woman comes in.

Dennis Hartigan recognises her as his sister Kate. She tells her brother that she heard the song he was singing—sung in just the same way—once when she was sitting on a breakwater at Groudle. She also adds that the man who was singing said, evidently to someone with him: "This is out far enough. In with it;" after which there was a splash.

Hannah Davenal (Hartigan's wife and the diver's sister) is maid to Lady Tarleton. She is possessed of a secret with which she continually blackmails her mistress.

One afternoon Lady Tarleton and Hannah Davenal go down to Groudle Tower, and together they make a mysterious journey at midnight.

Two mornings later Hannah is found dead in bed, a towel smelling of chloroform is on her face, and over that a pillow on which are some dirty finger marks.

The police are informed of the tragedy, and Detective Sergeant Ussher is sent from Scotland Yard to investigate the affair.

Edward Stormont, the owner of Groudle Tower, and Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law, now arrives at Groudle with his friend Paul Jerome, a war-correspondent, and the following day Irene Tarleton comes in response to her mother's summons.

Dennis Hartigan is arrested on suspicion of causing his wife's death, but is soon released. He has a mysterious conversation with Lady Tarleton regarding a child.

"If—if the child were no longer in my path," Lady Tarleton murmurs, "I would give ten thousand pounds—to the man who told me so. Think it well over."

"I will, my lady," Hartigan answers.

On his way back to Groudle Tower Hartigan encounters his sister Kate. They return by way of the level-crossing. A train is in sight, rounding the curve. Dennis leaves his blind sister standing in between the metals along which the train is coming. She is rescued just in time by Paul Jerome, who is out riding. He leaps one gate, picks Kate up, and then leaps the other gate.

After leaving Kate in safety Jerome comes up with Hartigan, and tells him that he saw all that happened, and leaves him with a warning.

Lady Tarleton discovers that her daughter is very friendly with Jerome, and takes her to task about it. She wants Irene to marry Sir Guy and does not know that they have each agreed to go their own way.

Davenal and Hartigan go for a walk on Groudle Quay, where they have a heated and rather unfriendly conversation regarding Moira. They part and Hartigan hurries on. He hides behind a fence near Davenal's cottage and when the latter comes along stabs him in the back.

Guy Vanbrugh goes down to Hawthorn Cottage to see the diver, not knowing that he has been murderously attacked. He tries to comfort Moira and takes her in his arms.

Suddenly the wicket-latch clicks, and Moira looks up. It is too late. Lady Tarleton, pausing on the threshold of Hawthorn Cottage, has glanced into the small entrance hall, and perceives none other than Sir Guy Vanbrugh with a fair and ruffled head pillowed on his breast.

Digitized by Google

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Guy Vanbrugh is Detected.

Blushing painfully, Moira released herself and stepped back. The new-comer put up a tortoiseshell-rimmed lorgnette, and regarded her with a penetrating stare, whose affectation of indolent disdain could not conceal its ferocity. Lady Tarleton's glance travelled to her nephew, and her lip curled in a coarse, though subtle sneer.

Guy Vanbrugh had coloured slightly. He drew himself up to the full height of an athletic five-feet ten and squared his young shoulders. A proud, if somewhat embarrassed smile flickered about his mouth. Lady Tarleton was the first to break the silence. Conspicuously ignoring Guy Vanbrugh, she addressed herself to Moira.

"I am sorry to interrupt your philanderings, my good girl," she remarked, with a brutal self-possession, "but I understand that some persons named Davenal live here. I am Lady Tarleton."

Moira retreated to the rear of the little hall.

"Will you come in, please?" she said nervously.

Guy Vanbrugh opened the inner door, Kit had gone out of the room, and the pleasant, simple apartment was empty.

"Allow me, aunt," he interpolated deftly, as Lady Tarleton swept by him, "to make you acquainted with Miss Moira Davenal. She is the daughter of my friend, John Davenal, and is to honour me by becoming something more than a friend. Moira, my aunt; aunt, my future wife."

Lady Tarleton struggled for breath—her nephew's swift, cool candour had taken her off her guard. The blush that had begun to fade from Moira's cheeks returned to them. But she looked up at Guy Vanbrugh and her eyes shone with a soft, sweet confidence in him. He had met the situation in a fashion befitting a gentleman and a loyal lover.

"This is scarcely the time," he went on calmly, "I should have chosen to take anyone, even yourself, aunt, into what has been hitherto rather a secret. But I cannot allow you, for a moment, to think that Miss Davenal would permit me to indulge in an aimless and, indeed, dishonourable flirtation."

A shrill little peal of laughter burst from Lady Tarleton's full white throat.

"Oh, my dear Guy," she exclaimed, "how picturesque you are, and how seriously one takes these things at your age. But, I assure you, I am quite discreet, and if worldly wisdom should prove in the end stronger than youthful romance, why I shall not have mentioned your—your flirtation, as you call it, to a soul."

Guy Vanbrugh forced a smile, but his expression had darkened.

"I should prefer that you had received my explanation in a less jesting spirit, aunt," he replied; "but Miss Davenal will, I hope, not need to be told that you are rather fond of banter, even of a somewhat cynical order."

Moira's nostrils contracted, and she lifted her delicate eyebrows. But otherwise she made no response to her lover's tactful observation.

"Won't you sit down, Lady Tarleton?" she suggested, and indicated, with an almost disdainful gesture, the high-backed, cushioned chair that was the diver's favourite seat; "no doubt you called upon some matter of business, my Aunt Hannah was your maid, I believe?"

Lady Tarleton put up her lorgnette once more. She was no mean judge of character, and there was a ring in the refined though girlish tones, which told her that Moira Davenal was a cultivated and intelligent woman. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Quite so," she said, sinking into the chair; "I had no idea that my visit would result in surprising so highly romantic a secret. My object, Miss Davenal, was simply to inquire after your father. Your aunt was really a most deserving person and her shocking death touched me deeply."

The speaker coughed and glanced around her with an air of supercilious toleration.

"I need not say," she continued, "how grieved I was to hear that a murderous attack had been also made on your father. The chief of the detectives, it seems, fancies there may be somebody who had a grudge against both your father and my poor Davenal. It is very sad, very."

She yawned behind her tightly-fitting slate-grey glove.

"And so," she said, "as I had to drive into Groudle for the inquest, I thought I would call and ask how your father is, and if I could do anything for you in your great trouble. I trust both yourself and my dear Guy here will forgive me my unintentional intrusion. You really made a most charming picture—quite idyllic."

Guy Vanbrugh laid a hand on Moira's brown fingers—they were resting on the edge of the plain serge tablecloth. It was as if he were seeking to fortify her against the mocking politeness of Lady Tarleton. Moira withdrew her hand. There was something in the latter's insolent regard that made her lover's caress distasteful to her.

"My father is very ill indeed, Lady Tarleton," she said, with grave courtesy; "it was kind of you to think of us. But we want for nothing, thank you very much all the same."

Lady Tarleton looked at the tiny bracelet watch on her wrist, folded her lorgnette, and rose.

"Not at all," she answered. "I hope your father may do well. And now you may show me to my carriage, Guy; it will give you an opportunity to assure me that you bear no malice."

She dropped Moira a bow of amused patronage, and took her departure. Guy Vanbrugh escorted her out of the cottage, and, notwithstanding her intimation, put her into her victoria without remark. He was silent, almost repellant. Lady Tarleton tapped him with her lorgnette.

"Guy," she murmured, "what an awful mistake you are making. You poor boy, how you will regret it one of these days. Yet there, all you men are alike where a pretty face is concerned. That is, till the gilt is off the gingerbread. However, if you should come to your senses in time, remember that I am your friend, and, especially, that I shall not breathe a word of this—to Irene."

She motioned to the footman and the victoria was whirled away before he could reply. Under cover of her parasol, Lady Tarleton glanced back, and saw that he was just entering the gate of Hawthorn Cottage.

"The fool!" she said, "the hot-headed young fool! But at least I *know*—my Lady Bountiful call has, indeed, served me better than I meant."

She relapsed into thought, playing with the thick gold ring of her parasol.

"The girl is dangerously pretty," she muttered, "and even more dangerously clever. I—I wonder who she reminds me of."

Lady Tarleton pondered irritably as the carriage rolled through the irregular, sunny streets of Groudle, to the weather-beaten, grey stucco block of public offices where was to be held the inquiry into the death of her murdered maid.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I Promise, Guy, Dear."

"You must forgive me blurting it out quite so theatrically, my darling, but really it was the only thing to do."

Digitized by Google

Moira turned from the window of the cottage. Sheltered by one of its looped muslin curtains, she had been watching the departure of Lady Tarleton's victoria. Guy Vanbrugh crossed the room, drew her from the casement, and put an arm about her.

"I feel as though you had really become mine, now, dear," he said; "I ought to have spoken to your father myself and at once. Nothing but vexation can spring out of secrecy in an engagement such as——" He stopped awkwardly. Moira winced.

"Such as ours," she concluded; "that was what you were going to say, wasn't it? I am beginning to feel that ours isn't the ordinary sort of—of engagement. I'm not quite sure that it is the right sort."

Guy Vanbrugh started.

"Moira!" he said; "you don't—you can't mean——"

Moira shivered.

"That woman," she answered slowly, "pities and laughs at you, and sneers at and despises me. Are all your friends going to do the same?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried her lover. "Lady Tarleton is simply a disappointed matchmaker. If she had had her way she would have married me to her daughter Irene and spoilt four lives in doing it. For if I have given you my heart, I'll be sworn Irene has given hers to Paul Jerome—a fine fellow, who, because he is merely a war-correspondent and was once a newspaper reporter, Lady T. will consider as much out of Irene's station as, in her opinion, be it understood, you are out of mine."

He put a gentle hand under her firm little chin, and compelled her to look up into his face. The tears flooded to her blue eyes.

"Moira," he said, "are you going to turn coward because a soulless, money-worshipping dowager spits at you the characteristic venom of her species? My dear child, you will have dozens of such creatures fawning on you for a dinner or a dance card as soon as you are Lady Vanbrugh. I took you for a clear-headed little woman, surely you are not going to be frightened of that arrant humbug, 'Society's verdict'?"

The strong, yet masculine fingers held her remorselessly, and Guy Vanbrugh's gaze seemed to probe the very depths of her being. She shook her head mutely—she could not speak. He was mastering her by sheer force of his fearless man's will, and she, woman like, was happy that it should be so. He stooped and kissed her, lip to lip.

"We two against the world, dear," he murmured, "for the best and rarest thing in it—true love. Swear it, my darling, or bid me go—go because you are only a weak woman and must needs yield one triumph the more to the old and evil system which sells human hearts over the golden counter of Society."

Moira buried her face on his breast, overcome by the sudden, if somewhat melodramatic, eloquence that love had lent the reserved young Englishman.

"Oh, I promise, Guy, dear," she faltered; "but if I am ever really certain that I am not making you happy, or that, after all, I am not a fit wife for you, I shall go away and hide myself where you will never, never find me."

"And where will that be?" demanded her lover gravely.

Moira choked back her emotion.

"I—I don't know," she stammered, trying to speak lightly; "but I shall know then."

Guy Vanbrugh studied her.

"You are very proud, my darling," he said, "and yet I like you for it. Well, and now that momentous question is settled, what am I going to do about rendering this engagement of ours decorously public?

"I have told Lady Tarleton, it is true, and indeed she ought to be the most suitable person to tell, yet she is scarcely likely to deal with the information in a fashion satisfactory to us. You see, I have so few women relatives; until I set eyes on you and discovered how much I liked Groudle, the Close, like the Tower, was in the hands of servants. All I did was to use it as a shooting-box."

He reflected, but Moira intervened hastily.

"Oh, please," she begged, "don't do anything, or say anything, till I can tell father. He—he will feel it terribly, my leaving him—I know he will—and I want to break it to him myself before he hears it from anyone else."

"Then we will allow matters to remain just where they are," said Guy Vanbrugh, "until Mr. Davenal gets better, or until——"

Moira checked him with an impulsive motion.

"Don't!" she gasped—"don't! I can't bear to think of that; he—he must get better—he must! Oh, why should anybody have wanted to hurt him; why would anybody want him to die?"

Guy Vanbrugh sought to comfort her.

"It is a terrible riddle, my darling," he said, "but we must hope for the best—we will hope for the best."

A footstep sounded on the staircase that gave access to the floor above, and the door from the small hall-way of the cottage whined. The lovers moved apart, and the blind girl reentered the room.

"Moira," she observed, "your father has been asking for you once or twice. He is asleep now, but nurse says if you will go and sit by him so that he can see you when he wakes, it may excite him less than having you sent for."

"Then I will not keep you another moment, Miss Davenal," said Guy Vanbrugh formally.

He stopped, remembering that it must be ten minutes or more since he had bidden farewell to Moira in the hearing of Kate Hartigan. However, there was no opening for him to an explanation, and he could not be sure that it would be advisable to volunteer one.

The blind girl impressed him as being an extremely shrewd little personage. He pressed Moira's hand, looked the adieu he did not speak, and went away abruptly, letting himself out.

The blind girl knitted her brows as the door closed behind him.

"So he didn't go," she said.

Moira replied in the negative.

"Lady Tarleton called," she added evasively—"Aunt Hannah's mistress, from the Tower, to ask if there was anything that could be done for father. Sir Guy knew her and came back with her. But she did not stay long."

"Oh," remarked Kit drily.

Moira hesitated, as if she were inclined to investigate the reason for the odd inflection of the blind girl's voice. Her hesitation terminated in inaction, so far as Kit was concerned. She stepped towards the stairs and stole noiselessly up them to reach the wounded man's chamber.

Kit opened the front door of the cottage, and, passing out into the garden, stood suddenly still. The sunbeams shone warmly upon her childish, tear-stained countenance, and the sea-breeze stirred her clustering brown curls. Kate Hartigan was a creature of the open-air, and now, after the long and sleepless night that had followed the mysterious attack upon the master of Hawthorn Cottage, she sought in it refreshment and consolation.

Digitized by Google

As she stood there motionless in an ecstasy of sorrowful silence, the beat of iron-shod hoofs rang upon the cobble-stones of the neighbouring quay. It was not the uneven clatter of the draught-horse's clumsy feet, but the quick, rhythmic walk of well-bred, well-broken animals.

The hoof-beats ceased, there was a pause, and the gate-latch clicked. Paul Jerome, giving his reins, with a laughing apology, to Irene Tarleton, had leapt from the saddle of the white hunter and entered the wooden wicket. He approached the blind girl, speaking as he came that he might not startle her.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "and how is Miss Hartigan? None the worse for her adventure at the crossing, I trust."

Kit took an impulsive step in the direction of his voice.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I am glad to see you again." The war-correspondent noticed that, from force of habit, she said the same phrase as a "sighted" person would have done.

"I happened to be riding by," he answered, observing with a new interest, the sensitive, petulant features of the blind girl, "and saw you standing in the sunshine. So I thought I would inquire after Mr. Davenal. He and I met up at the Tower the other day and I was extremely sorry to hear this morning that he had been seriously wounded."

Kate Hartigan's lips trembled.

"Yes," she faltered, "they found him last night lying at the gate there. Someone had stabbed him in the back as he came in at it, the doctor says. He is a little better now, the nurse thinks, but he is very ill."

"Poor fellow!" said Paul Jerome, and added, still fixing his keen, bright eyes on the blind girl's face, "I should not have thought him the sort of man to have enemies—and he had not been robbed, I hear, so the deed must have been dictated by motives of revenge or hate."

"We—we think," murmured Kit, "that perhaps he was mistaken for someone else. But it all happened so quickly. He had gone out for a walk with my brother, who left him to go home to his lodgings, and it was not an hour after they left here together that he was brought in bleeding to death."

The war-correspondent frowned reflectively and looked over his shoulder at Irene Tarleton. She was watching them curiously from her seat on a tall brown mare, half saddle, half carriage horse, one of the single pair kept at the Tower stables.

"If—if only Dennis had not left him," went on Kit, unconscious of his inattention; "but there, I daresay he would have run away from the wretch with the knife, as he did from the train at the crossing."

An odd expression flitted across Paul Jerome's shrewd countenance.

"You are hard on your brother," he said.

Kit sneered.

"I hate a man to be a coward!" she retorted. "Why should Dennis be one—he is big and strong? *You* are brave."

"I am used to exciting situations, if that is what you mean," responded the war-correspondent; "courage is often only a kind of use."

He hesitated and glanced again towards Irene; the brown mare was pawing the cobblestones restlessly. Kit moved towards the gate.

"You have your horse with you," she cried childishly; "do let me pet him a little. He is brave, too, and clever, or you would have been killed by the engine as well as me."

The war-correspondent held the wicket open for her, and, following her through, took the bridle of the white hunter and drew him to the kerb for the blind girl to caress.

"This is the young lady who figured in my adventure, Miss Tarleton," he remarked; "safe and sound, as you perceive."

Irene Tarleton scanned pityingly the pale face and sightless eyes.

"I am very glad to know that you came to no harm," she said, stooping from her saddle to speak to the blind girl; "won't you tell me how it was—Mr. Jerome is too modest to describe his own exploits."

Kit had been listening intently to the clear, sympathetic tones—"seeing with one's ears," as it has been called. Her absorbed expression relaxed; she was satisfied.

"It was very dangerous, miss," she answered; "the train was almost on me when he jumped the crossing-gates on this dear old horse and picked me up like a dropped handkerchief. When I came to my senses, miss—for I had fainted with the fright of it all—I was in the lane on the other side of the crossing, and him trying to bring me out of my faint."

Irene shuddered.

"What a fearful experience!" she murmured. "You must be more careful of the trains in future."

The blind girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, yes, miss," she said drily, "I'll be more careful, you can be sure of that."

She patted the white hunter's sleek withers.

"Good-bye, you big, brave thing!" she exclaimed, and stepped back to the wicket; there had been a pause and her instinct had told her one or other, if not both, of the riders, was anxious to be gone.

Paul Jerome sprang to his saddle.

"Good-bye," he said to her. "I will bring him to see you again one of these days. I shall want to know for myself how Mr. Davenal goes on."

"Good-bye," added Irene; "and do be careful of that terrible level-crossing, won't you."

Kit nodded and smiled as they rode away. A groom who had been waiting at a neighbouring corner walked his horse leisurely after them. When the three had turned away from the sea-front and were ascending the hill towards the Tower, Irene spoke.

"Mr. Jerome," she said, "I do think it was fine of you to risk your life like that. You ought to have the V.C."

"Nonsense!" replied the war-correspondent, "it was very easy. But even if it had been really difficult I should be more than repaid by a word of praise—however undeserved—from you."

Irene coloured and laughed. The white hunter had swerved under Paul Jerome's knee, and the war-correspondent was riding very close to her. She glanced back.

"You do flatter most delightfully," she rejoined; "but pray don't forget that I have a chaperon."

"The dickens take that groom!" exclaimed the war-correspondent.

"Poor man!" said Irene. "No, let us send him to——"

"Where?" asked Paul Jerome eagerly.

Irene regarded him with demure self-possession.

"To my aunt in Yorkshire," she retorted provokingly, and shook the brown mare into a trot.

The war-correspondent surrendered to her mood of coquetry. After all, Lady Tarleton's threat of banishment might have been no idle one, and, though few would have suspected it, the war-correspondent was, by nature, a deliberate person.

Also, at the back of his head, Paul Jerome was thinking of Kit Hartigan's words: "He went out for a walk with my brother." "He" was John Davenal, and now John Davenal, stabbed through the lung, was lying at the point of death. "He went out with my brother." And "my brother" was Dennis Hartigan—the man who had left his blind sister on the railway crossing to die.

Digitized by Google

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

"You are My Dear Father."

In his small, white-curtained bedroom at Hawthorn Cottage, John Davenal lay asleep. The holland blind was lowered to shut out the rays of the sun, and the wounded man's pillow was darkened by the shadow of a tall screen placed between it and the casement. But the window was open, and the sound of the still-flowing tide came in with the salt sea-air.

The diver breathed, even in his sleep, with painful quickness. His body had been sorely drained of blood, and the stout heart in his broad and heaving chest fought hard to keep circulating what was left in the depleted veins.

Moira, sitting by the fireside, listened with an anxious intentness to the tell-tale respirations.

The nurse, standing by the window, listened also, but with the quiet self-possession that comes of a long intimacy with the mysterious powers displayed by life in its battle with death. She was a pleasant, pink-cheeked Englishwoman, with the bright, yet gentle demeanour of her class.

Suddenly John Davenal's breathing changed, and he opened his eyes. In his blanched face their grave, grey pupils gleamed as they fell upon the golden head at his side. He lay motionless for a moment, and then spoke, faintly, unsteadily.

"Is that you, Moira?" he whispered.

Moira leant over him.

"Yes, dad," she answered.

John Davenal moved his head on the pillow. The nurse had come softly to the foot of the bed; the diver turned his gaze upon her.

"You might let us be awhile," he said; "I've a word to say to my lass here."

The nurse hesitated—it was alike dangerous to thwart or to indulge him.

"You ought not to talk," she said, reprovingly; "but if you will promise me not to sit up and to stop the minute I come back, I will do as you wish."

John Davenal smiled weakly.

"I'm obliged to you, nurse," he said. "I can't rest until I've settled something with Moira, but she'll not let me be foolish, will you, my lass?"

Moira shook her head, and the nurse slipped away.

The diver moved slightly on his pillow again, and his glance sought the old-fashioned bureau near him.

"Open yon," he murmured; "in the well in the middle of the desk, there's something flat and three-cornered, wrapped in paper. Fetch it, just as it is. My keys are on the dressing-table—I had them put where I could see them."

Moira obeyed, and, unlocking the upper "drawer" of the ancient piece of furniture, gained access to the inner recesses of the concealed "desk." She found the packet he had referred to, and brought it to the bedside. The diver looked from it to her and his blanched skin grew ruddy with the spasm of emotion that thrilled him.

"My lass," he faltered, "doctor says I'm not to excite myself, and I'll not, for I want to live, if it's to be Heaven's will. But I've a strange thing to tell thee." He relapsed into a broader dialect than that which he ordinarily employed. "Thou'rt my daughter in love and in duty, but not in blood. I've deceived thee all these years. It was for thy own good and happiness, lass, yet haply thou'lt find it hard to forgive me."

His grey eyes suffused with tears and Moira saw them. The throb of surprise that had stung her died away, she sank on her knees by the bed, took his hand in hers, and put her cheek to it.

"Dad," she murmured, "dear, dear dad, I have nothing to forgive. What does it matter? Real fathers are often not kind, and you have been, oh, so good to me always. You are my dear father in the very best way. I couldn't love you any better if you *were* my real father. Don't think about it any more until you get well, and then, if you want to, you shall tell me the rest."

John Davenal clasped the little fingers that were caressing his own.

"My heart's light to hear you speak like that," he said; "it's cut me to the quick often to think you weren't my own child, and I, all the time, willing to give everything in the world to have you so."

"You were very foolish, dad, dear," whispered Moira, "and now not another word, or nurse will be very cross."

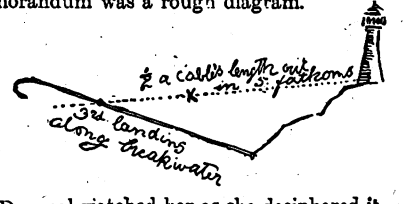
The diver knitted his brows.

"I must tell thee more, my lass," he said; "much more, but first look in the paper you have there."

Moira did so. In the folded white sheet there lay the fragment of engraved metal that the diver had brought out of Groudle Bay.

She gazed with astonishment at the flat, irregular triangle, with its imperfect wording. There was her own name, and—lacking the dates which should have followed them—the strange syllables—"Born" and "Died."

On a flap of the paper was written, in the diver's bold hand, "Brought up off the breakwater in Groudle Bay." Below this memorandum was a rough diagram.



John Davenal watched her as she deciphered it.

"Those are the bearings of the place I brought it up at," he said. "At first I thought nothing of it, and yet I hid it from my men lest they should talk, and, knowing you weren't my own child, I was nervous. But now the thought of it's come back to me, and I'm not sure that it mayn't mean something—something to you, my lass."

Moira studied the fragment of metal, fascinated by the blurred letters that spelt her own name. The diver studied her, almost jealously aware of her interest in it.

"It's—it's a bit of a coffin-plate," he gasped; "if—if only I had got the other half of it! Yon piece was caught in a niche of the rock under the yacht's bow, and I plucked it out more by chance than anything else. The other bit might have told us what I'd have been glad to know, now I lie here, lass, for I'd fain believe that he who calls himself so was not your father—you being what you are, and him what he is, a wastrel and a blackguard."

The diver's utterance had quickened excitedly; it grew thick and indistinct, then failed altogether, and his eyes closed. Alarmed, Moira stole to the door. The nurse was already entering. A glance at Moira's face, and she passed her quickly to gain the bedside. John Davenal had re-opened his eyes; they sought for Moira.

"You have been talking quite long enough, Mr. Davenal," said the nurse, quietly and soothingly, "not another word. Moira must run away for the present. She can come again later on."

John Davenal's gaze travelled to the unfolded paper on the

Digitized by Google

bed and the piece of metal that lay by it. Moira understood his meaning and took them up. The nurse wiped the beaded sweat from the wounded man's forehead, and Moira,—thus temporarily screened—crept out of the room.

Her brain was numb with the amazement that had fallen on her at John Davenal's strange and all too incomplete confession. She paused to gaze at the broken metal. "Moira"—who? And yet it could not be she, for she was not dead, and the plate said, "Died ——" What else could the diver—her father no longer—have to tell her? Would he live to tell it to her?

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Paul Jerome Saw.

"No, I think we'll get ashore now, my venerable friend. I have emptied the sandwich-box, you have accounted for the whisky and water and are half a hundredweight of codling to the good besides. I have to get up to the Tower and dress before seven. It is after six, and we shall have to dodge in against what wind there is."

"Aye, aye, sir, you're right about that," was the cheery reply, and the speaker—a grizzled Groudle veteran—threw down the hooks and sinker that he had been about to overhaul, and stepped to the stern sheets of the broad-beamed fishing-coble in which the war-correspondent and he had been beating along the rocky fringes of Groudle Head.

Paul Jerome moved to the tiller, and brought the heavy boat up into the wind. The fisherman loosed the sheet of the foresail, and pushed the boom of the mainsail over. The boat gybed and began to beat back towards the little town.

The light was fading, and the green waters of the Irish Sea shimmered under the dull yellow sunset; the irregular puffs of air that eddied across them impelled the fishing-coble slowly towards her goal.

Rounding the bluff promontory, on whose seaward slope stood the tall tower of the Groudle Light, the little vessel made for the harbour. The fitful breeze was blowing off the land, and they were able to hug the shore. All was singularly quiet and lonely, the bay was destitute of shipping, and the granite walls of the pier and breakwater shut in the activities of the harbour.

The fishing-coble breasted her way across the triangular bit of sea that lay between the breakwater and the promontory above. Suddenly the boatman uttered an exclamation—right before them lay a large smack, her mainsail apeak, her anchor down.

"That's odd, sir," he said; "there's diving going on there again, where Sir Guy Vanbrugh's yacht sank. It was only the other day that they got her up and took her into the harbour."

He eased the mainsheet of the coble, and she kept out to pass the other vessel. The little craft forged slowly by the larger, and Paul Jerome got on his feet to look at the group in the waist of the smack. The helmet of the diver had been unscrewed—a rough sailor-like fellow in a sou'-wester was just lifting it off.

The war-correspondent started—the head of the diver was that of a young and lovely woman, whose masses of fair hair rained over her shoulders as she stood shrinkingly in the clumsy diving-dress.

(Another long instalment next week.)

WIFE: "Are you pleased with our new maid?" Husband: "Very much." Wife: "I thought so. I have discharged her."

"MISS CAYENNE is a very smart young woman," he remarked admiringly. "Does she say clever things?" "Better than that. She sees the point when somebody else says them."

GUSHLEY: "Would you think of me if I were ten thousand leagues away?" His Fiancée (from College): "As the maximum diameter of the earth is only eight thousand miles, Clarence, your supposition is an impossible one."

Your Editor Chats.

THE third list of sentences in our popular and novel competition appears on page 455. Any reader who has not made up his mind until now to enter it can obtain the issues of *Short Stories* dated March 28th and April 4th, which contain the first two lists, by sending threepence in stamps to the "Publisher, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C." It will be well to send at once in order to prevent disappointment in case the numbers are sold out earlier than is expected. The first list of sentences was also published in *Pearson's Weekly* and *Home Notes*, both dated April 2nd. The lists in these papers are available for the competition.

If you have any friends who are not regular readers of *Short Stories*, and whom you think may perhaps have missed the numbers containing the first lists of sentences in the competition, you should not delay a moment in telling them of it. The finding of the names of the railway stations will be such a pleasant occupation for the Easter holiday evenings.

THE reproductions of picturesque men's heads, about which I told you a few weeks back, will be found on various pages of this paper. I shall be glad to hear what my readers think of them, and whether they would like me to try to secure some others for reproduction on a future occasion.

I TAKE this opportunity of reminding my readers of the article on the FRESH AIR FUND, which was published last week. I hope that everyone read it and will do all they can to help on this noble work of brightening the lives of the poor little mites from the slums. It is not London alone that is benefited, but most of the other large towns in the kingdom.

If you are not able to afford a large donation out of your own pocket, perhaps you can get up a concert or entertainment of some sort, hold a bazaar, or by some other means raise money for this most deserving cause. Remember that every penny of the money subscribed is spent on the children—in railway fares and food. All the expenses of management are shared by the Ragged School Union and C. Arthur Pearson, Limited.

Last year 126,000 children had a day in the country; this year it is hoped to send many more than that, but it will not be possible to do so unless everyone helps. Think of it! Only ninepence is required to provide enjoyment for one child for a whole day, with plenty to eat and drink. Such a cheap charity is absolutely unique. All subscriptions, which will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, FRESH AIR FUND, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W. C., who will also forward collecting sheets on application.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

THREE LETTERS.

Telling of a Proposal and its Businesslike Acceptance.

YOUNG Mr. Dusenberry asked Miss Lucretia Elphinstone to marry him. Miss Elphinstone was the daughter of a candidate for Parliament, and shared her father's cautious nature. She told her lover that she would consider his proposal, and send her answer in a few days. Within a week the young man received the following letter:

MR. THOMAS DUSENBERRY,

Dear Sir,—On last Thursday night you notified me that I had been honoured with the nomination of queen of your heart and wife of your bosom, and you urged me to accept. I replied then that I would let you know my decision in a few days. I have now the pleasure of informing you that I accept the nomination, and of setting forth the programme of principles upon which I stand.

I unhesitatingly arraign and condemn the practice of too many men in doing all their love-making before marriage. I shall expect as much kissing and petting after the honeymoon wanes as while it is at its full.

My position on the tobacco question you already know. It is most pronounced. The drawing-room curtains must and shall be protected from the fumes of a pipe and cigar.

I am unalterably opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of excuses for remaining out late at night. The latch-key is an article so liable to misuse that the only safety is the entire abolishment of that cause of so many domestic disagreements.

I believe in the utmost freedom of the wife in regard to her own actions, and unhesitatingly assert that every husband should esteem it a privilege to supply her with the necessary funds, not only for housekeeping, but also for the purchase of articles of apparel and adornment, for religious and charitable uses, and for pin-money. It should never be necessary for the wife to ask her husband for money. He should turn over to her, on salary day, his entire receipts, deducting only the small portion required by him for 'bus fares and lunches for the current week.

It is the wife's privilege to invite her mother to make visits of any length, and also to extend occasional invitations to other members of her family, without waiting for the consent of her husband, and it is the duty of the husband to treat such relatives of his wife, while under their roof, with profound consideration.

The wife's right to maintain and keep a pug-dog shall not be impugned by deed, word, look, or manner.

Hoping that these sound principles will meet with your chearful acceptance, and that our married life, conducted under their beneficent influence, will be a long and happy one, I have the honour to subscribe myself.—Your loving fiancée,

LUCRETIA ELPHINSTONE.

DUSENBERRY'S REPLY.

MISS LUCRETIA ELPHINSTONE,

Dear Madam,—Your reply to my proposal of marriage was received yesterday. I did not answer it immediately, because its somewhat unconventional style seemed to require some deeper consideration than is usually accorded to a letter accepting a proposal of marriage.

I have considered your programme clause by clause, and I find it extremely difficult to bring myself to accept its principles with the same earnestness with which you seem to have formulated them.

I have no objection whatever to your first clause. Married men should continue their love-making after marriage with the fervour which marked the engagement stage. The honeymoon should be kept constantly full.

Your position on the tobacco question is too pronounced. I do not think that a wife should entertain for her drawing-room curtains a deeper affection than for her husband.

On the question of latch-keys, my position, though different, is as fixed as your own, and cannot be altered. The right of a husband to have a latch-key must and shall be maintained.

Regarding the financial system you declare yourself in favour of, I have only to say that it can have no place in the domestic government of this age. My wife shall be supplied with all the money she can reasonably want for all proper purposes, but no self-respecting husband can hand over to her his entire salary, "deducting only the small portion required by him for 'bus fares and lunches for the current week."

Your views regarding your mother's visits and the proper treatment of your relatives when they call are approved without reservation.

I now reach the final and exceedingly important pug-dog clause. On this point we are at irrevocable variance. Since you have raised this pug-dog issue, I feel it incumbent upon me to meet it squarely. I quote your declaration of principles on this important question. You say: "The wife's right to maintain and keep a pug-dog shall not be impugned by deed, word, look, or manner." Permit me to say that you speak of a "right" which does not exist.

I cannot endure the steady company of an animal whose only recommendation is his ugliness, whose chief characteristics are stupidity and perversity. Your devotion to Cæsar marks you as a double-hearted girl. One lobe may beat for me, but the other beats for him. This I cannot endure. I will brook no rival at my altar. The other clauses in your programme to which I have taken exception are matters of moment, but the pug-dog question is the rock on which we split, and which must separate us.—Yours very truly, THOMAS DUSENBERRY.

A day or two later Mr. Dusenberry received the following letter:

MR. THOMAS DUSENBERRY.

Dear Tom,—The pug has been drowned. Come and see me to-night.—Your loving LUCRETIA.

The engagement of Mr. Thomas Dusenberry and Miss Lucretia Elphinstone was announced within three days of the receipt of the last note.

A. E. Porson.

Digitized by Google

In Love With a Name.

The Story of a Woman's Ideal.

"You won't go, then, although I have secured seats?"

"No; I had rather not."

"Well, I can't make it out! You have always been so enthusiastic about the man; while I know that you have a special hiding-place among your treasures for Neil Stuart's photo."

"Now you are rude! Of course I appreciate the trouble you have taken in the matter; Mr. Stuart as 'Millionaire Midas' is also, I admit, a tempting inducement; but—I have my reasons for not going."

"Then there is an end of it!—though you are certainly missing a good thing, and Neil Stuart himself saw to the selection of the seats; the best in the house."

"That was very good of him," said Evelyn Hood, with a pleased smile, and flushing ever so slightly, "I was not aware that you knew Mr. Stuart personally."

"Know Stuart!—why, I am vain enough to think, that if there is one man in all the world who has succeeded in getting behind the curtain of Neil Stuart's reserve, I am that man!"

"Really, Wallace! and—and what have you found?"

"Ah! now she wakes to life! this emotionless fair one! What have I found? why, a heart as big and as true, as ever beat in the breast of man!"

"I knew it!" said Evelyn, half under her breath; yet not so quietly but that Wallace Rayne caught the exclamation.

"Knew it! why you have never spoken to him! never even seen him act!"

"Yes—I know!" she said in some confusion; "and—and you are too quick to take me up, Wallace; but it is a little strange, that my estimate of Neil Stuart, formed only from hearsay, reading, and pictures of him; and yours, founded on personal knowledge, should agree so completely."

"I suppose it is. But I tell you what it is, Evelyn!" he half jokingly added; "if this sort of thing continues, I shall begin to be a little jealous of Stuart. Only that I know him to be a thorough woman-hater, and that, therefore, the chances of the sweet girl adorer are absolutely hopeless, I should fear for my own matrimonial prospects, Evelyn; I should indeed."

"Wallace!—you are just horrid!" said Evelyn, an angry red spot showing on either cheek; "you had better take Cora Holroyd with you to the theatre to-night; there will be no need for fear, with regard to your matrimonial prospects in *that* direction!"

"Perhaps you are right!" replied Rayne hotly. "Still, I am not disposed to adopt your suggestion, for the simple reason (here he took an envelope from his pocket, which first deliberately tearing into half a dozen pieces, he dropped into the fire by which they were standing) that the tickets no longer exist."

* * * * * *

Evelyn Hood and Wallace Rayne had been an engaged couple for some two years before Neil Stuart, the actor from the North, had by his wonderful playing of the title *rôle* in his own play, *Millionaire Midas*, revealed to Londoners that a dramatic star, of the very first order, had risen above the theatrical horizon.

Young Rayne, a Foreign Office clerk, while being hot-tempered and a trifle overbearing, was not by any means a bad fellow at heart. At any rate, until about three months before the conversation above between them, Evelyn regarded him as the *beau ideal* of what a husband should be.

They were both of them passionately fond of the "play," and devoted "first-nighters."

Perhaps had Wallace Rayne been a little more reasonable when his *fiancée* decided not to attend the opening night of *Millionaire Midas*; and, instead of expressing sullen surprise, good-humouredly looked upon it as a whim merely, he would have been saved much trouble in the future. But he was one of those men who, offence once given, neither forgive nor forget, until the offence is purged. So, knowing Evelyn's admiration for the famous actor (admiration in his opinion, absurd, seeing that she had never seen Neil Stuart in the flesh), he never ceased in his endeavour to lure her to witness the piece and the man; his last persuasive being a box from the hand of the actor himself. When even this had no effect he lost control of himself; his thoughts inclining to an insane, unreasoning jealousy.

Long before Neil Stuart's London appearance, the public had been well-informed through the Press of almost every detail in his career. Portraits without number had appeared in the illustrated weeklies, and in the current monthly magazines, so that the theatrically-disposed were made familiar, not only with the actor's history, but with his features.

Now this so-called history was defective in one very important particular; the private side of it—Neil Stuart's life off the stage—was absolutely unknown, except to the very few. At the close of each performance, he left the theatre, immediately after changing his costume, and no man, save his business manager, and two intimate friends (of whom Wallace Rayne was one), knew the place of his abode, or his manner of life.

His somewhat sad cast of countenance, spare, almost emaciated frame, and ascetic features, gave rise to many stories concerning him, which, manifestly, were impudent fabrications.

It was impossible to get an interview with him for journalistic purposes, both before and subsequent to his coming to London, so that popular impression of him was based solely on imagination, and was consequently erroneous.

Evelyn Hood was a girl with the imaginative faculty very strongly developed. The preliminary puffs and obviously mendacious accounts of the coming star had no effect upon

Digitized by Google

her; but, after reading a clever appreciation of the actor in the part he had made his own; and studying the features of the man, through a photograph given to her by Wallace Rayne, she gradually began to build up in her own mind a conception of him; to set up an ideal, as utterly unlike the literary and journalistic portrait as possible.

By the time that the curtain was ready to rise on the Metropolitan production of *Millionaire Midas*, the ideal had become the hero, and, dreading disillusionment, she would not risk it by coming face to face with the object of her strange worship.

She loved her betrothed; was hurt at his new tone and manner, after her final refusal to accompany him to the theatre; but she somehow felt that, given the realisation of her "ideal," the parting with the original man of her choice, would not mean for her much "sweet sorrow."

Mention has been made of Cora Holroyd, who posed as Evelyn's bosom friend and confidant, but who was in reality her ever-scheming rival.

People wondered at the long intimacy between the two girls; at, what they called, Evelyn's shortsightedness in failing to see Cora's persistent policy of standing well in the eyes of Wallace Rayne.

But, whatever might be the latter's mistaken idea with regard to Evelyn, he was certainly guiltless of any tender feeling in connection with Cora Holroyd. That designing young woman was in the nature of his *bête noire*, so much so, indeed, that he was always on the defensive when opportunity threw them together.

Time went on and at the end of nine months, *Millionaire Midas* was at its zenith, artistically as well as financially. But the lease of the theatre being up, and no other house being available, the production had perforce to be withdrawn in the very heyday of success.

At midnight after the last performance, Rayne sat at supper with Neil Stuart in a private room at the Carlton.

It was by way of a farewell feast, as the actor was to leave London for the North the following morning.

"Rayne," said the player, with a weariness born of a long run, and the exigencies of a trying part; "I should like to have seen your wife that is to be, before I left. You know London will not see me again for nearly two years; perhaps never; for life is so uncertain, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," answered Rayne.

"We know it is! But, tell me, what is Miss Hood's reason for refusing either to meet me, or to see me act?"

"My dear Stuart! you are as wise as I. But if you don't mind, we will change the subject."

Neil Stuart was a man of over forty, and with a larger experience in matters of the heart than most people gave him credit for.

Years before, when but a novice, and with all his triumphs to come, he had met with and loved a girl, who seemingly returned his love, and in whom he placed his faith, even to the uttermost.

As an actress she had talent, some said genius, and this in time led her up the professional primrose-way.

Even this would not have divided them; for though more slowly, as surely he too advanced towards the coveted tree-top. But there came along the inevitable man with the money bags, the illiterate plutocrat, who purchases his wife as he would any other marketable article, and with the giving of the receipt Neil Stuart's life-dream of love and happiness vanished for ever.

Not naturally given to suspicions or unkind thoughts of his fellow creatures, he rigidly kept aloof from society, burying himself, in the intervals of theatrical engagement, in the heart of the ruggedest part of Sutherlandshire. Here he had what had once been a shooting-box, but which he had converted into a comfortable, if not luxurious home.

On the loch, near his home, he had a steam yacht, and as the loch communicated with the sea, he was enabled to gratify his taste for cruising, without taking anyone into his confidence.

He was a solitary man; a man who, outside his profession, lived a veritable hermit's life.

In the neighbourhood of his retreat he was simply worshipped; the distinguished actor, who, having the world at his feet, declined response to its advances, being scarce recognisable in the tweed-clothed, homely-mannered gentleman who made friends with the poorest on the country side.

He was rich—very rich, and was never so happy as when helping his poorer brethren who needed his assistance.

His last word to Wallace Rayne as be bid him "good-night" at parting, showed that the matter of Evelyn's strange attitude towards him, was still uppermost in his thoughts, as an unsolved riddle.

"My dear fellow!" he said, placing both hands on his friend's shoulders; "I feel sure that for some inexplicable reason, you and your sweetheart are drifting apart. Am I right?"

"You are more than right. Six months ago—in fact, almost from the day you sent that box—Evelyn joined the nursing fraternity. Three years ago, she served her probation; not from necessity, but because, I believe, she liked nursing. Now, it is different, she has definitely adopted the profession, and we are no longer as we were."

"I am sorry," said the actor, sighing deeply, as at some new-stirred memory; "and I can only sincerely wish, for both your sakes, that it were otherwise. You are coming to my Highland home to see me, you know, and I shall expect then to hear that all is well. Again, good-night, and—good bye."

* * * * *

Next morning all London was startled to read that Neil Stuart, who, the night before, had spoken his farewell acknowledgments to an enthusiastic and crowded audience, was lying, the victim of a terrible carriage accident, in one of the surgical wards of Charing Cross Hospital.

It appeared that on leaving the hotel, the carriage went up the Haymarket, turned to the left at the top, and made to cross Piccadilly Circus, in the direction of Regent Street.

Half-way across, a motor-car, driven at high speed, and evidently by incapable hands, bore down upon the brougham, which, unable to escape collision, was literally smashed to splinters.

The horse was killed on the spot; though the coachman miraculously escaped; but the unfortunate actor received injuries that made it doubtful whether he would survive removal to the hospital.

Wallace Rayne's first action upon hearing of the catastrophe, was to drive to Charing Cross.

He could only make inquiries; no one was as yet allowed to see the patient.

He learnt that Neil Stuart's condition was so grave that it was advisable that his friends should be sent for. And then a fresh surprise was sprung upon everybody.

The famous actor and dramatist, the wealthy man, had not a relative in the world. Rayne knew this, and communicated his knowledge to the hospital authorities.

There was nothing then, than for his friend to be allowed to see him.

As Rayne entered the ward, which was a small and semi-private one, he saw that the doctors had just left the injured man, leaving a nurse in charge.

The latter's back was towards the visitor, but something about the height, figure, and poise of the head, made him start with a sense of familiarity.

The sound of his footsteps caused the nurse to turn her head. It was Evelyn!—who motioned to him with finger on lip.

"He will not be able to recognise anybody for at least another hour; and, perhaps, not even then," she whispered to him.

The drawn, ascetic face, looked death-like, in its unearthly pallor; it seemed almost impossible that Neil Stuart would live to act again.

Through that day Evelyn Hood watched the flicker back to consciousness, when she sought rest for an hour or two.

When, the next morning, she stood by the bedside, with Wallace Rayne near by, the sick man looked first at his friend and then at her, a half smile upon his face.

Digitized by Google

"I know you," he said faintly; "you are Rayne's dear love—I have wanted much to see you, and—I am glad."

* * * * *

It was fully three weeks before Neil Stuart was fit to leave the hospital.

It was in the morning, early; but the previous day he had sent for Rayne to come and see him.

"What will you give me," said the actor; "if *I give you* back something, which, I think, you value very highly?"

"I don't quite follow you," replied Rayne.

"No?—well, what would you say then, if I have discovered why the girl of your heart has acted so mysteriously these past few months?"

"I don't know," said Rayne, who, however, began dimly to see what the other was driving at.

"Ah! It's not a pleasant thing to have to confess, but I'm afraid that this foolish little woman, to whose good nursing, by the way, I owe my life, full of romantic notions, fell in love, not with my humble self, but with my photographic presentment. I came to this conclusion, after much artful talk with Miss Evelyn, and yesterday, by way of atonement and reparation for having been the innocent cause of strife between you, I painted for the young lady such a terrible picture of myself, in even my mildest moods, that she fairly threw the whole thing overboard."

"But, Stuart——"

"Wait a moment! I once suffered by the cherishing of an ideal; I was not going to see my friend's happiness, and a charming girl's best interests wrecked upon the rocks in like fashion, if I could help it."

"Stuart, I told her long ago that you were the best of good fellows!"

"Did you?—then you have only yourself to blame for a big part of the mischief. However, I don't intend to always play the beast to your prince, and when you are married beyond redemption, shall do my best to disabuse your wife's mind of all uncanny things concerning myself. Meanwhile, you resume your part, and play it for all it is worth, while I, in the *Fairy Queen*, seek health and strength sailing the Mediterranean."

* * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Rayne not only six months ago, paid a visit to the Sutherlandshire actor-hermit, but the latter is pledged, on her wifely honour, to be present at the forthcoming reappearance of Neil Stuart in London, in a new piece of his own, which is expected to take the town by storm.

Ralph Edwards.

THE GRAND HOLIDAY NUMBER

of The Big Budget contains many screamingly funny comic pages beautifully and artistically printed in six colours. Some of the drawings are by Yorick, F. Opper, R. Dirks, the Wilkinsons, and other well-known artists. And there are besides two thrilling complete stories and long instalments of

UNIQUE SERIALS.

These are "The Syndicate of Death," a story of Britain's Alien Peril. "For King or Kaiser?" telling of Prussian University and Military Life. "The Adventures of Captain Kettle Junior," the smartest yarn ever penned of a School at Sea, and one by Mr. Henry Farmer, author of "Fettered Lives."

This magnificent Double Number of The Big Budget is now on sale at all newsagents and bookstalls.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE FOLLY OF FATNESS.

A Pleasant Permanent Cure.

To remain in a condition of physical deformity—for extreme obesity *is* a deformity—not to speak of the excessive discomfort, is very unwise when the means of a speedy, pleasant, and entirely permanent cure are ready to hand. The person labouring under a burden of superabundant fat also runs considerable risk of fatty degeneration of the vital organs, which might ultimately prove fatal. The means to which we have alluded is the famous "Russell" treatment for the cure of corpulency, a sure and safe treatment which has received the full endorsement of many eminent physicians as a rational and scientific process of fat reduction, harmless even to the most delicate subject. The "Russell" treatment, by a simple and quite comfortable action, brings about a decrease in weight varying from ½lb. to 2lb. per diem, commencing within the first day and night of the initial dose, and this decrease goes on steadily apace until the patient regains his or her proper symmetrical proportions. Mark this, too: The reduction is not merely abdominal, but the subcutaneous fat of the whole organism is proportionately reduced. Face, figure, hands, feet—wherever there is a superabundance of adipose tissue—every part is equally affected by the "Russell" treatment, and this without the slightest discomfort or inconvenience. Many processes of fat reduction require the most exhausting and unpleasant restrictions and conditions: violent exercise, sweating, a continuous use of cathartics, and a starvation dietary. None of these things enter into the "Russell" *régime*. The liquid compound, which is the chief item in the process, is a harmless vegetable preparation, not disagreeable to the taste, but, on the contrary, very refreshing and thirst-assuaging. It contains nothing that is not purely herbal, and, indeed, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, the originator of the system which bears his name, has given to the world in his well-known book, "Corpulency and the Cure," a full list of the ingredients of which his wonderful preparation is compounded; this is chiefly to demonstrate its entirely harmless nature. The compound is a tonic and an appetiser, as well as a potent fat-reducer, so that while the decrease of adipose tissue is proceeding rapidly the appetite is improved, more nourishment is taken, the blood is enriched, and all the vital organs receive renewed vitality and functional activity, the clogging fat around the heart, kidneys, etc., being gradually cleared away and eliminated from the system. We have perused "Corpulency and the Cure" with the greatest interest, and strongly recommend our stout readers to do the same. It is certainly the standard work on the subject of obesity cure, and contains many useful hints which may prove of great value even to those who might be disinclined to follow Mr. Russell's simple and admirable course of treatment. "Corpulency and the Cure" is the *vade mecum* of the stout, and the outcome of more than twenty years' scientific research. In short, what the author does not know about the formation and the elimination of fat is not worth knowing. If any of our corpulent friends are desirous of becoming authorities on the cure—*i.e.*, the *permanent* cure—of obesity, let them send three penny stamps to Mr. F. Cecil Russell, Woburn House, Store St., Bedford Sq., London, W.C., and they will receive by return, under private cover, a copy of "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pp.)—one of the most useful publications ever noticed in these columns.

Digitized by Google

The Old and the New.

OR, AN ALTERED ENDING.

THERE was a block in the vehicular traffic, and several persons were waiting on the kerb for a chance to cross the road. One was a woman of thirty or thereabouts, whose countenance still showed signs of the beauty that had belonged to it when the woman had been a girl; that face also exhibited traces of deep suffering—mental rather than physical suffering. Near her, but unconscious of her presence, stood two young men, watching impatiently for a chance to dodge under the head of a horse and reach the other side.

"I say, Clark," remarked one of them suddenly to the other, "don't you think it would be a good idea to offer good remuneration to the man in the street or the woman at home to tell his or her life story, provided that it contains romance? I've a good mind to suggest that to the chief. He wants good stories, and the best are those taken from life. Truth is stranger than fiction."

"You might have omitted the last sentence and have made a more original observation!" laughed his companion. "Don't fancy that your idea will work. You see, if you advertise, the advertisement will reach the eyes of only a few who have a really good story to tell, and only a small percentage of those will care to tell it. A few guineas will not tempt them. The very people you wish to get at are just those who don't read the journals and newspapers, because they can't afford to take them in."

"I don't agree with you altogether. I think—— Hallo! Here's a chance at last! Quick!"

The woman saw them make a dive, as it were, and they had vanished. She could not cross so quickly, so she remained standing on the kerb; and she continued in that position long after the traffic had cleared.

She had heard the remarks of the young men, who were apparently members of the staff of some weekly journal. Write her life story, if there were romance in it! Romance? There was more than enough for one; she felt that she had had more than her share. Write for money? Could she do that? Could she lay bare the story of her girlhood—for money?

"No, no!" she cried at length, with a shudder. "I want money, badly enough, and the 'few guineas' of which that young man seemed to speak so lightly would be a small fortune to me, but I can't do it!"

She went on her way to the firm which gave her work to do in the form of painting slides for magic lanterns. She handed in the work which she was carrying, and was told that the half-crown earned thereby would be paid on Saturday at the usual hour. No, there was nothing more just then; there was not much doing just at that time.

She returned to her attic room in the dingy street. The squalor of the neighbourhood made her shudder. Her own room was scrupulously clean but contained very little furniture. She sat down on the wooden chair by the deal table near the window and meditated.

Steadily increasing poverty had driven her from one place to another, always lower; she had been compelled to sell the piano because pupils did not come in sufficient numerical strength to enable her to live and pay the rent in a good neighbourhood, and she was now reduced almost to want. Her rent for this room was in arrears and food had been scanty of late.

"Why should I not write it?" she cried, after a long silence, and there was a ring of bitterness in her voice. "I want money; I want it badly! There is only one person left in the world who would recognise it, if it met his eyes, but he went to Australia, and it isn't likely that he will see it! Shall I? Yes, I will!"

From a little shelf within her reach she took a penny bottle of black ink and a pen, then a small packet of notepaper. She opened some of the doubled sheets of paper in order to obtain a size which, she thought, would be nearer to that used in newspaper offices, and seized the pen nervously.

"Shall I tell my own story in the first person—shall it be 'I' all the way through? Yes, I can write it better, more naturally, in that way. I must leave the title till the last; I can't think of one just now."

Another moment of hesitation, and then she began to write; after the first few lines she forgot that she was writing for money—she was writing a confession. She lost all thought of her surroundings and lived the story over again:

"My father was a village squire, a man of means and local position, and with good connections in London. I was his darling, and he would have done anything for me. I had all I wanted and my life was a happy dream.

"People said I was pretty, and my father's sister, who had married Lord Rutcliffe, and was one of the leaders of London Society, said that I ought to be presented. My dear father, always desirous to make the most of me, consented to my going to stay with her and 'coming out.'

"I was nearly eighteen, and, although perfectly happy and contented where I was, the novelty of the proposal attracted me. In due course I prepared to go, and it was not till then that a drop of the bitter fell into the cup of sweetness. I saw the look of sadness in Clive's eyes, and I was sorry.

"I had forgotten Clive Wilson. We had been companions since childhood, and it was quite understood that we were to marry as soon as I was old enough. Clive was three years older than I. It was one of those family arrangements which everyone, even the two most interested parties, accept as a matter of course. And, strange as it may appear, it was so much a matter of course that we almost lost sight of the fact!

"Clive did not like my going to London and joining the fashionable element, but I only laughed at him and called him a foolish boy.

"'Anyone would think I was going away for good!' I cried. 'I shall come back to father and you!'

"Clive still looked gloomy, but I was really too much occupied

Digitized by Google

with my preparations to pay attention to him. I dismissed him from my presence and then from my mind, and began to live, as I imagined it would be, the life I was to lead in London Society.

"I suppose I did see Clive again; I have a hazy idea that he was at the station to see me off; but I cannot remember distinctly. I was in a whirl.

"I stayed with my aunt till the great day, when I was presented and 'came out.' My father returned to the Hall, and left me to the care of his sister.

"I was very little more than an unsophisticated country girl, and my aunt was unaccustomed to the care of young girls, not having children of her own. Lord Rutcliffe was a prominent figure in clubland, and the numerous guests whom he invited to his town house were not always fit companions for a girl. There were numerous parties and functions at my aunt's house, and my life seemed to be passed in a continuous round of pleasure. I was dazed and taken out of myself.

"One constant visitor was Albert Glover, who paid me the most marked attention; he was reputed to be a man of wealth, and he certainly belonged to a good family. Looking back, I see that my aunt was not careful enough, and she herself admitted it sorrowfully when it was too late. Albert fascinated me; his passionate declarations made me captive, and left me without so much as a desire to keep from him. In short, when I left the metropolis to spend the off season with my father at the old home, I was engaged to Albert Glover, and wore his diamond betrothal ring on the third finger of my left hand.

"'My dear child,' cried my father, as he helped me to alight from the train. His voice faltered and he pretended to be busy with some wraps. 'Clive is not here,' he added, 'but he expects to be with us to-morrow. You know that he has secured a very good appointment in Manchester?'

"I remembered having heard something about it, but I said nothing, for the mention of his name there, in the old place, recalled the fact of the life-long engagement. I went away engaged to Clive, and I had returned as the promised bride of another man! It had only happened two days ago, and my father knew nothing of it.

"My father caught sight of the ring almost as soon as I took my gloves off. He thought that Clive had given it to me and when I told him the truth he looked grave.

"'I hope you have chosen well, Allie, and my only desire is for your happiness,' he said gently, 'but it will be a blow to Clive. Didn't you like him well enough to marry him?'

"'Yes, I think so!' I faltered. 'That is, I—— Oh, I'm so wretched! I was mad!' And I burst into a fit of weeping.

"Truly, it was a sorry home-coming!

"When I came down on the following morning, I was not wearing Albert's ring. It galled me like a fetter, and I was glad to lay it aside, but the chief reason for doing so was—I dared not let Clive see it.

"He came that afternoon—Clive Wilson, with his honest, manly face and truthful eyes; not the gay Society man, with his exaggerated phrases and compliments, his talk of merely empty functions and theatres, but plain, sterling manners and straightforward conversation. When I contrasted him with Albert Glover, my eyes were opened, and I wondered how I could have remained so long in ignorance of Clive's worth, how I could so easily have been taken captive by Albert. I almost trembled when I thought of the ring upstairs.

"Clive spoke to me in the old way; he made no allusion to my engagement to him, but all his attention implied that it was still in force. I began to detest Albert Glover, and I determined to tell him the truth, and break off the new engagement at once. I was realising, too, the advisability of being off with the old love before I was on with the new.

"That night I wrote to Albert and returned the ring; I told him that it was like a fetter, that I could not bear to be bound by it, and that I had deceived him, for I was already engaged to Clive Wilson. I felt light-hearted when I had sent that letter off, but it was only the beginning of my trouble. I did not

A Great Australian Discovery.

Australia, that mysterious country of gold, has been the birth place of many wonderful things. Foremost amongst them is the discovery by an eminent scientist of a natural vegetable substance which acts more beneficially upon the liver and digestive system than any medicine yet discovered. Chas. Forde, the discoverer of this substance, had long been impressed with the remarkable freedom from disease of the Australian natives.

On this subject the great Captain Cook wrote: "I did not observe (amongst the natives) any appearance of disease or bodily complaint or eruption of the skin. Very old men without hair and teeth showed no signs of decrepitude and were full of vivacity." There must be some reason for this, and Chas. Forde, armed with the implements of modern scientific research, sought for that reason amongst the rich profusion of Australian herbs which had been the sole medicines of the natives. After years of research he found himself the happy discoverer of a vegetable substance which acted on the liver and digestive organs differently and in superior manner to any medicine known. The best laboratories, the most modern appliances, and all that science dictated as being best for the purpose was requisitioned in the compounding of this substance into convenient medicinal form; and the result of it all was the production a few years back of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans—the most perfect medicine of modern times.

On their appearance, Bile Beans — the product of modern science—had to compete against the ancient and imperfect medicines which had been before the public for nearly half a century, but the public soon decided in their favour, and Bile Beans are now the most widely used family medicine; over three-quarters of a million doses being taken daily.

The superiority of Bile Beans lies in the fact that they do not merely purge, giving temporary relief only, like the old-fashioned, so-called remedies of forty or fifty years ago. They act directly on the liver and digestive organs, strengthening and stimulating those organs to perform their natural duties. They produce a gentle action on the bowels, curing or preventing constipation, cleansing the stomach and ridding the system of all impurities.

Do not be misled by claims of half a hundred pills in the box, where probably four to six constitutes a dose, and the doses cannot be discontinued. One Bile Bean is one dose, and they can be discontinued after the cure is effected. They are purely vegetable; they contain no harmful drugs, and they are the safest family medicine. Of all chemists at 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. per box.

SULPHOLINE LOTION.

For clearing the Skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. **2½%**

The Birkbeck Almanack, with full particulars, post free

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

know the evil heart of Albert Glover; as yet I knew only his handsome face and honeyed tongue.

"Clive had to be off again at the end of three days, and on the fourth day Albert was announced. Although he tried to hide it, there was an evil gleam in his eyes that was apparent to me.

"'What is the meaning of that letter?' he asked coolly. 'I decline to give you up! You are mine, and although you may say differently, you know that you are mine, and mine only. You think that you love this man, but it is wrong! You love me!' He took me in his arms, and, pressing me passionately to his breast, he gazed deep into my eyes, as if he would penetrate to my very soul. "You love me!" he added. 'Deny it, if you can!'

"I tried to get free, to tell him that I loved Clive, but I seemed powerless in his grasp. His eyes still fixed on mine; holding me spellbound, he approached his lips to mine, and kissed me again and again. And I, poor bird, under the fascination of the serpent, I kissed him in return!

"I scarcely know what happened, but when I felt thoroughly able to realise the position Albert was gone, and I was wearing his ring. I remember staring at it stupidly; then I uttered a cry, and dragged it off my finger. My strength came back; I seemed to have suddenly become possessed of a will, a woman's will, and I resolved to free myself from the terrible fascination of this man.

"I wrote to him again, and he came to me two days later.

"'You shall not marry Clive Wilson!' he declared as soon as he saw me, and without even a greeting. 'You will marry me at once, or you will rue it! Look!'

"He took a bill from his pocket and unfolded it. I had seen a similar bill outside a London police station; it was a notice to the effect that a man named Clive Wilson was wanted on a charge of forgery; he had absconded, and his description was published—not exactly accurate, but sufficiently so to convince me that it was my Clive. He next showed me a newspaper cutting, giving particulars of the crime, and making a statement that left no doubt that it was my Clive who was meant. I felt the room going round, and Albert held me to prevent me from falling.

"'You have played with me, Alice Harland,' he cried. 'but I am not to be played with. I know where this lover of yours is, and if you do not consent to marry me immediately and by special license, I will set the officers of the law on him! Choose!'

"I chose to marry Albert Glover in order to save my beloved; I sacrificed myself for him, and as soon as it could be arranged I married Albert, comforting myself in my misery by the thought that I was a martyr for Clive's sake. I wondered how he could have fallen so low as to become a felon, and yet I felt that if I had had the chance, I would have flown with him to a new country to begin life afresh.

"My married life was unhappy. For a time Albert treated me kindly, but his love soon wore away. I found that he was really possessed of very moderate means, and had expected to make a brilliant match in marrying me, fancying that I should inherit a lot of money from father, and come into all my aunt's money. Alas! He had not long to wait in order to be undeceived. My father died within a year, and it was found that the property was mortgaged up to the hilt; in fact, when all was cleared off, there was nothing for me. Father, it seems, had counted on my making a good match with Clive Wilson, whose position was likely to improve as time went on. As for my aunt's money, she had speculated with it and lost it; she told me quite frankly one day, when discussing the position at the Hall after my father's death, that she had no money, and that Lord Rutcliffe would leave his to his own people.

"From that moment Albert Glover neglected me; he turned gambler to make a living, and there were times even then when I was not certain of a meal, although he usually 'made' enough to keep a fairly good house going. The life was distasteful to me, but I had become his wife and I did my duty.

"He died, and I was left alone in the world, my well-meaning but careless aunt having followed my father. Since then, I have eked out a living somehow, sinking lower and lower in poverty, despite my strenuous efforts, till I am now reduced to write the wretched story of my life in the hope of earning money for bread!

"What became of Clive Wilson? Someone told me that he was in Australia, whither he had gone on learning of my marriage; but that cannot be for he must have run away before he knew of it, in his endeavour to escape the consequences of his act."

Her story was finished, and Alice Glover laid aside her pen with a sigh. She had written feverishly, and the effort had exhausted her. She would not trust herself to read it through either to detect mistakes or to see if the style was suited to the journal to which she intended to take it. She carefully tied it up, after having written a note to the editor, and having addressed an envelope for the return of the MS. if unsuitable. Then, to spare expense, she walked to the office of the journal and dropped it into the letter box.

She waited anxiously for the result. The idea opened a new field of work; if accepted, she might gain a footing there, and write other stories, not so true, perhaps. Those who would read her true story would believe it to be fiction, so she might as well write fiction another time.

Nearly a week passed before she received a letter from the office; it was an ordinary envelope, so her MS. was not rejected. Perhaps it contained a cheque. She opened it with trembling hands; the editor would like to see her concerning her story, and he named the time.

She went to the office and was shown into the great man's room. He was seated with his back to her, and it occurred to Alice that this was an awkward position for him, and that he would be better if his desk faced the other way. She walked up to him, and waited for him to turn round.

The editor rose, taking up her MS. as he did so, but not turning to face her.

"This story is a good one," he said slowly, "and it interests me greatly, Mrs. Glover, but I should prefer a happier ending."

"It is a real story, sir," she faltered, "and in real life things do not always end happily."

"They do sometimes, Alice," he cried in an altered voice, facing her abruptly, "and if *that* is the explanation, then it *can* end happily!"

"Clive!" she gasped. "I thought you——"

"That man played us both false, Alice," said he sadly. "I never committed such a crime, and that bill and newspaper cutting were printed by him expressly to deceive you. He must also have written the letter which I received from you, saying that you no longer cared for me, and asking me to release you and go abroad, so that we might never meet! I went to Australia, where I became a journalist, and a year ago I came back and accepted the editorship of this journal. Alice, I have never ceased to love you. Is it possible for us to make this story end happily? Do you love me still?"

"Oh, Clive, my love!"

He clasped her in his arms, and she nestled against the breast of her real lover.

George Day.

EVERY AMATEUR GARDENER SHOULD PROCURE

Small Gardens

And How to Make the Most of Them.

By VIOLET BIDDLE.

Price 1s.

This handbook teems with information, hints and wrinkles invaluable to amateur gardeners.

At all Booksellers, or Post Free on receipt of 1s. 2d. from The Book Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Alarming Medical Report on Deafness.

THE reports of three different authorities, including one from a Government expert, lately published in a medical journal, show that deafness prevails among school children to an alarming extent; in fact, that more than one-half have defective hearing and ear diseases. It is most important, therefore, that parents should be aroused to their responsibility in this matter, as attention to an ear trouble in childhood would prevent the development of obstinate deafness later in life.

To aid in educating people to the dangers of neglecting ear affections, a London Medical Institute has published a pamphlet containing much interesting information on the subject. The question of hygiene is well treated, and there is an article on the different systems commonly used in the treatment of ear, nose, and throat diseases. There is also a description of the new treatment, based on outward applications behind the ears, acting by absorption through the skin. This treatment, which can be applied at home, is said to have wrought cures in a large number of cases previously supposed to be hopeless.

Persons having children whose hearing is defective, or who are affected themselves, should write for this pamphlet which is distributed or forwarded gratis. The address is, The Secretary of the Drouet Institute for the Deaf, 10 Marble Arch, Hyde Park, London. A patient's Report Form is also issued to those who may wish to write for advice, for which no fee is charged if given by correspondence. Whenever possible, those who seek advice for deafness or ear, nose, and throat ailments should visit the Institute for a personal Consultation with the Medical Staff. Consultation hours are, weekday mornings, ten to twelve; afternoons, two to four. For personal Consultations a small fee of 5s. is charged.

GIVEN AWAY
with this week's
HOME NOTES
(No. 482.)

PAPER PATTERN of this
Boy's Coat and Knickers.
Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.
PRICE ONE PENNY.

MACKINTOSH'S
Is DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*
EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

BORAX
Starch Glaze.
Certain success
crowns the efforts of the Laundress when Borax Starch Glaze is in the starch. All the trouble that discourages comes from the endeavour to get satisfactory results with starch alone—an absolutely impossible task.
There is no need to suffer future irritation and disappointment.
A penny packet of Borax Starch Glaze, which is good for several ironings, will enable even the inexperienced to produce the finest laundry finish at home in an easy and pleasurable manner.
Nothing else can give that finish.
That's why Borax Starch Glaze is so popular.
Every Grocer and Oilman in your town sells it.

Facsimile Packet.

FREE SAMPLE PACKET AND SOME NOVELTIES if you name this paper and your grocer.
BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT MAKERS TO THE KING.
The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham

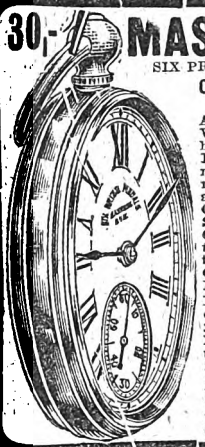
Headache
Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.
Kaputine THE SAFE REMEDY
Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says:
There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.
The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.
Packets of 18 doses 1s.
KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.
Neuralgia

Digitized by Google

30/- MASTERS'

SIX PRIZE MEDAL

CAPPED LEVER WATCH.



A most compact Watch, fitted with high-class Jewelled **Lever** movement, covered with removable Dust-and-Damp Proof Cap, extra heavy **Solid Silver Cases**. Warranted an accurate timekeeper. Strong Crystal Glass Front. Nett Price **27/-** cash. Or supplied for **30/-** on our monthly payment system. First send **2/6**, and **30/-** watch will be sent you. If satisfactory, send **2/6** on receipt, and **5/-** a month till paid for.

Large . . .
Illustrated .
Catalogue . .
Post Free . .

MASTERS'

New Design

CUCKOO CLOCK.

18/- on Credit. **3/-** First Payment

CUCKOO! CUCKOO!!

"How sweetly the Cuckoo is calling!"

A beautiful Cuckoo Clock, carved light oak case, 13½in. high, accurate timekeeper, and the Cuckoo over the dial sings out "Cuckoo!" once for one o'clock, twice for two o'clock, etc. Price **16s.** Cash, or on easy terms.

Sent to any address on receipt of Postal Order value **3/-**

If approved of send **3s.** a month for 5 months, or you may send **16s.** (cash price), and have the Clock on approval. If not satisfactory, we will refund your money in full if Clock is returned at once.

Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Rings, etc., Post Free.

MASTERS ltd., 157 HIGH STREET, RYE, ENG.,

"NO BETTER FOOD."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

Fry's

Pure Concentrated

Cocoa.

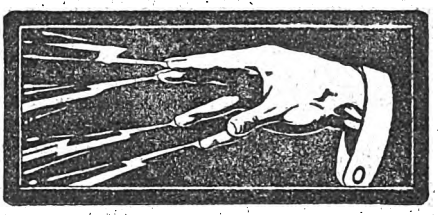
300 GOLD MEDALS, ETC.

The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET," "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and "MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its

ABSOLUTE PURITY.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.—Sold only in tins with gilt top.

HYPNOTISM



PERSONAL MAGNETISM

Can you hypnotise? Can you exercise that strange influence, known as personal magnetism? Would you like to know more about these things? Then write to our London Office for the wonderful little illustrated **FREE BOOK, "The Power Within."**

This little book deals with the most interesting and important subject in the world—the influence of the mind upon human life, health and affairs.

How to use the mind power, or mental magnetism, to attract friendship and success, to break up depressing conditions and influences, to hypnotise, to maintain health, to kill fear and nervousness, to develop a strong, magnetic, attractive personality—these things are what investigators have been lately working upon.

In the free book, above mentioned, they tell you of their fascinating work and how you can reap the benefit of it. This little book is a brilliant suggestion to those who are groping in the dark for something practical and tangible in occultism.

Thousands of people have been delighted with the work of these men. Glowing testimonials come in every day's mail. Are you going to let this valuable opportunity pass? The book is free for the asking. We give it away because we want to arouse a popular interest in up-to-date psychic literature, publishing which is our speciality. Please do not ask for it unless you are sincerely interested. Address (enclosing 1d. stamp for return postage),

PSYCHIC RESEARCH CO. (Dept. 437),
Temple Chambers, Temple Ave, London, E.C.

Knew the Symptoms.

"You're a nice little boy, Tommy," said Mr. Newman. "That's what they all say when they first meet sister," Tommy remarked.

Sure to Catch It.

"Only ten minutes before my train goes! Can I ever catch it?" exclaimed a pretty girl, flying downstairs. "Just imagine it's a man, and you'll catch it," called the crusty old bachelor after her.

Gave the Show Away.

Miss Gushington: "I admit, Arthur, that this is not the first time I have been engaged, but I'm sure your noble, generous heart——" Little Brother: "Sis, the baby's got your bunch of engagement rings."

Such a Coarse Girl!

George: "You do not call on Miss Rosebud now?" Jack: "No, I got disgusted. She has such a coarse laugh." George: "I never noticed that." Jack: "You would if you'd been within hearing when I proposed to her."

Only the Bric-a-brac!

Algernon (making a call): "What are these noises I hear, Miss Maud?" Miss Maud (whose mother is vindictively making a wholly unnecessary noise in washing the dishes): "It's dear mamma. She dearly loves to sort over the *bric-à-brac*."

The Cheek Remained.

Her head had dropped upon his shoulder. "If only," he whispered, "thy cheek could remain there for ever." Little thought he what was to be. Little thought he until he got home and tried to remove the cheek from his dress coat with ammonia and alcohol.

Was It the Dye?

Mrs. Youngwife: "Just think, Harry, all our chickens died to-day." Harry: "Is that so? What ailed them?" Mrs. Y.: "I'm sure I don't now. It's a great disappointment to me, too, for I had fed them with different coloured dyes so they would lay Easter eggs."

No Light Affection for Her.

"I do love you, Mabel! You know it is 'in the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.'" "So I thought. No, Mr. Brown; no light Spring business for me! I want the honest affection that shows itself in the Autumn, when the theatres and concerts commence. Good-bye, Mr. Brown."

Not Possible.

"I see by the paper," said Mrs. Hicks, "that you can buy a sealskin from the Esquimaux for two iron hoops and a tenpenny nail." "Very true," returned Hicks; "but I can't spare the time to take the hoops and the nail to the Esquimaux, and my bank wouldn't honour a cheque for two hoops and a tenpenny nail, so I don't see how we are benefited by that state of affairs."

Held a Better Hand Then.

She (half suspiciously): "Did you ever hold a hand that you would like to hold better than mine?" He: "Only once, darling. Then I went nap."

Bad Signs.

Mrs. Oldfidget is much worried about her daughter. The other night she kissed her, and the young lady murmured in her sleep: "Oh, Charlie, you've shaved off your moustache!"

Proof of It.

Country Lover: "Do you really love me, Jane?" Jane (impatiently): "Goodness me! You know well enough I do. Do you s'pose I would have lent you a shilling last summer to put on a 'hoss' race if I didn't?"

Hard Luck!

Photographer: "Can you assume a more pleasant expression than that? Just think of your best girl a few minutes." Young Man (sadly): "It wouldn't do any good. She refused me about a week ago."

The Right Expression.

Stage Manager: "You do not inject enough contempt, spite, and venom into that word." Actress: "I can do no better." Stage Manager: "Nonsense! Speak it just as you say 'plush,' when you meet a rival in a sealskin jacket."

The Horrid Man!

She: "No, thank you; I don't care to know him. He is a most detestable person." He: "There must be some mistake. Everybody speaks well of him." She: "I don't care. He was one of the judges at the dog show, and he wouldn't give poor little Fido a prize."

Something Like It.

Her *fiancé* (who has not known her very long, and is inclined to be jealous): "Er—er—Clara, dear, did you ever have a—er—er—an experience like this before?" Clara (innocently—she was sitting on his knee): "Well, George, I once sat on the top rail of a fence."

Sweet Innocence.

He had just bought a few acres in the country and proposed to set himself up as a gentleman farmer. "Well, Ethel, I am going over to old Mossback's this morning to buy a cow that will give good milk." "Yes, we want good milk, Charles; and we also want a cow that will give good cream."

Didn't Want to Marry Her.

She: "It is useless to urge me to marry you. When I say no, I mean no." He: "Always?" She: "Invariably." He: "And can nothing ever change your determination when you once make up your mind?" She: "Absolutely nothing." He: "Well, I wouldn't care to marry a woman like that."

Misunderstood Her Remark.

"Yes," said Mrs. Catchem, "those are my daughters over there on the sofa. They have half a million between them." It was not until they were married to those daughters that the young men who overheard the remark found out that Mrs. Catchem referred to the rich old man who sat on the sofa between the girls.

Dictated With His Arm.

Doctor: "From the condition of your hand and arm, I should say you are suffering from writers' cramp—too much exercise of one set of muscles." Young Business Man: "But I never write. I employ a typine." Doctor: "Um—engaged to her?" Young Business Man: "Yes." Doctor: "Do you—er dictate with your other arm?"

A Boarding-House Saint.

Bloomsbury Landlady: "Poor Mr. Lightweight died last week, and if anyone ever deserved to go to Heaven he did." Mr. Heavyeater (who is slightly in arrears): "Why?" Bloomsbury Landlady (weeping): "He always paid his board in advance, never complained if his bed wasn't made up, and oh, such a delicate appetite as that poor saint had!"

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Household Matters.

"KARKI."—I have handed your inquiry to "Isobel," who will, no doubt, answer it in her page of *Pearson's Weekly*. Will my readers please note that I only answer questions dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette, and not questions regarding recipes and other household matters?

Regarding Engagement Rings.

THE design of an engagement ring, "LOVELORN," is purely a matter of taste. The half-hoop pattern is certainly the most usual, but it is not an uncommon thing to see the stones in a cluster. As regards the number of stones in the ring, that is a matter to be decided by the taste of the prospective wearer and the pocket of the giver. Most engagement rings contain either three or five stones; there is said to be luck in odd numbers.

Is it Love?

LAST year "KITTY" became very friendly with a young man. They went out together and were introduced to each other's relations. During the course of a few months he went out to Canada to try to better his prospects. "KITTY" saw him off from Euston, and during the seven months he has been away they have corresponded regularly, but no word of love has been mentioned.

* * * * *

One thing that makes "KITTY" believe he cares for her, in a way other than ordinary friendship, is a remark he made to the effect that he didn't think it right for a fellow to get engaged, or bind a girl in any way, unless he were able to marry her right away, if need be. She wants to know whether she is right in assuming that he means anything.

* * * * *

You needn't apologise, "KITTY," for your long letter. I am always glad to be of service to anyone in trouble, and it is much easier to give advice when the full facts of the case are stated. I think you will be quite right in assuming that your—shall we call him friend?—really cares for you in no ordinary way, otherwise it is hardly likely that he would continue to write to you after so long an absence.

* * * * *

Three years will soon pass, you will find, and if he discovers that his prospects are brightening, he is sure to write something definite before long. Meanwhile, perhaps in some of your letters you can put out a feeler; say how you miss him and hope the day when you will meet again will soon arrive, or something of that kind. If his intentions are matrimonially inclined, he will take the hint; if not, there is no harm done.

A Troubled Lover.

"NINA" has a lover. She is not engaged to him, however. Most of her time is spent away from home, but when she goes there, which is usually once a fortnight, for the week-end, her lover is very attentive. During her absence, however, "NINA" has letters from her girl friends saying that he flirts with them. She has forgiven him many times, but at last is tired of doing so. Her friends say he has taken a turn for the better lately, and now he has written to her asking forgiveness again. What ought she to do?

* * * * *

You say you love him very much, "NINA." If so, I should advise you to send him your forgiveness; but at the same time tell him quite plainly that you do not approve of his conduct in carrying on with other girls during your absence from home. Of course, it may be that he is only flirting with you in the same way as he does with your friends. If this is not the case, it is about time you came to some definite understanding as to whether you are to become engaged or not. Next time you see him endeavour to lead up to the subject, and if he tries to turn the conversation, you will know that he is only trifling with your affections.

Wants an Introduction.

"F. H. R." is a soldier, and he knows by sight a young lady to whom he very much wants to get an introduction. So far as he is aware, they have no mutual friend, and though he knows her father, he does not like the idea of getting him to introduce them, for fear of meeting with a rebuff.

* * * * *

It looks rather as if the girl's father knew something about you which was not to your credit, "F. H. R.," otherwise it would surely be quite an easy matter to call in to see him one evening when you knew the daughter would be at home. An introduction in that case would follow naturally. If your relations with the father are quite friendly, I would recommend you to call in as I suggest. If not, it would be better to give up any idea of obtaining an introduction.

Chance Acquaintance.

"FALSE SQUALLER" sings in the choir at the church he attends and is getting very fond of a young lady in the congregation. He managed to scrape up an acquaintance with her, but has not seen her now for some time, and fears that she is offended with him for speaking to her without an introduction. He does not know her name or address, and wonders, if ever he sees her again, which he quite hopes to do, how he should greet her.

* * * * *

You hardly tell me sufficient about your acquaintanceship, "FALSE SQUALLER," for me to be able to advise you properly. You do not say how many times you spoke to her. If only once, it is quite likely she might be offended, but I do not think that would make her stay away from church. She is probably ill or away from home.

* * * * *

If you have only spoken to her once, and she appeared to resent your forwardness, do not take any notice when next you see her. If you have spoken to her several times, and she did not seem to object to it, I should certainly say that you might speak to her next time you see her.

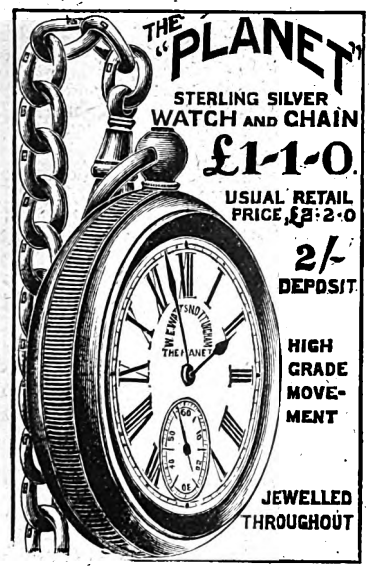
When to Cut the Cake.

IN reply to "A CONSTANT READER'S" inquiry, the proper time to cut the wedding cake is just before the bride goes to change her dress preparatory to starting on the honeymoon. If a breakfast is served, she should cut it at the conclusion of the meal.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google



TWO SHILLINGS

DEPOSIT (and subsequent weekly or monthly payments to suit the convenience of purchaser) secures one of these handsome and thoroughly reliable Watches and Chains for £1 1s. instead of £2 2s., the usual retail price. *When writing please mention this paper.*

SPECIFICATION.

The Gent's Silver "PLANET" Watch and Chain at £1 1s. is a marvellous production, and equal quality and value has not been attempted by any other firm in the World. The Watch is fitted with a horizontal movement of excellent quality; it is fully jewelled, carefully fitted and finished and thoroughly sound in every respect. The cases are Sterling Silver throughout, of extra strength and beautifully finished. Keyless or Key-wind as preferred. The Chain is Sterling Silver, Hall-marked on every link, of extra strength and thickness; it is of full length, but owing to want of space this cannot be shown in the illustration.

The Watch and Chain are forwarded post free, complete with signed warranty for ten years. They are produced by special and greatly improved machinery, and are supplied direct to the purchaser at a small commission on the actual net cost of production.

NO DISCOUNT WHATEVER can be allowed to customers sending cash in full with order, but they will be entitled to a week's free trial of the Watch & Chain; and the full amount of cash paid will be refunded if the articles are not approved.

W. E. WATTS FOUNDED 1858 WHOLESALE DEPOT 106-108 DERBY Rd THE ONLY ADDRESS— NOTTINGHAM.

PIANO VAMPING (BOOK 16 PACES.) 2/8 to £1 may be earned nightly by anyone having good knowledge of above. No knowledge of music required. A genuine work. Post free, 2/-; Colonies, 3/-. Agent (Dept. A), 16 Eton Rd., Southsea, Hants.

Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way. 1903 Models, fully warranted, **£3.10 to £6.10** New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories. **200** Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10 **Don't Fail** to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money. **Rider Agents Wanted** in every district to buy sample cycle at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. **MEAD CYCLE CO.** Liverpool.

Do you not envy the woman with a "pearl-like" skin? Then use "Peralia" regularly. It soothes, refreshes, clears and beautifies, making the skin smooth and healthy. Preserves a fine complexion and restores a faded one. Makes the hands and arms like velvet. Endorsed by society and professional women all over the world. Gentlemen find it extremely pleasant after shaving; relieves irritation—cools the skin. Use it for Spots, Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, and especially for Red Nose.

Doctor's certificate guaranteeing its purity, and testimonials, sent with each bottle.

In Bottles, 1/- 1/6 2/6 Postage, 3d. extra

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

ARE YOU LITTLE?

Or Flat Footed? If so, try our Elevators, which will increase your height from 1 to 4 inches without detection. Comfortable to wear. Price from 5/6, Lady's; 6/6 Gent's, per pair. Send stamps for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73, Camden Street, North Shields.**

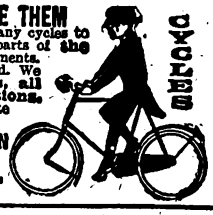
NOSE

If your nose is large or badly-shaped in any way, use our Nose Machine, price 10/-. Cheek Plumpers for thin or sunken cheeks, 10/- pair. Ear Instruments for standing-out ears, 10/- each. Send stamp for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73 Camden St., North Shields.**

CLERGY ENDORSE THEM

We sell a great many cycles to clergymen in all parts of the world on easy payments. No guarantors required. We supply both sexes, all ages, all occupations. We want YOU to write for our circulars.

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 125-128, City Rd., London, E.C.



CRIMPOLINE HAIR CURLING FLUID.

Curls the hair naturally in a few days, and, what is more, the hair will keep in curl. Does not change the colour or destroy the hair but makes it soft and silky, and will curl or frizz into natural curls. No tongs needed. Not sticky or greasy like other curling fluids, which only keep the hair in curl. After the hair has become curly it is not necessary to continue using Crimpoline. Give Crimpoline a trial—the result will astonish you. Use it for Ladies', Gents', and Children's Hair. **1/9 and 2/6 per Bottle, Postage 3d.** Ask your Chemist or Hair Dresser to get above preparations for you; if they are out of stock, we will send it direct to you securely packed.

Have no other or you will be disappointed.

Under Royal Patronage. Used by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc.

PERALIA PERFUMERY CO. (Dept. 14), **72 and 73 Camden Street, North Shields.**

Hygiene of the Skin explains how the famous Natural **Icilma Water** and the preparations made with it keep the skin healthy and free from lines, chaps, chilblains, sunburn, rashes and irritations. Free offer to those who have not yet tried it The only absolutely safe Natural remedy for the complexion. Send postcard, with address, to ICILMA (Dept. 17), 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the Best Coventry made Cycles, and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenges, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc. The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade COVENTRY CYCLE for £6-0-0.

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. EDWARD O'BRIEN, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, COVENTRY.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

From Factory to Rider.

How Does This Suit You? Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. **£14 14s** Grade for **£6 10s** Write, H Dept, Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

HYPNOTISM

BE A HYPNOTIST AND MAKE FUN AND MONEY.

It takes but a few hours to learn, the study is both easy and fascinating. Hypnotism is an endless source of fun and wonder. If you know how to hypnotise you can perform the most marvellous feats imaginable. You can do a thousand amazing things that other people cannot do. You can surprise all your friends and make yourself famous. You can place anyone you wish under this strange and magic spell. You can compel them to think, act, and feel just as you wish. If you want to make money you can do it by giving entertainments; curing diseases, or teaching the art to others. These are three sure and easy ways to win a fortune. Why be poor, why work for others, when you can master this money-making profession so easily? Investigate now. You can learn at home without cost. I will send you my **BIG FREE BOOK** for the asking. It tells all about Hypnotism. It is the most elaborate and valuable work of the kind ever published. It contains many beautiful pictures, and explains all the mysteries and secrets of the art. Anybody can learn from it all about the Hypnotic spell, how it is operated, how it sways the will of its subjects, heals the sick, reforms the degraded, wins undying love, helps to trade or position, amuses an audience for profit, and gains for the operator himself health, wealth, and happiness. It also treats fully on Personal Magnetism, Magnetic Healing, and kindred subjects, and how to CURE YOURSELF of any pain, ache, or disease. Remember the book is ABSOLUTELY FREE. Simply write for it, and it will be sent by next post, all charges paid. Don't send any money or stamp but send your name and address TO-DAY.

PROFESSOR WILLIAMS, Blenheim House, Oxford St., LONDON, W.

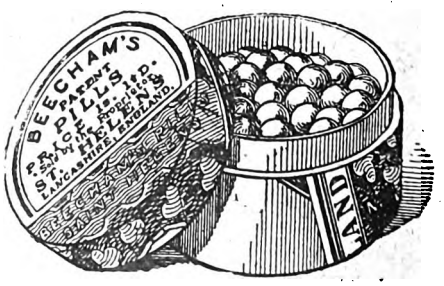
A Pointed Talk.

"Prevention is better than cure," we are told. Next time you feel 'out of sorts,' just take **BEECHAM'S PILLS** and so prevent a seemingly small ailment growing into serious trouble. **BEECHAM'S PILLS** prevent illness as well as cure it. Most people take them to keep themselves in good health. These are wise and happy ones—they hardly ever know what bad health is. There is no medicine in the world to compare with **BEECHAM'S PILLS.** They will not harm the most delicate—and the strongest will benefit by using them. They are a tried remedy — the trusted friend of thousands of families all over the world. You will soon feel better after taking them, and you will know what to resort to in future. REMEMBER, "Prevention is better than cure," so always have a box of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** handy and TAKE A DOSE when you feel YOU NEED ONE.

▼

BEECHAM'S

PILLS.



Digitized by Google

TURN TO PAGE 495.

SHORT STORIES.

No. 746.] Week ending April 18th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

"BOBBY, THAT'S YOUR DADDY! TAKE THIS LETTER AND TELL HIM I WROTE IT FOR HIM. TELL HIM THAT YOU ARE HUNGRY."

Digitized by Google

Worth a Guinea a Box.

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

No other medicine in the world can claim so many regular users. Thousands of families always keep a box of BEECHAM'S PILLS in the house, so that, on the first sign of any irregularity of the system, a timely dose may be administered, and further trouble and suffering averted. Nine-tenths of the BEECHAM'S PILLS sold are purchased by those who HAVE USED THEM BEFORE and have found them indispensable as

A FAMILY MEDICINE.

Sold everywhere in Boxes price 1s. 1½d. (56 pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 pills).

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine THE SAFE

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

Carr. Paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s. 15/10 | £9 10s. 17/6
£9 16/8 | £10 5s. 19/3

Juno Motor Cycle is the King of Motor Cycles, £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lowest prices; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6.

Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

E·P PS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

CYCLISTS' GOODS

Immense stock, at prices that defy competition. No trash, prompt deliveries on orders by post. Brakes, Pedals, Bells, Lamps, Tyres, Inflators, Tools, Oils, Free Wheels, Shoes, Carriers, Chains, Bags, Saddles, Road Maps, etc. Send for No. 9 catalogue, post free.

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, City Road, London, E.C.

To CURE Drunkards

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

15 Buns for 1d.

You can make 15 large, light, delicious, and wholesome buns from 1d. packet of Eiffel Tower Bun Flour for a total cost of 3½d. It is so easy to use that a child can make delicious buns with certain success.

Ask your grocer for it, or send a Postcard for FREE SAMPLE (enough for 15 Buns) to Foster Clark and Co. 115 Eiffel Tower Factory, Maidstone.

PUREST & NICEST.

PINK'S JAMS

A good housekeeper thinks
The "pink" of Jams is PINK'S.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 746.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending April 18th, 1903.

How Easily Things Go Wrong.

The Tale of a Misunderstanding and a Reconciliation.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

"OH, how easily things go wrong!" That is the opinion of a poet, and proofs of the accuracy of his words are to be found all about us. The story of Robert and Agnes Mason is one of those proofs, with its lesson for all who care to learn it.

Can things be righted again? Not easily, and the poet says that they are "never the same again; yet in some few cases a quarrel and subsequent misery are effaced by the greater happiness—the more solid joy—that follows. Whether this was so or not in the case of Robert and Agnes Mason, the following narrative will show.

It would be difficult to say exactly when the change began. No two people could be more fond of one another than they when they married, and if they had overheard the remark of an elderly woman who saw them leave the church, they would have laughed her to scorn.

"I fear they are a fair-weather couple," she observed, shaking her head slowly; "and they will be happy so long as trouble keeps away from them. Yet, perhaps trouble will do them good in the end!"

No trouble could shake their affection for each other, they would have said, but the change did come. Robert Mason had been brought up by his doting father in a manner suited for a man of large means; he had received a public school education, and had travelled.

On attaining his majority, he had vaguely anticipated that money would be his, but he learnt that his father had none to give.

John Mason had lavished money on his son with the idea that his education and travelling would so sharpen him that he would be fitted to take up some line of work and carve a road to fortune for himself. The particular kind of work was left to circumstances; "the boy would discover what he was most fitted for," was the father's conclusion.

Robert tried several things and contrived to exist with the aid of a small sum which his father was able to allow him; at the end of two years, when his father died, he was making a fair living with his pen.

Not having too large a share of the circulating medium, he arrived at the paradoxical conclusion that it would go farther if divided between himself and somebody else. He had fallen in love with Agnes Torrens, an attractive young woman; they were both full of the hopefulness of youth, they both believed that Robert was bound to make a name and earn a constantly-increasing income, so they married.

All rights reserved.]

A year passed very, very happily, but after the birth of the baby there was a change in their circumstances. Robert determined to try a novel, and for that reason had relinquished some of the regular journalistic and literary work which had supported them.

Money was becoming scarce, and they were running into debt, but it was all to be set right when the novel was finished. Robert indulged in dreams of the extent of the sum which would be paid to him for the copyright, if he sold it, or the total of the royalties he would receive on the sale of so many thousand copies of his work. They would be rich.

It was a great shock to Robert and Agnes when the novel was refused by the publisher to whom it was first offered; and the refusal was repeated by all the chief publishing firms as he tried them one after another.

The book had good points, but——. Then followed a reason that differed every time. Robert Mason became morose; angry with Fate, he turned his attention to the work he had secretly despised before the failure.

This trial brought out the weakness of both natures. Agnes told him that he ought to have made his characters do this or that, as she had originally suggested, or thought she had suggested; her husband was annoyed, his pride was hurt, and he answered that she knew nothing about it.

In less than another six months, things had gone wrong with their happiness; there was constant quarrelling—petty quarrels, just bad enough to make life miserable, no blows as with many others, but sharp speeches that cut quickly into the sensitive natures.

If Robert had had success in his journalistic career, all might have gone smoothly, but ill-luck pursued him and his earnings dwindled until they were living in genteel poverty.

At last it came to a bitter altercation, in which each said more than he or she had intended.

Stabbed, figuratively, by the unrestrained language of the other, the two young people stood facing each other with flaming eyes and hot cheeks.

"I could keep myself and baby better than you can keep us, if I were free from the worry of this wretched place!" she had said in a fit of ungovernable rage, and the words rankled in his heart.

"I'll leave you to do it!" were his last words, as he opened the door of the apartment and passed out.

She heard his steps as he descended the stairs, and then

Digitized by Google

came what Tom Hood called a wooden oath—the slamming of the door—and she was alone.

During the remainder of the day she had time to reflect and she felt that she had gone too far; yet he had done the same and it was not her fault! She first tried to excuse herself, and then she began to say that he didn't mean it and would come back at night.

As the time wore on and evening approached, she felt rather awkward; Robert would be back shortly—how would he greet her and how would she receive him. The first moment would be a trying one, but she resolved to act bravely and welcome him frankly, should he enter in sullen silence.

But evening became night and her husband did not return. The cold pain at her heart grew more intense as the minutes ticked away by the cheap clock. She waited until two o'clock, when she threw herself on the bed and cried herself to sleep.

With the morning her mood changed. If he cared so little for her she could get along without him! Perhaps he would return after two or three days, thinking that his absence and the prospect of gaining her own livelihood would have frightened and humbled her. He would find out how mistaken he was!

She gathered a few things together and called the landlady.

"We owe you several weeks' rent, Mrs. Amer," she said quietly. "If Mr. Mason comes back, he will settle with you. If he doesn't, there is enough furniture here to repay you."

The landlady was not particularly surprised; it was not the first couple who had parted while living as tenants in the house she rented. It was none of her business, although she felt a little sorry for both, and the furniture would cover the back rent, there was just enough for that purpose.

"Very well, ma'am!" she said indifferently. "I suppose Mr. Mason will know where to find you?"

"Oh, there is no need to worry about that!" declared Agnes.

Mrs. Amer, finding that her departing tenant was not inclined to be communicative, did not condescend to say more, but retired. Agnes managed to get a cab and soon afterwards drove away with her few belongings and her baby boy, going to another part of the great city where she had lived four years previously.

It was during the evening of the same day that Robert Mason returned. He had received a commission to explore a district of the East End by night and he had carried out the task and had written his description of what he had seen.

In his anger, he had decided not to send word to Agnes, telling himself that it would do her good to think that he had taken her at her word and kept his threat. He returned with a couple of sovereigns in his pocket and feeling somewhat ashamed and penitent.

It was a silly thing to quarrel and he regretted the scene. It was not all his fault; Agnes was quite as much to blame as he and she had a bitter tongue when she liked to let it run loose; yet he was the stronger partner and he would restrain his own feelings and try to make things go more smoothly.

Agnes was gone! She had left no note for him, but there was no doubt about it, for the ransacked drawers told the story.

He called the landlady, only to receive confirmation of his fears. Robert Mason's heart grew hard against his wife and the feeling of repentance vanished.

It did not occur to him that his own silence had been the chief cause of her disappearance; he did not, in his disturbed mental condition, rightly understand what Mrs. Amer said and he jumped to the conclusion that Agnes had left soon after his departure on the preceding day.

His mind was quickly made up; he was able to pay some of the rent and thus redeem a few of his household goods, and with those he removed to another lodging.

Two days later he called on Mrs. Amer and left his address, in case Agnes repented.

"I will not destroy all trace and all chance of a reconciliation!" he muttered.

But no sign came from Agnes and, to drown his troubles, Robert began to drink, spending most of his earnings in intoxicants and steadily going the path that leads to disaster.

The months went by, Robert Mason did not know how many. Sometimes he would be pulled round by friendly advice or a slight accident, and he would go on steadily and soberly for a time, only to lapse again.

During these intervals he would try to find Agnes, and it was probably failure to trace her that caused the lapse.

It was while under the influence of a convivial gathering that he found her and lost her again because he did not know it. Yet that incident marked a change for the better and brightened his life.

He was proceeding rather unsteadily along a wide thoroughfare when a woman spoke to him. She was dressed in ragged garments and her face was pinched with want.

She was holding a child by the hand, and she addressed him with feverish eagerness, like one who had made up her mind to a course of action beset with difficulties and yet shrinks from it.

It was Agnes Mason, seeking reconciliation and forgiveness. She had tried to find him for many weary weeks, for her child was often on the verge of starvation and her mother's heart was lacerated by the child's suffering.

For herself she cared little, yet she yearned for the happy life of those first months and wished—oh, so ardently!—that it were possible to forget the later months.

She sacrificed all her pride for her child, and went to the old lodging to humble herself, ready to take all the blame on her own shoulders, for the sake of the boy. It had been a hard struggle for her, and her health had failed her.

Mrs. Amer was there no longer, and the new landlady knew nothing of Mr. Mason! Agnes had sought him in vain, and now she saw him coming!

"Robert!" she cried, raising her hand to place it on his arm.

He looked at her stupidly, but she did not notice the dull appearance of his eyes and the wooden expression of his face. He pushed her aside roughly and passed on. She sank with a moan to the pavement. He had pushed her from his life; he did not want her!

She arose hurriedly as a thought struck her. Catching the child by the shoulder, she pointed to the retreating figure which was still only a few yards distant.

"Go to that gentleman, Bobby, and tell him that you are his little sonny, as you tell mamma sometimes! He is your daddy. Take this letter and tell him I wrote it for him! Don't let him go! If he tries to leave you, cry loud! He has the pennies to buy you something to eat and he will give you something. Tell him that you are hungry!"

She pushed the boy along with the same feverish haste, running with him almost to the man who had spurned her. Then she left the child to give the message as best he might and hid herself in a doorway to watch the result.

Her heart beat high as she saw Robert Mason stop and listen to the boy. She saw him take the letter. An impulse prompted her to run up to her husband, but she crushed it down. She might spoil all by intruding.

Robert would probably care for the boy, it was his responsibility, but he would not want her—he did not want her! Something in her heart told her that the child would be all right, so she turned and fled from the spot.

Robert Mason tried to read the letter, but his eyes were dimmed. What was the child talking about?

Digitized by Google

"What do you say?" he asked, trying to speak softly and encouragingly.

"Mamma says you're my daddy! I'm hungry!" the child, about three years old now, spoke in a tone more befitting an older boy. He would have been dubbed "old-fashioned" by grown-ups. "I want a cake, daddy!"

"This is amusing!" muttered Robert, striving to fix his attention on the child and so clear his own muddled brain. "He's quaint! I say, what's your name, now?"

"Robert Mason!" pronounced the child, quite distinctly, showing that he had learnt it as a special lesson.

"What?" cried the man in amazement. "Here, come into this—. No, not there! I'll find a tea-shop!"

He caught the boy up in his arms and moved off with him. He didn't know what he was going to do exactly, but the haze was clearing from his brain. By the time he had seated the child on a chair in a cheap tea-room, holding him with one hand, Robert Mason was not far from sober.

"It's true!" he gasped. "The boy's the very image of *her!* What's it mean? Yes, this note!" He read it and his face became ashen in hue. "Did your mamma give you this? Where is she?"

The child replied in two or three broken sentences, and Mason gathered an idea of the truth. He caught up the child again and literally ran back to the spot where the child had come up to him, as nearly as he could remember, but he found no trace of Agnes. She had slipped from him once more.

* * * * *

Another two years have gone, and they have wrought a great change in Robert Mason. The entrance of the child into his life, the constant reminder of his lost wife in the boy's striking resemblance to her, had been the means of turning him aside from the path he was following, and making him work with dogged stubbornness to gain a name as a journalist and author.

After much hard work the tide had turned and he was on the road to success.

His great opportunity had come in connection with a play for a provincial touring company; a man for whom he did a good turn in an unexpected manner gave him this opportunity and he was able to take it. This was such a success that his reputation spread and he was soon represented on the London "boards," but the public did not know him as Robert Mason.

"My dear fellow, you must have a more fetching name than that, to take *my* public!" expostulated the manager of the touring company. "We must alter it. Let me see. Mason, Masson, Marston. Yes, Marston is all right. We have added a little, that's all! Robert Marston? H'm! How would Marston Roberts do?"

"You are adding more now!" laughed Mason, thinking of the addition of the "s" to "Robert."

"You've hit it!" cried the manager. "Marston More! See? Sounds like Marston Moor—historical name, you know; a big battle fought there. We'll call you that. You're not the first man who has taken the name of a place as his pseudonym!"

And so it came about that Agnes, watching for any sign of her husband, heard of the fame of Marston More, dramatist and novelist, and did not know that it was Robert Mason's assumed name.

"Now, Bobbie!" exclaimed Robert Mason gaily to his five-year-old son. "I'm going to take you to the theatre to see the ladies and gentlemen saying the things that dad puts down on the paper."

"I like the ladies and gent'men!" declared Bobby comfortably.

"If this company treats you as the others did at rehearsals, you ought to like ladies and gent'men!" laughed his father. "They'll spoil you."

He looked much older than the man who had slammed the door behind him so many weary months ago. His face had a calmer, stronger appearance, and the lines, wrought by sorrow, gave his face a nobler look.

His manner was that of a man who is happy with a chastened joy. He had not forgotten his wife, but he had found delight in the possession of his son. He thanked her in his heart for having given the child to him.

It was very cold and Robert hailed a cab to take them to the theatre. Their appearance was hailed with acclamation by the assembled company, and the ladies took Bobbie away to give him goodies and otherwise spoil his appetite and disposition. Father and child were almost inseparable, and in the theatrical world they were acquiring such titles as "The Two Bobs."

Business began. Little Bob was placed in a corner and for the time his father forgot him. The manager had allowed some relations of the supernumeraries to be present in the auditorium, just as a treat for them and to avoid the rather depressing effect which an empty theatre would have on the actors at rehearsal.

At least, that was his explanation, but everybody understood that his good-nature prompted him to allow poor people to come in at times, out of the cold or wet, and he also gave them a coin as a souvenir.

Extraordinary conduct, as some persons said, but he was an extraordinary man altogether, which probably accounted for the position he had acquired.

In the midst of an important scene, Bobby became tired of inactivity and suddenly ran forward. At the same moment one of the actresses, in the performance of her part, rushed across the front of the stage.

There was a collision, immediately followed by a cry of fear and pain from the child and a general shout from the other members of the company. The two sounds drowned one more that was uttered at the moment by a woman standing in the theatre at the side. She sprang forward and scrambled to the stage.

"My boy, my Bobby," she screamed. "You have hurt him! It *is* my boy! Oh, let me come to him!"

She was a pitiful object, in rags and faint from exposure and want. She staggered forward, but the effort to get on the stage had exhausted her. She reeled, threw out her arms for support, and was caught by the author of the new piece.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried fervently, while the spectators looked with wide-opened eyes. "I have found her again!"

The sound of his voice sent a quiver through her frame. She opened her eyes to gaze at the face of her lost husband, and, seeing nothing but the deepest love and sympathy therein, she instinctively nestled nearer to his breast and wept tears of joy.

"Me, too!" said a child's voice.

And Bobby struggled to obtain a share of his father's embrace.

"We'll give up the rehearsal for to-day and take it up to-morrow at the same time!" whispered the kindly manager to the several members of the company. So they dispersed and left the stage to the chief actors in a drama of which they knew nothing.

B. E. Garden.

Maud: "What do you do when a man persists in asking for a dance, and you don't care to dance with him?" Marie: "Tell him my card is full." Maud: "But supposing it isn't, and he still persists?" Marie: "Then I insist that it is, and let him see that it isn't."

Digitized by Google

A Deed = = Repaid.

A Story of a Girl's Choice and its Transfer.

PROLOGUE.

In the Teeth of the Storm.

It was late afternoon, and storm-clouds were scudding overhead, heralding a dark and premature night.

An hour before the blue waters of Crag Bay had smiled and danced beneath a still bluer sky. But a storm had risen, and the wind was now lashing the surface of the bay into foam-crested billows, above which the stinging spray flew and hissed in the teeth of the gale.

The tide was on the flow, and the storm increased as the torn and broken water poured in between the distant headlands. Outside, the deep boom of breakers told of a tossing, turbulent sea.

Presently the figure of a girl came into view, walking, high up, along the narrow path which fringed the cliff over-looking the bay.

To walk there in such a storm was neither an easy nor a pleasant task, but Ida Sherwood loved nothing so well as to come here in the teeth of a storm and witness the grand but awful battle between wind and sea.

Slowly she traversed the narrow path, gazing out over the jagged, seething waters. Soon she came to the further side of the bay, where the water was dotted with huge black rocks.

When the sea was calm, it was easy to leap from rock to rock, but they were only approachable when the tide was low. A sheet of broken water now lay between the rocks and the shore, for the tide was on the flow.

Suddenly the girl stood still, and a little cry escaped her lips. Far out on the rocks, she saw a solitary figure, standing terror-stricken in the midst of the seething, storm-swept waters. Around him hissed the spray, lashing his white face with stinging salt drops.

Gazing helplessly shorewards, he caught sight of the girl, standing motionless on the edge of the cliff, and, with an imploring gesture, he lifted and waved a broken crutch, which he held in his hand.

It was now too dark and he was too far off for the girl to recognise him, but his signal of distress told her who he was. He was the cripple son of a fisherman in the village—a man of ill-repute, who was regarded, even by his drunken associates, as a man to be feared.

The boy, too, appeared to be following in his father's footsteps, in spite of the ill-usage to which the latter subjected him, for though he was as yet but ten years old, he had already found his way to the notice of the local police.

But these things—though not unknown to the girl—were considerations of small importance now. The boy was in peril of his life.

The cruel waves leapt around him in a veritable dance of death. She must save him! But how? He had wandered on to the rocks, and the rising tide had cut off his retreat.

Suddenly a thought came to the girl. There was but one way to save the lad.

To summon assistance would be fruitless, for the little village of Crag Bay lay two miles off. She looked below, and her eye rested on a small boat-house at the foot of the cliff. Her breath came quick as she realised the peril of the task before her. But her mind was made up.

Catching up her skirts, she descended the steep cliff by a rough, precipitous path used by the fisherfolk of the village, and, racing over the shingle beneath, reached the shed where the boat was kept.

With a strength born of desperation, she dragged the boat out on to the beach and ran it down to the water's edge.

The tide was higher now, and the foam-crested waves were sweeping over the rock upon which the trembling boy stood. One glance at those hungry black, froth-flecked fangs in the angry maw of the sea, and, with a quick, brief prayer for strength, she ran the boat out into the breakers and leapt within it.

A few strong strokes with the answering oars, and she was out among the leaping, foaming waves.

Time after time the oars were nearly torn from her grasp, but she still held on, keeping the head of the frail craft pointed out towards the line of black rocks and putting in a stroke or two wherever she could.

Slow—very slow—was the progress she made against storm and tide. The exhausted little figure on the rock was tottering now under the stress and fury of the gale, while the angry billows leapt up as if to clutch him and draw him into their embrace.

But nearer and nearer came the boat, until barely a dozen yards separated it from the white, scared figure in the midst of the seething waters. Close to him was a great rock, and under the lee of this she steered the tiny, tossing craft. Then, reaching out an oar to the terrified boy, she cried to him to jump.

Dropping his crutch into the boiling sea beneath, the boy sprang, with a terrified cry, across the narrow, gleaming strip of angry water separating him from his rescuer and sank in a heap into the bottom of the boat.

For a moment it rocked and swayed, while the girl caught her breath in fearful apprehension that the tiny craft would be engulfed. But soon that danger was over, and the girl exerted all her remaining strength to turn the boat's head in the direction of the shore.

There was no need to propel the frail craft now. High on their white crests, the roaring billows lifted it and swept it on. But the oars were now even more indispensable, for the boat's head must be kept towards the shore, or the girl well knew what would be the result.

Painfully she toiled, while the boat swept through the angry waters.

Nearer and nearer, skilfully handling her tiny craft and watching every opportunity, the girl gripped the bending oars and glanced momentarily backward at the oncoming billows. And then they rose high on the crest of a great

Digitized by Google

wave, bounding forward like an arrow from a bow, till, falling once more, they heard the keel grate upon the shingle and knew that they were saved.

The Choice.

Ida Sherwood stood by the window of her little sitting-room at Crag Farm, and looked out over the soft green meadow-land beyond. But to-day the smiling landscape had but few attractions for her.

She was in some perplexity, as was evident by the puckering of the pretty brows and the impatient pouting of the ripe lips, for she knew that, ere long, she would be called upon to make a choice in which the most vital considerations were at stake.

For some time past two men had been paying her marked attention, and she knew sufficient of mankind to be aware that, in both cases, this would terminate in a proposal. She liked both men, but she loved neither—or, at least, she thought so.

There was no particular need for her to marry. Her father was a prosperous farmer, and not at all disposed to part with his beautiful and accomplished daughter.

Being free to follow her own sweet will, she had chosen literature as a vocation, and was already blossoming into a writer of some repute. But she held certain strong and vigorous opinions on the question of marriage, regarding it not only as a desirable but a necessary step, demanded of all true women.

So she had at last decided that she would give an affirmative reply to one of the two, when he should put his question. But which one? That was her present difficulty.

As she mused, a boy came past the window, and, seeing her within, held up a note which he carried in his hand. It was the cripple boy whom she had rescued from those cruel rocks two years before. He was twelve years old now, and a sharp, intelligent lad. People said he had changed for the better since Miss Sherwood had taken to noticing him.

She opened the window and the boy handed her the note. She unfolded it and read as follows:

"*I am sketching in Glen Wood by the brook. Shall be there till dusk. Can you run over some time during the day? Have an idea for a story which I think would admirably fit in with this lovely spot. Perhaps your quicker imagination could make something of it, and I might illustrate.* "Frank Desmond."

The girl considered for a moment.

"Are you going back?" she asked the boy.

"Yes, miss," was the reply.

"Very well," said Ida. "Tell Mr. Desmond I will try to be there by three this afternoon."

"I hope I'm doing the right thing," she said to herself as the boy moved away. "He has only been in the neighbourhood six months or so, but he is not a bad fellow, and—he is very handsome.

"Besides, his co-operation with me in my work is of more value to me than I care to confess. He is polished, too, and would appear to advantage in any society.

"Now, Rupert Woodville, on the other hand, is—— But he is a good fellow, too, and—and rather good-looking. But—but he's so quiet, and looks at one with those deep, earnest, steadfast eyes of his as though he would read one's inmost heart. Yes, Rupert Woodville is a man, every inch of him, but—but Frank Desmond is—a gentleman!"

She stopped and once more looked out through the open window.

"Yes," she said presently—"I think it will be Mr. Desmond. I know I do not love him in the least, but—but that may come later. At any rate, he is—a gentleman!"

And, having thus determined on her course of action, she dismissed the subject from her mind until the afternoon.

The shade was deliciously cool beneath the overhanging trees when she stood at last by the brook in Glen Wood. Frank Desmond had left his easel, and was stretched on the soft green sward.

At the sound of Ida's footstep, he leapt to his feet and greeted her with unmistakable tenderness. She stepped up to the easel and examined the picture upon which he had been engaged.

As she looked, an admiring light flashed into her lovely face, which the artist at her side was not slow to notice. And then they sat down on a fallen log and began to converse upon subjects interesting to them both—of literature and art—until Frank Desmond, having thus skilfully yet unobtrusively shown the always enthusiastic girl at his side how many and varied were the interests they had in common, led up to the great question which had inspired him to seek a meeting with her in the woods—not of a prospective story, but of his love.

There was something that jarred upon the girl as she listened—something she could not explain or understand—but she had already made her choice, and, when at last she left the soft shade of Glen Wood, she had promised to become Frank Desmond's wife.

The shadows were lengthening as she neared Crag Farm on her return home. She had reached the last field, and stood leaning against a stile, lost in thought. So occupied was she, indeed, that she was unaware of the presence of a tall figure standing at her side, till a voice said:

"Good afternoon, Miss Sherwood. You are wise in preferring the air out of doors to the house this hot day."

Ida started and looked up. Dr. Rupert Woodville—a tall, handsome man of thirty—was looking down at her with deep, earnest eyes. In spite of herself, the girl coloured.

"Yes," she said, trying to retain her self-possession—"is it not beautiful? It makes one glad only to know one is alive!"

Rupert Woodville smiled. His smile was wondrously winning and made his handsome face still more attractive.

"That is the voice of a perfect constitution," he said.

Ida smiled and turned her face towards Crag Farm.

"You are on your way home?" said the doctor. "I wonder if you will be so good as to give me a cup of tea?"

Ida could not restrain a feeling of vexation, yet she could do nothing else but respond: "With pleasure, Dr. Woodville!" and together they walked along the narrow path through the smiling meadow towards the farm.

The cup of tea was very fragrant, and the girl who presided over the little tea-table looked sweet and dainty.

Rupert Woodville forgot his former statement that the air out of doors was preferable to the house, and lingered long after the evening shadows had stolen over meadowland and orchard. He could talk well, and his words were well worth listening to.

He was not so brilliant, perhaps, as Frank Desmond, for he was not a genius, but he possessed that strong undercurrent of shrewd common-sense which gave point to his remarks.

So topic after topic came up for discussion, till at last, tempted by the fact that they two were alone in the little sitting-room, Rupert Woodville entered upon more delicate ground, treading lightly, as if he feared to startle the girl whom he loved. But

Digitized by Google

in a flash she read his intention, and her sense of honour bade her speak.

"Dr. Woodville," she said, "I have a little piece of news which, though as yet unknown, will soon be common property. Mr. Desmond has to-day asked me to be his wife, and—and I have accepted."

There was a dead silence in the little room for a minute or two, and then the doctor said in a low voice:

"Miss Sherwood, no one deserves more than you do to be happy. I earnestly hope you may be."

There was so much earnestness in the words that they fell on Ida's ears almost like a prayer, and the girl was touched. She held out her hand impulsively, and it was held in a strong, firm grasp.

Then the doctor rose, and with a quiet, courteous farewell, took his departure. But it was with a very grave and troubled face that he went his way homewards across the dark fields, while Ida, sitting still where he had left her, murmured softly to herself:

"I believe he is a gentleman, too!"

The Transfer.

It was a month later, and the soft green meadows of Crag Farm gleamed beneath the silver rays of a harvest moon.

The day had been excessively hot, and, though the hour was now late and the twinkling farm-lights had one by one been extinguished, Ida Sherwood still sat at her casement window, and looked far out over the moonlit landscape.

She had attired herself in soft white dressing-gown and slippers, and the cool, fragrant air, wafted over blossoming flowers and ripe corn, fanned her cheeks and soft white throat with its perfumed breath.

The month had brought many disquieting reflections. A vague foreboding that Frank Desmond was not quite what she had believed him rose repeatedly in her breast, and though she resolutely thrust it from her on each occasion, it returned anew to fill her heart with vague unrest.

Musing thus, she became aware of a figure hastening through the moonlight in the direction of the farm. A moment later, and she recognised him as the boy she had rescued on the rocks of Crag Bay.

A vague sense of uneasiness took hold of the girl's mind as she watched the now rapidly advancing figure. Something must be wrong, she argued, or he would not come so quickly, for she was well aware that so much effort involved no small pain to the little cripple.

Rapidly descending the stairs to the hall beneath, she unfastened the door and waited for him to come up. At last he reached her, and, sinking breathlessly down on the white stone step, said in quick, terrified, gasping words:

"Go to—boat-house—on the beach—you know—where you got—the boat—to save me! Go now—or be too late! There's danger—Mr. Desmond—I can't tell you—I shall be killed if I'm caught! Be quick!" And he went off at a great pace over the moonlit meadows.

For a moment the girl stood petrified. Then, without waiting to think what she was doing, she ran breathlessly up the dark stairs, exchanged her slippers for stout walking-boots, and, waiting to do no more than cover her dressing-gown with a long, dark, waterproof cloak, she darted out of the silent house and was soon speeding down the path from the cliff to the beach.

All was quiet when she reached the boat-house, and she stood leaning against the dark cliff, where the shadows were deepest, and waited.

Presently she heard a step close at hand and, peering out, saw a man approaching, whom she immediately recognised as Frank Desmond.

She was just about to spring forward from the shadow of the cliff and tell him of the strange message she had received, when another footstep sounded on the shingle, and the tall figure of Rupert Woodville reached his side.

"Well?" said Dr. Woodville sharply. "You sent for me, and I am here. Now, what is it you want?"

"My purpose in bringing you so far from home," replied Frank Desmond, "is to tell you, plainly and emphatically, that the conditions contained in your letter of to-day are quite impossible. I shall *not* leave Crag Bay, either for you or anyone else, and I shall *not* give up Miss Ida Sherwood!"

"Pardon me," said Rupert, with quiet emphasis, "but you overlook one thing. If you do not readily undertake to do both thsese things, I shall feel it my duty to disclose one or two facts which have come to my knowledge in regard to your former career, in which case both conditions will be forced upon you."

"You dare not!" said Frank Desmond.

"And pray why not?" asked Rupert Woodville with a smile.

"Because," retorted the other pointedly, "you would not only not be believed by the person most concerned, but your motive in making the disclosure would be interpreted by that same young lady in a manner scarcely likely to raise you in her estimation."

Dr. Woodville's face flushed angrily, but he controlled himself with an effort.

"I shall chance that," he said quietly.

For a moment or two they stood gazing straight into each other's eyes.

"Look here," said Frank Desmond at last, "I do not want to kick up a fuss. You have no right to interfere with my plans, but I will make one concession. If you will promise to keep your information to yourself, I, on my part, will promise not to marry Ida Sherwood until my wife is dead."

The shrinking girl in the dark shadow of the cliff caught her breath and drew still farther back.

"You hound!" said Rupert Woodville sternly. "Do you think I would consent to such a fiendish proposal!" And his strong hands clenched in sudden and overpowering anger.

"It is only a question of time!" continued the other coolly. "She can't live much longer. She bored me to death with her ailments before I left her. But they are real enough, poor wretch, and the end can't be far off. And then there will be no legal obstruction to my marriage with the lovely Ida——"

With an angry cry, Dr. Woodville leapt close in front of his opponent.

"Stop!" he cried, "or, by Heaven, if you use that name again, I will strike you to the earth!"

For a moment, Frank Desmond cowered before the tall, threatening figure, and then, once more mastering himself, he said coolly:

"So you reject my proposition?"

"With the scorn it deserves!" replied Rupert Woodville. "From such a consummate scoundrel as yourself no proposal could for a moment be entertained by a man of honour and integrity."

"Then take the consequences!" exclaimed Frank Desmond hoarsely; and, drawing from his pocket a whistle, he blew it shrilly three times.

Instantly a man darted out from the shadow of the boat-house where he had stood concealed, and, assisted by Frank Desmond, threw himself upon the unsuspecting doctor.

Rupert Woodville made a brave fight, struggling desperately with his two assailants, but the odds were against him, and he was soon thrown down and pinioned. Then Frank Desmond pointed to the boat-house

Digitized by Google

"Get out the boat," he said excitedly, "and use that little auger of yours on the bottom. Dead men tell no tales, and the water of the bay is deep."

Without a word the man rushed to the shed and drew from it the boat in which, two years before, Ida Sherwood had saved the life of the little cripple. But now it was to be the means of death, and not of rescue.

The girl, terrified and bewildered, heard the sharp rasp of the auger as it cut its way through the bottom of the boat, and then, with a wild, inarticulate cry, she bounded from the shadow of the cliff and stood in the broad moonlight, confronting the two villains.

In her haste and agitation the dark cloak had slipped from her shoulders and she now stood, a dazzling, white-robed figure, with the moonlight shining about her with an almost unearthly radiance.

The man at the boat, with the credulity of the ignorant fisher-folk in the supernatural, uttered a terrified cry, and, letting fall his auger, rushed off over the hard shingle and disappeared into the darkness.

Then the girl turned to Frank Desmond, who stood sullenly watching her, and pointed with her finger up the narrow path which led to the top of the cliff.

"Go!" she said imperiously. And he, overawed by her presence and muttering an oath, slunk away in the direction she indicated.

Quickly she knelt down by the prostrate figure lying at her feet, and, with trembling fingers, cut the thongs that bound his arms and feet, while little suppressed sobs rose in her throat and choked her.

In a moment Rupert Woodville leapt to his feet and, picking up the cloak which his eyes alone had noticed, put it tenderly about the girl's shoulders.

"Miss Sherwood," he said softly, "you have saved my life!"

"Don't!" she said brokenly. "Thank God it is not too late to retract! Oh, whom *is* one to believe?"

"Try me," said Rupert softly. "I have loved you for years, dear, and can know no happiness apart from you."

The girl looked up shyly into his handsome face.

"I think," she said softly, "it is you I have loved all along, only I did not know it."

And so they went back to the quiet little village, happy, trusting and silent, for love needs no words to manifest its presence.

It was not till later that Ida learnt to what happy circumstance she owed the information which had led her to Crag Bay that never-to-be-forgotten night.

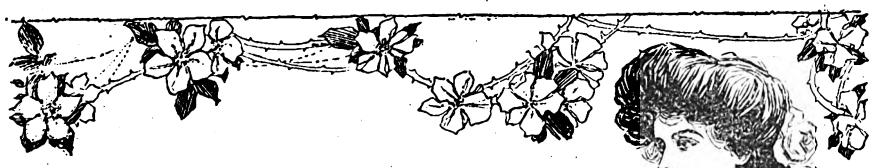
Rupert Woodville, discovering almost by accident the character of the man to whom Ida Sherwood had promised her hand, had written him a stern letter, demanding his immediate disappearance from the village and his complete surrender of that lady's favour.

Frank Desmond determined to brook no such interference in his plans and ready to perpetrate any crime to compass his end, sought out the father of the cripple, and, with his assistance and co-operation, formed the plan which had so nearly succeeded.

But the little cripple had overheard the foul plot and, vaguely conscious that it in some way menaced the girl who had saved his life two years before on those terrible black rocks in Crag Bay, had, at the peril of his own life, rushed off to acquaint her with the news.

And thus he repaid the deed of heroism which had snatched him from a cruel death—a deed which, in all his after life, he never forgot.

Walter J. Mowbray.



A Borrowed Fame.

Which Brought Happiness to Three People.

"Never mind, Nannie, dear, perhaps something will turn up soon. I haven't heard yet about that last story I sent to the *Screecher*, they may take it, 'you never know your luck!'" the speaker finished cheerily, though with a half-smothered sob behind her optimistic speech.

"Poor Nora!" said the sick girl, turning a loving look upon her companion, "always so hopeful and so brave. If I were only not like a stone tied round your neck, dear, lying helpless here——"

"A stone round my neck!" cried Nora, going down upon her knees beside her sister's couch, "my greatest blessing, you mean! Why, whatever should I do without you? But let us cheer up, Nannie, my screw for teaching that little fiend of a Harper boy must be due next week, and I have a little money to go on with. If only I could get something to do in the afternoons or evenings, though I should hate leaving you alone, dear," she said, turning involuntarily to her invalid sister.

"Oh, that wouldn't matter, I have my crochet, you know! It's the only way I can make a few pence," the other said wearily.

"We won't talk any more about money," Nora said cheerfully, as she kissed her sister and rose from her knees. "I spent a whole penny on a *Daily Telegraph* to-day, so as to look at the advertisements, so here goes!" and she unfolded the paper. "This is handsome, isn't it?" and she read aloud—

"Young lady, not over twenty-five, offered comfortable home in high-class family, in return for taking entire charge of three children."

"Humph! I'd rather be the scullery maid at twelve pounds a year, she would at least have her evenings out, and something to dress on! Nursery governess—companion for elderly lady," she continued. "Here, Nannie, here is something for me," and she read excitedly—

"Lady typist wanted from three till seven daily, usual terms, apply three to-day, G.C., 15, Paper Court, W.C."

"Where is my hat? Where are my gloves?" she exclaimed. "Nannie, are you sitting on them?"

"My dear Nora," said her sister more calmly, "you have had no lunch, you mustn't go away hungry!"

"Oh, that doesn't matter!" said Nora, as she hurriedly put on her hat. "If I get the post I'll have a double tea afterwards. There's the postman!" as a knock was heard. "I'll just run and see what it is!"

She came back looking rather crestfallen, with the familiar long envelope in her hand.

"My story back from the *Screecher*," she said a little bitterly, "I suppose they haven't even read it, for I only sent it yesterday. Well, better luck next time!" she said, trying to smile as she threw the despised M.S. on the desk.

"Oh, poor Nora!" said Nannie sympathetically.

"Never mind, dear, luck must turn some day, but it is hard lines to get my 'Grip of Iron' back, for I know it isn't half bad. Never mind Nankin Blue, I must be off, ta-ta!" and with that she flew down the long staircase.

"Poor Nora!" said Nannie Nugent, brushing away a

Digitized by Google

tear, "with all her spirit and her hope, what is to become of us? What is to become of us?" and she rocked herself to and fro.

Until six months ago the Nugent girls were dependent on an uncle. A year before he had seen fit to take unto himself a wife, who much objected to the encumbrance of what she called "two able-bodied women," quite ignoring the fact that Nannie, the elder, had been an invalid almost from birth, and for the last five years quite confined to the sofa.

Nora bore the bride's reproaches and sneers for a year, when she suddenly made up her mind to cut the matter short by deciding that she and her sister should come up to London—that grave of many vanished hopes—and search "for something to do," the vague "will o' the wisp" which has lured so many souls to destruction.

The girls had a tiny income from a small legacy left them by their grandmother, and, so far, had managed to rub along, their only outside means of subsistence being a miserable pittance Nora earned by daily teaching, and what Nannie could make by her beautiful work.

Nora's heart beat high as she ran up the narrow, dirty staircase which she was told led to "the advertisement."

On the landing outside the door were four or five persons of various ages, with clothes in various stages of decomposition.

One elderly woman, with straggling grey hair, leant wearily against the stair-rails; another, even more anxious-looking, had seated herself on a broken box outside the door, while in a corner two or three of the class known as "shop-girl," laughed and giggled together.

"'E don't mind keeping ladies waiting," said one of these, as Nora arrived on the scene, "'ere's another," she continued in a whisper, "looks a toff, don't she?"

At this moment a noise was heard upon the staircase, and a head appeared upon the landing below.

"Good Heavens!" said a man's voice, "there's a crowd there!" as he looked up and saw the response his single advertisement had brought forth.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, ladies," he continued, as he unlocked his office-door. "Now, how shall I interview you? Perhaps you will come first?" he said politely to Nora, after a hurried glance at the other applicants.

"It's a shime!" the giggling girls said, as the door was shut. "And 'er the last to come. That shows what a cheeky face and a smart 'at will do!"

"Bless you!" replied her companions, "we all know what that means! For my part I'm off to pastures new. Come along, Liz—'urry up, Bess, I'm 'alf frozen waiting here," and they ran downstairs arm in arm, singing loudly as they went out of the door.

The two elderly women left looked at each other with mutual pity in their eyes.

"We can't stand against the young," said the one with the grey hair streaked over her forehead, as she turned sadly and went downstairs.

The other waited a minute or two, there came a laugh from within, and a man's voice said—

"Very well then, Miss Nugent, that is settled!" The woman rose wearily from the broken box, and turned to go.

* * *

"Now, Miss Nugent," said Geoffrey Churnside, cheerfully, as he hung up his coat and hat, "we'll have a good long evening's work at the novel. These miserable 'pot boilers' have kept me back half the week, I only sent Jones half that story for next month's *Rambler*, but if he wants the rest, he is to let me know to-morrow, and it will have to be done somehow.

"I generally finish these odd things Saturdays and Sundays, and devote the serious part of the week to the novel. By Jove, it is cold, isn't it? I think we'll have some more coals on, eh?" he said, as he heaped up the fireplace.

Nora shivered slightly, this unexpected spell of cold weather came hard on people who had a very meagre supply of winter clothing.

Mrs. Harper had failed to pay the quarterly instalment of what she called "the governess' wages," and the money in her sister's exchequer was very low.

Nannie had tried to smile brightly, and say she didn't feel at all cold, as she covered up her feet with a well-worn rug, and declared it was no use lighting the fire until Nora came back, "it was such a bother to keep up," all the time conscious that only a decent sized shovel of coals was between them and freezing point.

"Yes, it is cold," said Nora, becoming acutely conscious that she had eaten nothing since her early breakfast of tea and bread and butter.

"You look wretchedly cold, are you ill, Miss Nugent?" and, as Geoffrey looked at her, he became conscious of a sudden feeling of interest in this typewriter girl, whom he had hitherto looked upon as only a part of his machine.

"No," said Nora laughing, as she imagined, cheerily, "I can't afford to be ill."

"Hard lines, isn't it?" said Geoffrey, "but I say," he continued, looking at her again, "are you sure you take enough care of yourself? Isn't this rather thin for a day like to-day?" he said gingerly, touching the well worn black cape which was Nora's sole outer covering, "and are you sure—women are so careless about that sort of thing"—he said apologetically, "are you sure you have had a good lunch to-day?

"Forgive me if I seem impertinent, but I know the sort of thing—bread and butter"—or without the butter, Nora thought—"water, tapioca, that is what my sisters used to be so fond of, but in London, you know, one must eat well. Now, what you want, is a good strong beefsteak. Will you do what I ask you?" he said more gently.

"What is it? I think we are wasting time, Mr. Churnside, we had better get to work," she answered.

"Come down with me to the restaurant round the corner, and have some lunch—to please me—now do?" he pleaded.

Poor Nora's eyes were swimming in tears—half from hunger, half from gratitude for the unaccustomed care lavished upon her.

During the intervals of devouring lunch she told him some of her troubles, of Nan's weakness, her own inability to keep the wolf from the door.

"Sounds like the tale of a budding novelist," said Churnside. "I've been hungry myself before now. You ought to take to writing, Miss Nugent."

"I do write," she replied timidly, the hot blood mounting up in her cheeks.

"Oh, you do, do you?" the man replied, half amused. "For fashion papers, and that sort of thing, I suppose?"

"No," said Nora indignantly, "not at all, I write stories!"

"But," he continued more kindly, "you haven't had much luck yet, perhaps?"

"None," she replied, with great emphasis, and a certain bitterness.

"Dear, dear," he said sympathetically, "but luck will turn, you know, it does for us all some day. Bring me some of your work to-morrow, I will have a look at it. Now we must go back to the novel."

Nora built a good many aerial castles on the foundation of the hope his words had opened out to her, and it was no small disappointment next day when he seemed to have

Digitized by Google

as utterly forgotten the conversation—as if it had never been uttered.

She had brought the "Grip of Iron" neatly tied up in a parcel in her muff, but the whole conversation seemed to have slipped from Mr. Churnside's memory, and her typewriter had to fly more quickly than usual, to complete the requisite number of pages, as her employer was obliged to go out early, on account of an appointment.

He was in such a hurry, he hardly waited to say good-bye, and Nora felt a curious feeling of desolation, as she was left alone with the neatly-typed sheets before her, instead of the exultation which would have been hers a week ago, on knowing that she was free to return to Nannie an hour earlier than usual.

She had not hurried to put on her cloak, and as she at last rose to do so, heard a step ascending the stairs.

The postman's double-knock meant a parcel, and she hastened to bring it in. The printed label on the packet showed that it was from the *Rambler* office.

"They may want the rest of it typed—I had better open it and see, I could do it at home for him, if they are in a hurry," she said aloud.

To her astonishment, instead of proof-sheets, an unused MS. was disclosed as she unfolded the paper. A note lay on the top; which read as follows:

"Dear Churnside.—*This is not quite up to your usual, and after some hesitation, we have decided not to use it. Can't you send us something in one number, more in the style of the last you sent. Please let us know at once, if you have anything suitable ready, and if so please send to-night. I will forward cheque on receipt.*"

Nora felt like a condemned criminal, as she stood with the letter in her hand.

"I oughtn't to have opened it," she said, "but"—then her eyes fell upon the parcel in her muff, in which "the Grip of Iron" lay concealed.

"Why shouldn't I?" she said, "I'll tell him afterwards, it may be mean—but, oh! if it brought in some money!"

In a moment the deed was done—she had typed a short note saying that "Mr. Churnside inclosed a new and original story, which he hoped would be suitable for the *Rambler*."

Nora thrust the rejected MS. into an unused drawer, and walked home, feeling more miserable than she had ever done in her life.

* * * * *

"Can you explain this, Miss Nugent?" said Churnside, two mornings later, as Nora arrived upon the scene.

All the day before she had tried to pluck up courage to tell him what she knew—sooner or later he must inevitably find out—but the words seemed to stick in her throat as she tried to utter them. Now she felt instinctively that crime was discovered, and the terror of the honest wrong-doer took hold of her.

"Do you remember," continued Churnside, "what I called that story of which I sent the first part to the *Rambler*? I thought it was 'Romance of a Summer,' or something like that, but they must have muddled me up with somebody else, for they call it 'A Grip of Iron!' They're mighty complimentary, too, I must say," he added. "Listen:

"Dear Sir,—*We have read with attention your short story, and think it the best thing we have hitherto had from you. Send us as much as you like of the same sort, and we can guarantee insertion.*

"*You will notice cheque inclosed is at an increased rate of remuneration, and we consider 'The Grip of Iron' worth it.*"

"Now, did you ever hear anything like that?" he concluded in a puzzled voice; "very nice if I deserved it, but I never wrote the thing in my life!"

Nora's face had turned to a ghastly pallor as he read, while her eyes glittered as she saw the amount on the open cheque he held in his hand.

"Mr. Churnside," she began, and with speech greater strength came to her—"I have a confession to make to you. The *Rambler* sent back the part of the story you had sent to them, they—they said it was not very good—not suitable, I mean," she hastened to add—"they wanted a story complete in one issue—I had brought down the MS. of a story I had written to show you—you remember, you asked me to do so?" and she gained courage to look at him.

Churnside merely bowed his head.

"You had evidently forgotten all about having done so," she continued timidly, "but I had the MS. with me, and the temptation was too great. I sent it to the *Rambler* as if from you. Believe me," she implored, "I did not mean to do you harm—I only wished to insure that my story would have the justice of being read. They say beginners' work is never read—I did not mean to hurt your reputation—indeed, indeed I did not."

"Seems to me you have increased it," Churnside said rather bitterly. Did it never occur to you, Miss Nugent, that you were doing a dishonourable thing in opening my letters, and a dishonest one in using my name?"

"I opened the letter with no dishonourable intention," she answered indignantly. "you left early on that day, and you had told me they might want the second instalment of your story in a hurry—so I opened it to see, and meant to leave a note for you, saying I could either return to type it that night, or do it at home, if you sent me the rough copy.

"I was very wrong in what I did, and I am sorry, but if you think me dishonest, I had better go"—and she turned towards the door.

"Stop a minute," said Churnside, as he fingered the cheque. "This is yours, I had better sign it in your favour, and then you can cash it. I shall write to the *Rambler* and explain—as they think so highly of your work, they will probably take more of it—but of course you understand, I cannot run the risk of your opening any more of my letters."

"You mean," said Nora, as she turned and indignantly faced him, "that you dismiss me from your service? I think I told you, I was going, without waiting to be dismissed—but listen one moment," she cried passionately, "before you send me away in disgrace. I have not stolen your money.

"Much as I require it, I would rather not take the cheque. I did not mean to steal your reputation—I only wished to insure my tale being read—for I felt it had grit in it—I have made a dreadful mistake, and I am sorry, but you don't know—you don't know what it is to be starving like we are.

"The lunch you gave me on Wednesday was the first meat I had tasted for weeks; we have no fire in this bitter cold weather—and I am trusting to what you owe me to meet the rent of our poor little room.

"My other employer has not paid me yet for teaching her wicked little boy—because she says the arrangement is to pay half-yearly, and I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do," she wailed, as she burst into tears. "I don't mind for myself, but for my sister, I would work myself to death for her—but it's no use—it's no use," and she sobbed bitterly.

Churnside's heart began to smite him, as he heard the piteous tale, and saw her bitter distress.

"By Jove, what a pretty little head she has," he thought, as he stood helplessly looking at her.

In a few minutes the sobs ceased, and she again rose to go. Quickly he stepped between her and the door.

"Miss Nugent, will you forgive me?" he said gently, "I was a brute, I confess I was angry and jealous of your being able to write better than I could—and I lost my temper. Here, take the cheque—it is you who have earned it—buy what you need, and come back to-morrow at the usual time."

* * * * *

The novel of the year—some two years later—was said to be one by the joint authors, "G. G. and N. Churnside," but Geoffrey always says he owes the greater part of the fame he now enjoys to his clever and original wife.

Kitty Smart.

Digitized by Google

LOVE *versus* MONEY.

The Romance of a Rich Man's Wooing.

I AM a very rich man—not quite a millionaire, but rich enough to be able to get anything that money can buy. One thing I desired, that was love—love for myself alone, not for my riches.

My wealth brought me in contact with many women; in fact, threw women in my way. How, then, was I to tell whether they would have sought me for myself—for my own worth?

I saw every day the fairest, most amiable girls, girls possessing even to me every charm and virtue but one, and that one was that they would marry without a blush men to whom I knew their hands and not their hearts were given. I longed inexpressibly for love, the disinterested love of a woman, and felt I could have sacrificed my all for it, for her.

Why not? I asked myself. It was easy—at any rate for the time being, I would live poorly, humbly; I would earn my own living. I would stand on my own merits, and see what came of it. Not here, that would be difficult, but in a big town where no one would know me, nor smile at and excuse me as eccentric.

A week later I had installed myself as one of the salesmen at the silk counter of a large and flourishing firm. There were a number of girls employed in the establishment, and I remarked them closely.

They were all affable and obliging, and some of them were pretty and unaffected too, but I did not find my fate among them, and two or three weeks later I had begun to be disheartened with my model mode of life when an incident occurred that served to bind me to my resolve more firmly than ever.

It was a wet day and business was rather slack, when I noticed come into the shop a girl who instantly riveted my attention. It was not that she was beautiful, or in any way striking looking, but she was pretty and charming, and her whole bearing was graceful in the extreme, and at a glance she became possessed of that nameless attraction for me which is termed love at first sight.

How I hoped that her shopping would bring her to my counter, and that it would fall to my lot to serve her with silk or satin. Yes, that was evidently what she had come to buy, for now the shop-walker was conducting her towards me, and another minute she had seated herself in a chair opposite me.

As I asked, "What is your pleasure, madam," the customary formula did not sound so trite to me as usual, and seemed even to have become endowed with a subtle meaning of its own.

"I want to look at white silks and satins," she said, "something suitable for a ball dress."

I brought out all my choicest goods and spread them before her; she selected the very one I would have chosen for her myself—a rich, soft satin, that was worth every penny of the rather high figure at which it was priced, but when I reckoned it up and told her what the whole dress length would come to, she put it aside and said she was afraid it was too expensive.

She looked very disappointed as she began to make a second choice, remarking that she did not like the other fabrics nearly as well, and I thought it was a great shame if she should have to forego her fancy for the sake of a few pounds.

I was so madly in love with her already that I was only dying to gratify her every wish, and a hasty plan came into my head by which she might have the satin, and yet no one be a bit the wiser.

I appeared to reflect.

"If you will allow me to remove these, madam," I said, gathering together the pile of silks, not forgetting the precious satin, "I think I remember to have a dress length very similar to the one you have chosen, marked at half price, owing to a slight damage; but it is so very slight that I am sure it would not interfere with the making up in the least. I will show it to you."

I retired with my armful of silks in great excitement at my ruse, and presently returned with the identical piece of satin, which I had now metamorphosed by various snips of the scissors along the edge, added to one or two dusty finger marks in the middle.

She looked at it carefully.

"It really seems quite as nice as the one you just showed me," she exclaimed in delight.

"It is absolutely the same thing," I said, preserving my countenance, "going at half price because of the damage, and it's only just at this end too. You won't lose half a yard by it in the whole piece."

"I think I'll decide on taking it," she said. "Thank you very much; that is all I require to-day. Will you please send it to Miss Lily Grahame, Ashburnham Grange."

I made out the bill, and after a moment's mental arithmetic announced, "That will be £3 17s. 6d. if you please." But needless to say I settled it at the desk for twice that sum.

"I'll let you have the bill with the parcel," I said guilefully, as I counted out her change, for it is scarcely necessary to add that I meant to take particular care *not* to inclose it at all.

"Yes, that will do nicely, thank you," she said. "Good morning."

"Good morning," I responded, trying to reconcile myself to her departure.

It came on to rain heavily after she had gone, but the rest of the day was sufficiently bright for me. I had got her name and address too, and though I did not know either, I trusted I should soon find someone who did. I wondered for what ball she was buying her dress, and wished I knew, so that I might also, by hook or by crook, get an invitation.

In my spare hours I took to haunting the road in which she lived, but I never by any chance saw her, and two or three weeks passed; but whatever purchases she found necessary to make, at least they did not bring her to my counter.

I began to despair, when one afternoon I had occasion to pass through the flowers and feathers department, and saw her with an elderly lady, whose attention seemed to be wholly given to a box of roses of every shade and colour that was being displayed to her.

Digitized by Google

I loitered behind a corner that I might watch the girl I loved, and I heard the lady with her say, "None of these are quite what I want, can you show me something else?"

"Certainly, madam," answered the assistant, and she mounted a short pair of steps to reach down some more boxes.

It was not a dangerous position if she had taken ordinary care, but somehow the steps slipped, and she reached out desperately to save herself, and a whole shower of heavy boxes came tumbling down with her. She was herself unhurt, but in her fall she carried Miss Grahame to the ground also.

Fortunately I saw the boxes coming, and was there to spring to the rescue of my love, but even then I was not quite in time to save her wholly; one of the heavy boxes had struck her on the temple, and she lay motionless on the ground.

I raised her in my arms, and sought to reassure the trembling old lady with her.

"She is only stunned," I said. "See, she begins to open her eyes already."

And, sure enough, before the distracted shop-girl who had caused the accident, returned with restoratives, Miss Grahame had opened her eyes to look into mine, and find me bending over her, while her head still nestled unconsciously against my shoulder.

"Where am I? What has happened?" she asked, struggling up.

I guided her to a chair, but insisted on still supporting her as between us we applied the restoratives, and presently she began somewhat indignantly to repudiate our ministrations.

"Come, let us go home," she said. "I am quite able to, now."

"Do you really feel better?" asked the lady with her. "There is quite a bruise on your forehead. Now, I do hope it will be well for Lady Brancepeth's ball next week."

"Oh, yes, I'm sure it will!" said Miss Grahame hastily. "I feel all right now. Thank you so much," she added, turning to the shop girl, who stood somewhat tearfully at her side.

The other lady looked severely in her direction.

"It has been a very narrow escape," she said, "and if it had not been for this young man's providential presence of mind, such carelessness might have had very serious results. My dear," she continued, turning to Miss Grahame, "this young man has saved you from a very nasty accident, and been most helpful too. We shall not forget you," she added condescendingly to me.

Miss Grahame looked at me and blushed, and I felt like blushing too.

"I'm sure I ought to thank you very much," she said, in an embarrassed but wholly charming manner, while, as for me, I was so overcome by this direct speech and look from her that I could only bow awkwardly, and disclaim having rendered any service that called for thanks.

I escorted them to their carriage, and, as they drove away I distinctly heard the old lady remark—

"A very gentlemanly young man, my dear, quite a superior person!"

Then the irony of the situation struck me, and I could not help laughing as I returned to my duties. Well, I could afford to laugh, for I knew at least one ball that my divinity would grace, and that was Lady Brancepeth's.

She was an old friend of my mother's when they were girls together, and I felt sure if I ran through my correspondence of a month back I should find her invitation among others, if not already destroyed.

I soon discovered it, and lost no time in resigning my position on the staff of Messrs. Price and Hunter's establishment, as I felt that that episode in my life had served its turn.

I awaited the night of the Brancepeth ball with impatience, and over and over again I wondered how she would receive me.

When I reached Lady Brancepeth's, and saw her surrounded by admirers, men of every grade and fortune, my determination to be loved for myself alone, wavered.

I felt that to win her I could even stoop to use my wealth as a lever, even if needs be myself come to play the *rôle* of unloved bridegroom.

When Guy Brancepeth, my college chum, came up to me and patted me on the back, and asked, "Don't you want an introduction to the belle of the ball?" indicating Miss Grahame, glorious in the white satin I had sold her, my feelings had become very mixed indeed, and I was almost incapable of speech when, without waiting for my answer, I found he had transported me to her presence, and pronounced the mystic formula over us which culminates in orthodox acquaintance.

Yes, she recognised me, there was no doubt about that, but if she felt surprise or annoyance she concealed them both admirably. I could almost have thought that pleasure lurked in her greeting to me.

She spared me more than one dance on her programme, and, when she was whirled away from me by an eager partner, I felt that I could not rest after to-night without knowing my fate.

I knew I risked much by putting it to the test so soon, but I was longing to stand well in her eyes, to clear myself from a false position, to prove that I had something to give as well as ask.

"Would you?" I asked, when, in the course of the evening, I had succeeded in getting her to myself in a quiet corner, "marry for love or money?"

"They never go together, do they?" she said, with a little catch in her voice, "It's bound to be a choice nowadays, isn't it?"

"But that's begging the question," I said.

"The question?" she said absently. "Oh, well, of course, I'd marry for love if I had the choice, but I haven't, you see!"

My heart sank. Was she too, like all the rest?

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, well, you see," she said carelessly. "I've no money, not a penny in the world. I live with my aunt, but I'm really only a sort of paid companion to her. Would you not change all that for love, money, and independence?"

"Then," I said, "you love the man?"

She laughed merrily.

"No. I don't love the man."

I was dumfounded.

"But you are going to marry him?"

"I suppose so. I don't know!"

"And you," I said sternly, "can tell me this after having just owned that of your own choice you would marry for love rather than money."

"Yes, but then I never had the choice," she said, innocently, "because I never loved anyone till now."

Her words were calculated to dash my last hope to the ground. "She loves, she is loved," I said to myself, "she is not for me!" Filled with despair I raised my eyes to look at her. Her own were downcast, and her face covered in burning blushes.

In a moment I ventured to put a new interpretation on her words. Her blush proclaimed them unguarded.

"Could you love me?" I asked softly, bending towards her.

The sweet lips trembled. I tried to catch their answer, but it was sufficient that they granted me unresistingly a lover's privilege.

"And you won't mind," I asked presently, "if I am poor?"

"No," she said, nestling against me, "and some day you shall have a shop of your own, and I'll trim the hats."

I laughed outright, she was such a child.

"But what would you say," I asked, "if I could buy the shop already?"

She clapped her hands.

"Oh, but could you? Could you?"

I smiled.

"I think I may say I could buy you the inside of any shop you like, and not of one shop, but a hundred. And," I said gaily, "we don't buy shops with kisses, you know, but with money—pounds, shillings and pence. Although sometimes," I added slyly, "you may get a length of satin for love."

And after that speech, naturally, I was called upon to explain myself.

Ellice Beere.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.

Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

MY SUCCESS AS AN ACTRESS.

Twenty-four hours of the most intolerable nervousness is what I think I remember most about the First Night of the new play. It was a time in which I could neither sit nor stand, run nor walk, eat nor sleep—I was almost paralysed with dread.

"What if I fail?"—I kept asking myself. "What if I fail?"

It was my chance—I knew that well—a chance that would perhaps never come again. *I must succeed.*

Yet the nervousness grew upon me, and at last in desperation I wired for Bobbie. When he arrived he asked me what on earth was the matter.

"You look like a boiled owl," he said; "with its head on the wrong way."

I explained to him my hopeless condition, and, instead of being in the least concerned, he threw back his head and laughed boisterously.

"Oh, this is highly interesting!" he said. "The *prima donna* struck by stage fright, and the kneeling multitudes waiting anxiously. Don't be a little fool, Queenie! Why, you can't fail! If ever success were certain, yours is. I wish it weren't, then you'd have to marry me to console yourself."

I smiled at him. "That would be a poor bargain for you, Bobbie," I told him; "I'm sure you've far too much sense to throw yourself away on any girl who only took you as a consolation prize."

"Not at all," he answered blandly. "The main point about matrimony is to marry the girl you want. The sweetest creature that ever strayed out of Heaven is no good to a man if she doesn't happen to be the girl he wants. And in nine cases out of ten she isn't, for sweet creatures are apt to get a little bit tame."

"Oh, Bobbie!" I interrupted; "and I fondly believed you considered me sweet."

"What—you sweet!" he echoed, in feigned amazement. "But, my dear Queenie, look at your temper, and your obstinacy, and your pride! Why, when a chap comes to see you, he never knows whether he's going to be shrivelled up by a glance, or shattered by an attitude, or floored by a sarcasm—unless you happen to be in a particularly good humour, and then you are sublime, and the poor chap feels so pleased with himself because he imagines it is all his doing.

"It's fascinating, you know," running on; "a girl's deadly dull if she's always the same."

I can't say that I felt very flattered, but I was grateful to Bobbie for his chatter, and gladly kept him all the afternoon. At teatime Di arrived, considerably to my surprise.

"I thought I'd just look in," he remarked coolly, "and see that you were all right."

"All right!" laughed Bobbie; "why, she's been shaking like an aspen leaf all the afternoon!"

Di looked at me keenly, and I daresay I was rather pale.

"I ordered some champagne as I came up," he said; "you'd better have two good glasses before you start. It will help you to forget that there is such a thing as failure, and that matters most the first night."

"It might also make it very easy for you to imagine your audience is nothing but a field of cabbages—which I have heard is a great help in overcoming nervousness," said Bobbie wickedly.

Later on Di drove me to the theatre, for which I was grateful.

"You'll be all right," he said, at the last, eyeing me with that keen glance of his. "You've got your colour back, and you look like success."

I smiled and thanked him, going into the theatre with regained self-confidence.

The piece opened with a pretty scene at a fashionable watering-place near New York, in which I was only a country girl selling oranges, but towards the end I had a piece of difficult acting to do in overhearing the story of a gigantic fraud, then being most successfully carried forward by a lady high in American Society, and one or two accomplices.

I owe it to the girl who took this part to say that she acted superbly. Had mine not been the more pleasing and promi

nent character, the palm must assuredly have gone to her. As it was she contributed largely to my success, and could only take the second place.

The plot hinged chiefly upon the detection and unravelling of this fraud, in which I became gradually mixed up through no fault of my own, until by a daring stroke, the real offender managed to throw all the suspicion upon me.

There were one or two exceedingly fine passages, notably the one in which she tried to work upon my feelings to clear her for her son's sake. But I had a lover, and for his sake I turned a deaf ear to her passionate pleading, until it came out that they were one and the same person—her son and my lover.

I understood then how true were her words when she had told me this son worshipped her, for I had often heard it from his own lips, and I was confronted with a terrible problem. Either she or I must go to the wall! Which should it be! Which would spare him the bitterest suffering?

In the end I take her guilt upon my shoulders, and one of the finest scenes of all is that in which I and my lover meet afterwards.

It was a beautiful piece to act—I have never liked any scene so much since, and Yorke Donovan was perfect in it. It begins with passionate intreaty that what he has heard is untrue, followed by the upbraiding of unendurable pain, and then a silence upon both of us that is more terrible than either.

It was an act that I always felt supremely, and it took more out of me than all the rest of the play together. It had in it that element of intensity that I have always welcomed in my life, and without which all life to me has looked colourless and dull. A calm, easy-going life had absolutely no attractions for me.

Sometimes when acting that scene, I was conscious of a fine irony towards the crowded house of beautifully-dressed people. I could see, partly perhaps, with my mind's eye, the eager interest struggling to rise to real feeling, against the inborn inanity, discontent, or boredom of the Society woman. I felt I wanted to turn round and address them.

"You!" I would have said scornfully; "what do you know of life beyond your dressmaker, and your admirers? What can you appreciate truly of any depth? The supreme sacrifices and loves that make it *real*—what are they to you but an 'idle tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'"

By my special wish we never appeared after that act. The curtain rose once upon my lover sitting with his arms upon a table and his face buried in them, while I turned to take one last, long, yearning look from the door, then fell silently. There was no bowing, and little applause—the whole thing was too intense. Mr. Gregory only gave way after a good deal of persuasion, but in the end he was glad, and Yorke Donovan was with me all through.

"If we drop suddenly to the commonplace by bowing for applause, the whole scene loses its grip," I urged, and he soon came to see it in that light himself.

I wonder it is not a rule followed more by others in the profession. Many a fine scene has seemed to me to lose very much by that sudden drop to the commonplace of the bowing actors, where we should do better to remember them as the men and women they have just been personating.

The final act, when the mother dies, just on the point of confessing, is a powerful piece of writing, but it lacks much of the simplicity of the former acts. There is a slightly forced air of unreality about it. One feels the writer's chief idea was that everything must come right somehow.

For the benefit of those who have never seen the play, I may add that the son never learns the truth about his mother, and there is a striking instance in which his love for her, as he believed her, saves him in an hour of temptation.

A junior at the bar, who is his devoted friend, eventually brings us together by proving to him that I am absolutely blameless, without betraying the real culprit, whom he also proves they have discovered after her death.

This is a clever piece of writing, because it has a most convincing effect, and one is strung to a high pitch of anxiety lest the son should want to know too much, and discover the truth.

It was when Yorke Donovan clasped me in his arms just before the curtain fell, that we realised truly the extent of our success. The applause was literally deafening, and calls were at once made for the author, Yorke Donovan, and myself, the applause the whole time continuing tremendous.

When at last they allowed us to retire, I was growing quite exhausted, and beginning to feel that my overstrung nerves could not hold out much longer. But I had not half done yet, for several critics were waiting to congratulate me, and Mr. Gregory was almost beside himself with delight. I gave them my hands a little vaguely, and looked round for—Di.

I have smiled about that since and wondered not a little. Di had not done half to make me look for him that Bobbie had, and yet there was no hesitation about my glance. Was it that I knew in spite of his apparently apathetic nature he had in reality the deeper feeling?—or was it that I was curious to discover how he liked the piece, and if he had felt at all?

Well, I do not know, for I cannot analyse my feelings about Di even now; I can only reluctantly confess, that though he sometimes irritates me almost past endurance, I invariably turn to him at once in any time of distress. That evening my eyes quickly met his, though he remained in the background, and made no attempt to come and congratulate me. Yet somehow I felt satisfied. I cannot explain how it was, but I knew quite well that his verdict was good.

As for Bobbie, he wanted to hug me with delight, and I had quite a difficulty to keep him within bounds, though every now and then he would suddenly break off with a doleful lament, that now, at any rate, I should never take him as a consolation prize.

The story of the next few months can be related in a few words. I received numberless letters of congratulation, mostly from people I had never seen—the seats sold far ahead—the piece was announced a brilliant success—and I was the popular actress of the season.

I moved into a West-end suite of rooms, accompanied by a comfortable middle-aged lady, whom I had engaged as chaperon and housekeeper, received visits from, and was entertained by, some of the highest in the land—and generally shook hands with myself and all the world.

Meanwhile Bobbie continued my devoted attendant. He came and went just as he pleased, talked slang, scolded me, smoked cigars in my drawing-room, and made most insulting remarks about any man friend I seemed to favour.

At intervals he asked me to marry him, as he had said he should, always in some more or less eccentric fashion, and with the same absolutely dauntless nerve. Sometimes he worried me, but I would not have been without him for anything.

Di, on the other hand, seemed to avoid me more. He called in the early days of my success and offered to be my banker and general business manager, for which I was most grateful to him, and afterwards his occasional visits were more or less of a business nature. I cannot say this pleased me. As a matter of fact, it irritated me sometimes to such an extent, that I purposely annoyed him. I used to feel that even quarreling with him was better than the stony composure he appeared to cultivate between us.

Digitized by Google

And now I have come to the time when I first sat down to write these confessions, at the flood of my new success, with the world practically at my feet. Perhaps I was a little intoxicated by it all; perhaps I was more impatient than ever of control—I do not know, but at any rate I allowed my obstinacy to lead me into a foolish step, resulting in an awkward dilemma.

Young Lady Filby, who had just got a separation from her husband, but not come off altogether with flying colours, tried to persuade me to go to Switzerland with her and a few others for some skating. Di disapproved of the idea, and came to tell me so.

He called early before I was down, and, knowing his object, I purposely kept him waiting while I changed my dress for one I thought more becoming, and finally sailed into the room with as nonchalant an air as I could muster, conscious that I was looking my best. He was standing on the hearth-rug biting his underlip, as he always did when worried, and his eyes were keen and cold as they met mine.

"You must have thought I was never coming," I exclaimed gaily. "It was too bad of me, but I had mislaid a diamond brooch, and as you are not a busy man, I ventured to keep you waiting while I hunted for it."

"Pray don't apologise," he said, shaking hands coldly. "I hope you were successful."

"Yes. As usual it was only put away fastened into a dress. I am very glad. Prince Kia gave it to me, and I should not like to lose it."

"I, on the contrary, should wish to lose it, were I in your place," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders and laughed lightly.

"From a moral point of view, or because he is of a somewhat inky tinge?" I asked.

"Both," he answered firmly, and shut his lips tightly.

I got up and busied myself carelessly with a vase of flowers, at the same time giving him an opening.

"You have come just in time to say 'good-bye'" I remarked, "I am expecting to start for the Continent next week."

"That is what brought me here before—before you found your brooch," with a delicate sneer."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed. "I imagined it was a business call."

"You can consider it so if you like."

I waited, and he went on in that quiet, masterful way of his, that gave one no loophole whatever. "I should in fact prefer to call it business. I understand you contemplate a trip with Lady Filby's party. Is this correct?"

"Certainly it is," I replied at once.

I cannot tell you why, but just as before, the moment he wished to influence me for my good, a little devil seemed to take possession of me. If only he would not be so arbitrary, I thought, or at any rate so resolutely business-like in all our intercourse. I would have been guided by him. But I could not forgive him the gulf he maintained between us, and the steady reserve, from which only at the merest intervals he ever emerged. Was I not good enough to be his friend? I asked, forgetting that it was his manner to every woman, and steeled myself against him.

"I am sorry," he said, "I hoped I might have been wrongly informed. However, perhaps it is not too late for you to change your arrangements?"

"I am afraid it is," I replied. "And in any case I should not wish to do so." As a matter of fact, I had made no definite arrangements whatever, but the little devil was still prompting me.

"You are very unwise," he said, maintaining his habitual quiet. "I think you should know your world better by this time."

I was rather fond of Lady Filby in a way. She was a pretty, harmless little creature, or at least so I thought, and I chose to be nettled for her.

"What have you to say against my friend, Lady Filby?" I asked, facing him squarely.

"It is not what *I* have to say," he replied, "nor the Law Courts. It is what Society says."

"You mean I am to listen to the pot calling the kettle black?" I said coldly.

"Not exactly, but even in that case, the chances are the kettle would still *be* black."

"But not at all to the extent the pot would make out."

"Then you know things are said?" he questioned.

"I have heard that various scandal-mongers have hit upon her for their latest victim," I replied, "but I should scorn to lend an ear to such petty gossip."

"And if I tell you I believe it is true?" he asked.

"What! You turn scandal-monger also!" I inquired, raising my eyebrows significantly.

He flushed slightly under his white skin.

"If I do it is for your welfare," he said.

"I'm sure you are very kind," I answered, with a touch of sarcasm, "but I think you are taking an unnecessary course."

He was silent for what seemed quite a long time, and a curious struggle went on in my heart. I wanted to get up and go to him and say: "Do be friendly and ask me in a nice way, Di, I don't really care a fig about going." Yet something in his expression still repelled me.

"I wish I could convince you," he said at last. "Whatever you may think, I believe Lady Filby to be a clever, designing woman, and you will gain no good, and possibly considerable harm, from travelling in her company."

I got up, and, strolling to the window, drummed upon the sill with my fingers.

"I am sorry," I said, "but we do not see things in the same light at all, so this conversation is eminently useless. I look upon Lady Filby as an injured friend, and what you say, since I do not believe a word of it, will only make me more resolved to stand by her."

"Very well," he answered quietly, preparing to take his leave. "I can only remind you once again that should you be in any difficulty and want help, you have only to send to me and I will do what I can;" and he held out his hand.

"You are very good," I said, feeling inwardly ashamed of myself, and then he rather hurriedly left the room and went out.

I stood a long time looking out of the window, and then I picked up the paper and set myself to read it.

"I would not have gone if you had put it differently, Di," I kept saying, and all the time the words danced over the lines I was reading.

(In next Tuesday's instalment I meet a duke.)

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION. Start To-day.

Cash Down. Cash Down. Cash Down.

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A fifth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

FOURTH LIST.

19. They left the city by the south gate; while going along a bare lane one of the horses stumbled on a flint.

20. The box contained over twenty different varieties of seeds, besides ferns and seedlings.

21. They talked of the new buildings in Soho, also of the groin just erected at Pwllheli.

22. In the village post-office I met Hilda Morriston; she was on her way to the travellers' rest near Wemyss Castle.

23. The price of coal fell much lower in spite of the distress among the miners. They would not on any account work.

24. Moira showed Sir Guy her new sewing machine, which her neighbour, Mrs. Grotton, had given her.

NAME ..... ADDRESS .....

Digitized by Google

WILD MAG.

The Story of a Waif.

"VIOLETS! Penny a bunch! Here you are, sir—just do for your button-hole!"

The girl held out the little bunch of flowers in front of the elder of the two young men who were passing, and walked a step or two by his side, in the hope of inducing him to purchase.

It was a bitterly cold night, and she shivered occasionally as the wind pierced her ragged clothes.

It was easy to see that she was not the ordinary flower-girl, yet it would have been exceedingly difficult to explain in which manner she differed from the others. Most of the passers-by who went up and down that thoroughfare regularly, and so knew the girls by sight, recognised the difference, and were puzzled to account for it. "She's one of 'em, an yet she isn't!" was the lucid way in which the policeman stated the fact.

She was known familiarly as Wild Mag, and she owed this nickname to her peculiar disposition. At one time she would be as quiet as a lamb, demure, and even sad; at another she would be the embodiment of wild exuberance. To-day, dejected and taciturn; to-morrow, full of fun, babbling like a brook, ready for any practical joke. And the change would sometimes take place with startling suddenness.

It was currently supposed that there was some Southern blood in her veins, which might explain these vagaries, but nobody knew. She was good-natured to a fault, but she also showed signs of Southern vindictiveness on occasions.

"A penny won't break you!" she continued, thrusting the flowers a little nearer to the man's face, and uttering a merry laugh as she did so. Then the light from the large lamp outside the club fell full upon his features, and Wild Mag drew back involuntarily; she did not like the look of that face.

She did not withdraw quickly enough, however. The man, angry at her intrusion, threw up his arm with brutal force, catching her at the elbow, and sending her reeling. She had great difficulty in saving herself from falling, but after staggering for a couple of yards she succeeded in keeping her balance.

A storm of angry invective rose to her lips; her eyes flashed, and she half raised the little board, on which she carried her bunches of violets, in order to draw the strap over her head and hurl the board at him, but at that moment his companion came up to her.

"I am very sorry, and I hope you are not hurt!" he said, with true gentlemanly feeling. "My friend is worried, I fear, and—that is, I really do not think he meant it!"

Wild Mag eyed him curiously; she was touched by this attempt at apology, and the tenderer feeling struggled with rage for the mastery.

"You excuse me when I tell you I don't quite take it in!" she declared, with strange dignity.

"Oh, but—" began Kenneth Markham, somewhat lamely, adding hastily: "I'll have six bunches—some other time!" He dropped a sixpence on the board, which had been permitted to resume the horizontal position, and hurried after his companion.

Wild Mag watched them till they disappeared in a club. She took up the sixpence, stared at it, and then, with one of those sudden impulses that were part of her nature, she kissed it passionately.

"One of them is the sort of man you could kill" she hissed through her clenched teeth. "The other——" and here the change of expression was marvellous, and the voice became sweet and musical—"is the sort of man you wouldn't mind being killed for! I've got two debts to pay," she continued in a matter-of-fact tone—"a bad turn and a good turn, and I'll pay them some day!"

The two men passed into the club, the one callous and indifferent, and the other regretful, and neither guessed how soon the incident would have its effect or how wide-reaching the effect would prove.

The next morning Kenneth Markham passed through the street alone; he was in deep thought, and appeared somewhat worried.

He was not aware of Wild Mag's proximity till she pressed a bunch of violets into his hand.

"I don't want any. Oh, it is you! Yes, here is the money!" he said confusedly.

"It's paid for!" she cried, with a slight hysterical laugh. "Six bunches! And six dozen, if you'll have them!" And she was gone.

Scarcely knowing whether to be amused or annoyed, Kenneth went his way to the club where he was to meet Reginald Adeney. Thence they made their way to a private house, where the gaming tables were the attraction.

Three evenings in succession this happened, but on the fourth he declined to accept.

"I will take it, if you will take this!" he said quietly, holding out a shilling. "You are cold, and you look hungry. You were not well treated the other evening, and some compensation is due to you. Take this, and we will cry quits!"

It was strange that he should be holding this colloquy with a flower-girl, but he could not help it; the girl impressed him, and he liked the idea of befriending her.

"I'll take it if you'll let me give you some advice!" said the girl suddenly. She took the coin and laid her hand lightly on his arm. "You did me a good turn, and I want to pay it back. Don't you trust that man you go with to play

Digitized by Google

cards and all that! His face is bad—I tell you it *is!*" she cried vehemently, as he shook his head. "*I* can see it!"

She bent and kissed his hand, and fled swiftly along the street. When she was out of his sight, she almost paralysed with amazement a masculine vendor of matches by giving him the shilling without a word and running off again. A few yards farther down, a policeman was standing contemplatively near the kerb; she gave a shout of mad laughter as she tipped his helmet over his eyes, after which she rushed at full speed down a narrow street till she was out of breath, squatting down on a step and weeping as if her heart would break.

Half an hour later she arose and wandered towards the miserable house where she usually obtained shelter for the night.

Kenneth Markham had an uncomfortable feeling within his breast after Wild Mag ran away; her words made him think. He was conscious of the fact that he had been gambling very heavily, but that Reginald Adeney had in any way lured him into evil paths, or was interested in his downfall, seemed absurd.

Adeney was the best of fellows, always ready to oblige and advise. He was not much older in years than Markham, but he was much older in experience, and this experience was valuable to a young man who had just attained his majority and succeeded to a large fortune.

He was something of a family connection, too, being a second cousin to Marian Laing, on her father's side, and Markham was cousin to Marian on the mother's side and engaged to her. What possible reason could Adeney have for acting against him? Yet, he could not get the "advice" out of his mind.

Wild Mag stood before him, facing the ruffianly assailants.

How queerly the girl behaved! "One might almost suppose that she was—— Pshaw! I mean, she had taken a fancy to me!" thought Markham.

Adeney was there before him and Markham was soon lost in the excitement of the game. He lost a good deal, and all the while he was playing there came to him the thought that he would "cut" this sort of thing in a day or two. Adeney came to his side and whispered that he must be off, but Markham only nodded and went on playing.

It was just past midnight when Kenneth Markham left the house and walked homewards; it was a practice of his to walk, as it cleared his head.

He felt rather "seedy," and regretted that he had not smoked and drunk less.

He proceeded at a fairly brisk pace till he reached a quiet point in a main thoroughfare, when he was roughly pulled up by coming butt against a hulking youth. Angry words followed from the lips of this rough, Markham retorted, and the moment afterwards he was being hustled. He struck out manfully, but he would have stood no chance with them.

As he made an effort to reach the houses, in order to place his back against the wall, another figure came upon the scene. Wild Mag stood before him, facing the ruffianly assailants and speaking with scorn and passion.

"Clear out of it, Jimmy Grimes and the whole gang of you! I know you all, and I heard you hatching this game hours ago! D'ye hear? It's Wild Mag who's talking, and I tell you I'll put the police on the lot of you. Touch him if you dare!"

She stood before them with her arms folded across her bosom, defying them, and they cowered under the threat and the influence of her presence. They knew her, for she was practically one of them, living among them; they knew that she would do what she said, and they dared not molest her. She had inspired both love and respect—the respect that comes from fear, perhaps—and they slunk away like beaten curs.

"You can go safe now!" said the girl, addressing Markham. "They won't touch you again, as they knows I understand their game!" she concluded with a laugh.

"I owe you a great debt," rejoined Kenneth gravely. "They would have murdered me, most probably. How is it that you have this power over them?"

"I told you to look out for that friend of yours," cried Wild Mag, almost defiantly, "and I tell you again! He wants to ruin you! I heard him making a deal with Jimmy Grimes to set on you—heard him not long ago—and I've kept watch ever since!"

Kenneth listened with mixed feelings. He could not believe that Reginald Adeney had done such a thing; he was more inclined to doubt the veracity of this waif of the street; yet she spoke with such sincerity that he felt ashamed of the doubt. In any case, she had saved him, and he owed a debt of gratitude and, moreover, she was worthy of better surroundings. Better dressed, and toned down a little by contact with more refined persons, she would be good looking, yes, really attractive!

"I will try to repay you for your help. No, don't refuse. You ought to be better cared for, and earn your living more easily! Take this card and go to the address I am writing on the back. There is a young lady there whom I—er—think a great deal of; she will take you into her service. I'll speak to her about you."

He could not see the sudden blanching of the cheek which followed the utterance of the words "think a great deal of," or he might have been startled. Mag pressed her hand to her side, and her breath came short. She took the card, and remembered nothing of what followed until he was gone.

"You're a fool, a blind fool, Mag!" she muttered fiercely. "What made you think that *you* could be a mate for such as he? *You!* And yet you did think so, so don't deny it! You did, you did! And you can crush it down like this—*this!*"

She clenched her hand, screwing the card in a ball, while her fingers and her features worked convulsively, telling of the depth of feeling.

"Shall I go to her? Yes, I will! It will give me the chance of seeing *him* sometimes, and I shall find out whether she is true to him or larks with others and makes him unhappy, and if she does——!" The right hand was raised solemnly, and Mag hurried away to avoid a policeman who was coming leisurely to the scene where a murder was near to having been committed.

Digitized by Google

And thus it came about that Wild Mag entered the service of Marian Laing as maid, and was once more able to save the man she loved in secret.

"How does the new maid get on?" was the query of Kenneth Markham, a week later, and Marian, a quietly enchanting girl of twenty, made a pretty pout and smiled dubiously.

"She is getting a little less awkward," she replied, "and, as she is quick to learn and desirous to please, she will do in time; but she is a trouble in other ways."

"It was very good of you to take her as your own maid," said Kenneth lamely.

"She wouldn't have stopped long in any other capacity!" declared Marian. "And we owed her a great debt of gratitude."

"What trouble does she cause?"

"She is so eccentric and full of—well, mischief. She is just like a great schoolboy at times, and I have hard work to keep her in bounds, especially as I cannot help being amused by her vagaries. But she will get on. Do you know, Ken, she came face to face with Reggie yesterday, and she positively scowled at him! That wasn't proper, so I had to scold her afterwards. She fired up, and said several things about him, but I put it down to her temper—I am sure she has a bad temper!—and I discreetly let the matter drop. I am glad that Reggie didn't notice her look."

"Yes, send for the police," she cried, waving the piece of crumpled paper aloft.

Kenneth said nothing, but he looked grave. Since that night attack he had pulled himself together, as he expressed it, and had ceased to frequent the gaming tables. He had also avoided Adeney, so far as he could without being offensive. He had discovered no foundation for Mag's denunciation, but it made him cautious.

Another week slipped by. Mag had become a general favourite in the house; her fellow servants had learnt her nickname, and, as it fitted her so well, they adopted it. She amused them by her free and easy manner, by her tricks and her witticisms.

She was a capital mimic, and on one occasion simply convulsed them by imitating the somewhat pompous manner of Mr. Laing. Only once did they see her angry; that was when a workman engaged in the house attempted to treat her familiarly. The scene that ensued was one not likely to be soon forgotten either by the man or those who witnessed it.

She was scrupulous and honest to a degree, notwithstanding her rough and mischief-loving disposition, and if anyone had entertained a doubt on the subject, that doubt vanished after the attempt to kiss her.

Wild Mag entered her mistress' room one morning, with a song on her lips, as usual, but the tune died away when she saw Marian weeping.

"What's the matter?" she asked abruptly, placing her hand on Marian's shoulder, and speaking more like an equal than a servant. "What's it about?"

Marian made no reply, and Wild Mag repeated the question sharply.

"You don't understand! You cannot understand!" moaned Marian. "It's about Ken, I mean Mr. Markham. He is in dreadful trouble!"

"What?" gasped Mag, her face assuming an expression of intense anxiety. "What trouble? Tell me, I want to know!"

Marian was too full of her trouble to notice the tone of voice in which Mag spoke. The latter had conceived much affection for her mistress, although she regarded Marian as her successful rival—the woman who had a right to Markham, whereas she had none. She leant over the weeping girl, and stroked her hair, while Marian, feeling the need of confiding in someone, told Mag what had happened.

"He is accused of forging a bill of acceptance in Lord Mallam's name to pay gambling debts."

"That's a lie!" said Wild Mag, with deliberate bluntness.

"What else?"

"He could not get at his own money in time to avoid discovery, they say, as it is in securities which he cannot realise for some time. They suspected him of getting this stolen money, and they found on him a bank note with the number of one of the notes given against the acceptance, and he cannot say how he came by it. Of course, he denies the charge, but they have arrested him!"

"It's a plant! A plot, I mean!" asserted Wild Mag energetically. "Well, I wouldn't cry about it; I'd——"

"You would cry about it, if you loved him as I do!" interrupted poor Marian.

"No, I wouldn't!" muttered Wild Mag, clenching her teeth as if to stifle a pain. "I'd work! And I will work, though I'm supposed not to love him!" Aloud she said calmly, "Someone must work. I've been brought up rougher than you, that's how we look at it differently. I can do the detective dodge. I'm used to prowling about, and I'll find out something. Let me put on some rags and turn flower girl again! He helped me, and I'll help him!"

Marian shook her head helplessly.

"Father is taking it up, but he is inclined to think that Ken is guilty——did it in a weak moment," she moaned. "Mr. Adeney is doing what he can."

"Is he?" sneered Wild Mag. "See here! Do *you* believe he's guilty?" The question was asked fiercely.

"No!" declared Marian decidedly, looking up boldly. "I do not!"

"That's right!" said Wild Mag, with a sigh of relief. "Now we can go on. I'm going out—to think it over."

On her way out she heard voices in one of the rooms. She put her ear to the keyhole.

She heard a word here and there, but she gleaned enough to convince her that Adeney was doing his best to poison the old man's mind, even while he was pretending to be anxious to get Markham out of the mess. She listened further; after a few seconds she stood erect, and with a triumphant gleam in her eyes.

"I see it now!" she murmured. "He is not rich and he wants money. Miss Laing is rich; he wants her and her money—her money above all. He can't get it while *he* is in the way! That's good enough for me, and I'm on the track!"

She stood irresolute now. Should she dress up and dog his steps. Quick-witted as she usually was, she seemed at fault now; her head was confused and she clutched at the hall-stand to steady herself.

In a few moments she felt better, and her eyes fell on a hat and coat hanging there. Like a flash her mood changed.

Digitized by Google

She felt the necessity of venting her anger against this man, and her spite took the form of ridicule.

She slipped off her hat and jacket and in a minute had assumed the heavy overcoat, with astrachan collar, and the high hat belonging to Reginald Adeney, and was mimicking him to a nicety.

Smothered laughter caught her ear, and she turned to find three of the servants watching her from a safe distance. She began grimacing about, feeling in the inner breast pocket with an exact imitation of Adeney's mannerism and then exaggerating his gestures.

She dived her hand into this inner pocket and her fingers touched a crumpled piece of paper.

She took it out from its corner, intending to throw it at the grinning servants, but she stopped as another idea occurred to her and she smoothed it out quickly and pretended to read it through an eye-glass, formed by curling her thumb and forefinger.

The servants laughed and waited for the next move, but Wild Mag was really reading. Then the door opened and Adeney and Mr. Laing stood with wide-opened eyes in front of the girl!

"I'll have no more of this nonsense in my house!" roared Mr. Laing furiously. "I've told Marian already that this new maid is—is a bother! It's degrading! She's like a street urchin! How dare you? Take them off instantly and get out of the house!"

"Oh, Mag!" cried Marian, coming down the stairs.

"Send for the police!" cried Adeney angrily. He had recognised the girl before, but he had made no sign, and he was now secretly glad of the chance of being rid of her.

"Yes," cried Wild Mag, drawing herself to her full height and slipping out of the coat, which she threw on the floor and the high hat on the top of it. "Send for the police! I have something to say to them! I want to tell them who forged the paper and got the money, and why it was done!"

She raised the crumpled sheet of thin notepaper and waved it aloft. With a hoarse cry, Adeney rushed at her; it was the slip of paper he had missed and thought he must have burnt with other awkward evidence! He guessed what had happened to it now!

Wild Mag awaited his coming quietly, but as he neared her she lunged out her arm viciously and her clenched fist struck him full in the face.

A great hubbub followed. Wild Mag was ordered to her room, but she held to the paper like grim death. Marian went to her and read the incriminating evidence. It was a note, unsigned, which, short as it was, gave the key to an infamous plot against Kenneth Markham and proved the guilt of Adeney.

Wild Mag heard later what had immediately followed the exposure brought about by her prank, but she did not trouble to understand it fully; all she cared to know was that Kenneth Markham had been released and Adeney had been arrested.

The next thing she knew was that the marriage between Kenneth and Marian was being hastened; Mr. Laing was determined to get the young people settled without more delay.

It was after that announcement that Mr. Laing called Wild Mag into his study and warmly thanked her, at the same time handing her fifty pounds in banknotes. Mag hesitated; the old independent nature begin to assert itself; but she finally accepted.

Back in her own attic chamber Wild Mag was staring into space with set features.

"I cannot stay, I cannot stay!" she wailed. "He will be happy, and she will have him to herself. I want him to be happy, and her too; but I cannot stop to see it! It would kill me, for I love him! I must go, I must go!"

The next morning she was missing; she left a badly-written note to stay that she was off to Australia, and that was all. They tried to find her, but without success. They know that she arrived at Sydney, for she sent a note of congratulation on their marriage; but they never heard again.

F. Brewster.

Your Editor Chats.

The fourth list of sentences in the Competition will be found on page 495. It is not yet too late to enter for it, as back numbers can be obtained on application to the Publisher, inclosing one penny for each copy of *Short Stories* required, and a halfpenny for the postage of each. Ten lists of sentences will appear in all.

I have had several inquiries from readers regarding some points in connection with the Competition, on which they are not quite clear, and for the benefit of other readers in like difficulties am publishing the inquiries, together with my answers.

Question: Can the letters of the words in the sentences be taken in any order, or must they be taken consecutively?

Answer: It is clearly stated that they must be taken consecutively.

Question: If one word alone makes the name of a railway station, and, combined with the next word, makes another name, can both be used?

Answer: If you will carefully read the conditions of the Competition, you will see that it says that "no word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a railway station."

Question: Does a "part" of a word consist of a syllable or just letters?

Answer: A part of a word consists of either letters or syllables.

Question: Are country readers as eligible for the prize as those readers who live in towns?

Answer: Certainly they are. If you will refer to previous published competition results you will see that quite a number of names of country winners appear.

One reader points out that in the example sentence there are other names of railway stations which are not underlined. He wants to know why they were omitted?——The fact that only certain words were underlined was not meant to imply that there were no other names of railway stations to be found in the sentence. The example sentence is only to serve as a guide as to how the Competition sentences are to be treated.

In case there are any readers who missed what I previously wrote concerning the Fresh Air Fund, I would just mention the fact that this charity gives a day in the country, with a plentiful supply of good, wholesome food, to a child from one of our big cities, for the small sum of ninepence. Eight pounds two shillings pays for a party of 200 children with the necessary attendants. Last year 126,000 children were benefited by the Fresh Air Fund, and this year it is hoped that even more will do so. Donations of any size will be gratefully received and acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. All money should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Collecting forms will be sent on application.

Next week the cover of *Short Stories* will consist of a reproduction of the Bruce Tartan. The paper itself will contain features appealing particularly to Scottish readers.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Painting for a Wife.

The Story of a Novel Kind of Wooing.

"Some persons would not comprehend it," murmured Bertram Hardcastle as he stared at the blank canvas on the easel, "but we artists—that is, those whose souls are absolutely in their art—are not quite like ordinary persons, and to me the idea is perfectly intelligible. In fact, it is a natural thing to do! Others may call us cranks, but that is because they can never reach the lofty heights to which the love of our art takes us!"

He continued to gaze fixedly at the canvas and there appeared before his eyes, conjured up by the imagination, the vision of a girl of entrancing loveliness.

The outlines of her form, the cut of her features, the poise of the head—all were perfect. The expression of the countenance was one of ecstasy; it indicated a frame of mind that seized with passion on an idea and became devoted, heart and soul, to it. It was the vision of Nydia Wontner, the daughter of the celebrated Royal Academician.

Mr. Hugh Wontner, R.A., had gained a reputation both as a painter and a teacher of painting; his pupils were all doing good work and bade fair to become celebrated in their turn. He had one great regret—his daughter was not an adept with the brush.

Hugh Wontner had longed for a son to follow in his footsteps, but this joy had been denied to him. He had then centred his care and hopes on Nydia, endeavouring to train her to become an artist of repute, and he had even cherished the belief that one day she would force the Royal Academicians to accept her as one of them.

Nydia was, as already mentioned, loveliness itself, and her adoration of art grew into a mania; but in spite of all her efforts she made no mark in her father's art.

It was a cruel disappointment for both father and daughter, and it seemed incredible that, with her love for it and her undoubted skill in criticism, she was nevertheless little more than a dauber herself. Yet so it was.

Nature is not so blind as some think in her bestowal of gifts upon mortals, for, having plentifully endowed Nydia in other ways, she declined to fill the cup to overflowing.

It was Nature's method of balancing matters. Nydia was lovely and accomplished in other directions, but the artistic skill was denied to her. "Perhaps that gift has been bestowed on another who is not so well endowed physically," observed a worthy clergyman, and Nydia bowed to conceal her grief.

It was precisely this condition of things which had led to the conception of a plan, the promulgation of which had thrown Bertram Hardcastle into such profound meditation. Art was everything to Nydia, and next to it came the longing to afford to her father, as nearly as possible, the pleasure and pride which he had hoped to derive from her abilities.

"I believe that I can inspire within the breast of an artist the passion that will guide his eye and hand to produce masterpieces!" she declared earnestly. "My father says that I inspire him; then I can inspire one or other of his pupils, especially as some of them have hinted at love for me!

"If I help to fame one of my father's pupils, so that the world will say that he owes his celebrity first to his teacher and then to his wife, will it not gratify my father almost to the same extent as if I had been clever with the brush?"

The idea took complete possession of her, and after a week she told her father of her plan.

"There are at least four of your pupils who might become celebrated if they had this inspiring influence," she explained, "and I propose to bring that influence to bear upon one of them. I will marry the one who paints the two best pictures.

"You can tell each of them as they call here; let each choose his two subjects without knowing the subjects chosen by the other three, and let them bring those pictures for exhibition to the gallery where your masterpieces are hung.

"We—you and I—will be the judges. To the world we will announce that you are giving a prize for competition among your best pupils, but only they and I will know the truth!"

"Good!" exclaimed the R.A. "Next to the gratification of my own special desire—which cannot be!—this will please me most!"

He was about to add, as the thought struck him, that the pupils might decline, but he dismissed the notion with a smile; he remembered the slavish devotion with which some of them had watched and attended her, and those were among the most likely pupils.

So the four best pupils were notified, and Bertram Hardcastle was one.

The young artist could not collect his thoughts sufficiently to think of two subjects until two days later. He was completely absorbed by his love for Nydia.

He had always been under a spell of fascination, but he had felt that his love was hopeless, and now the chance of winning her was offered to him. It fanned the flame into a fierce blaze, and he was unable to think coherently.

At last the two subjects suggested themselves; he would paint Nydia in one subject, and it should be as the Almsgiver, while the other picture would be a country scene, a reminiscence of his native village, "The School Treat."

In "The Almsgiver" he would depict Nydia with the tender sympathy of which he was sure she was capable, and in the second painting he might also introduce her as the daughter of the squire, aiding her father's small guests to enjoy the treat. Homely subjects, yet capable of inducing the greatest talent.

The subjects having been approved by Mr. Wontner, the competitors were at liberty to commence their task, but Bertram Hardcastle found it difficult to begin.

He had imagined that he could proceed with the work almost without effort, so great was his passion for Nydia, but now the task seemed too much for him. He began twice, and obliterated the work on the following day.

"I'm as nervous as a kitten!" he groaned. "Yet think of what it means to me, and it will not be surprising that I am in this state! Up till now there had always appeared to be some chance that I might win her, but if I fail in this she is lost to me for ever!

"I can't do anything to-day! I must have a chat with Mrs. Oakley or her daughter. The worthy woman usually calms me down with her sensible, motherly talk, and her daughter seems to be somewhat like her."

He rang the bell and again dropped into a reverie.

"There's a decided difference between Bertha Oakley and Nydia Wontner in looks! By Jove, the landlady's daughter

Digitized by Google

doesn't shine by comparison of looks! A plain face, yet with the same simple attractiveness as her mother's.

"She will make a good wife for some mechanic—h'm, perhaps she is fitted for a higher grade, for she is well educated, there's no denying that, and there is refinement about her which suggests more of the lady. That's the danger of the present system of education.

"Of course, if she has it in her it ought to be brought out, I admit, but isn't it going to make her less happy? She will never marry as well as she ought. What chance does she——? Oh, good afternoon, Miss Oakley!" he said aloud, in some confusion. "Let me see, what did I ring for? Oh, give me a cup of tea, please! I'm fagged to-day, and the inspiration won't come!"

"Certainly, Mr. Hardcastle," said the girl quietly, repressing a smile.

"What made me call her 'Miss Oakley'?" Hardcastle asked himself in some perplexity. "I always call her 'Bertha,' and it never appeared out of place till now. Positively, I don't think I can call her by her Christian name again!"

Another pause.

"She and her mother can both help me in the country scene, and I could paint them both in it, of course!" he continued. "Mrs. Oakley naturally remembers the old green better than I do, and I expect her daughter recollects it. It's an advantage in some respects to have a landlady who comes from your native place; she takes a pride in the success of one of its inhabitants, you see!"

Bertha appeared with the tea, laid it out very daintily on the table, and was about to withdraw when Hardcastle stopped her.

"Do you paint now?" he asked suddenly. He remembered how he had given her instruction or hints on several occasions.

"A little, Mr. Hardcastle," replied the girl, flushing.

"That's right!" he remarked approvingly. ("What on earth is she turning red like that for?" he asked himself.) "I have quite forgotten to ask you for—for ever so long!" he added, as he reflected that it was a very long time since he had made any inquiry. "I shall probably want you and your mother to help me," he continued, in an endeavour to be sociable. "I am going to paint a village school treat for a—yes, for a prize."

"That will be very good!" cried the girl enthusiastically, after he had explained the subject of the proposed picture. She appeared to take the greatest interest in it, and evidently looked forward to the chance of being helpful. "It is for a prize? What kind of a prize?"

This question nonplussed Bertram Hardcastle. He had calculated on telling her just as much as he wanted to and no more. It was an awkward inquiry, but he decided to face it boldly.

"A wife!" he said briefly. "If I win, I marry Miss Nydia Wontner!"

The girl rattled the sugar basin against the milk jug and nearly upset it.

"That is a curious idea!" she observed.

"Yes, it may seem so," he admitted; "but she is passionately devoted to art, so she would be just as passionately devoted to the man who could produce a good picture. See?"

Unconsciously it appeared to him that he must justify Nydia's action in the eyes of this girl, although he could not understand why. In fact, he was unable to comprehend why he was thus talking to Bertha at all, yet the conversation pleased him.

"I don't see it that way at all!" replied the girl decisively. "Love should control, not fascination for art."

"Ah, but I am madly in love with her, and she would love me because of my art!" he declared, making the avowal of the state of his feelings without knowing that he had placed his heart on his sleeve. "Then I have to paint another picture; I'll tell you about it!"

He did so, concluding with a glowing panegyric of Nydia, followed by the question, "Have you seen her?"

"Yes, in the park," returned Bertha slowly. "There is the bell. I must go."

She seemed glad to escape. Bertram Hardcastle drank his tea. That talk had somehow done him good, and he made a small beginning with the more important of the two pictures.

The painting progressed slowly day by day; the young artist was not satisfied with himself, and he grew despondent. He tried the effect of alternating the work, and made a beginning with "The School Treat."

Bertha knocked at the door with a letter one afternoon, when he was in a brown study in front of this second picture. He bade her "Come in," and she entered.

"Thank you," he said, taking the letter mechanically and laying it down on a chair. "I say! That child, there, doesn't seem right to me, but I am not very fit this afternoon. Do you see anything wrong about her?"

"Outsiders see more than those engaged!" opined Bertha modestly. "I think the frock is not quite right, and I don't like the expression. It wants just a touch here, and the frock should be just curved there!"

She pointed with a needle which she produced from somewhere, but Hardcastle looked moodily at her. His mind was away from the picture as a matter of fact.

"I wish I could touch it as I see it!" cried Bertha, with a sigh. "But I should spoil it!"

"*That* won't matter!" cried Bertram carelessly. "It's no good, I know, while I'm doing it! Harry Walton will win, I'm afraid!"

"If I wished to win a wife I should try; I shouldn't turn faint at the very start!" cried Bertha. "I would try, try, try! Nothing should stop me!"

She spoke warmly and her cheeks became suffused with colour. Hardcastle gazed in surprise at her animated face. Now he understood better than ever before how Nydia could conceive her plan—she could inspire! This girl was capable of encouraging and infusing energy into him and life into his work, then how much more so would it be with a beautiful woman like Nydia! He turned for his brush, but Bertha had taken it up and was touching the picture.

"Good!" cried Hardcastle in admiration. "I say, you're clever!"

"No!" she cried hastily, releasing the brush. "Those lines are only daubs, but they show what I mean. You must think me very presumptuous!"

"Not at all!" he told her. He wanted her to stay, but she hurried out of the room.

Mrs. Oakley did not often answer his ring; it was Bertha who came, as a general rule, and he invariably asked her for her opinion on this point or that. He showed her the more important picture and she criticised it, or so much of it as was done, with skill and tact.

Bertram Hardcastle was greatly pleased; this girl was intellectual and discerning, and she was able to point to the faults which had escaped him.

When he felt despondent, which condition was becoming too common to be pleasant, he rang for her on some pretext and then asked for her opinion.

Several days passed and the young artist worked hard, but not one of those days went by without Bertha Oakley looking at his pictures

Digitized by Google

and expressing an opinion. Hardcastle began to regard her criticism as necessary, and he failed to notice that words of encouragement always accompanied the opinion.

Men are blind sometimes, although their eyes are wide open; Hardcastle, fascinated by Nydia, was blind to what was occurring nearer to him.

The country scene was finished, but the picture in which Nydia was the central figure was only half done.

"Do you think that is like Miss Wontner?" asked Bertha deferentially, with her eyes fixed on the face painted on the canvas.

"She is more beautiful than that and more kind!" cried Hardcastle enthusiastically. "I can never paint her as she is, and that is why I feel sorry that I chose to do so!"

"You can alter the central figure and make it someone else," said Bertha quietly. "There is time!"

"No, no! It must be she or no one! But why do you ask? Do you not think the likeness good enough to satisfy most people? You have seen her."

"I hardly know," returned Bertha, reddening slightly. "I think—that is, it is difficult to imagine Miss Wontner in that capacity and so the portrait seems——" She stopped in confusion.

"Ah, that is because you do not know her well enough!" cried Hardcastle warmly. "She is goodness itself, I know it! So sympathetic, so lovely, so bewitching!" He pulled himself up abruptly and continued more soberly: "Tell me how you think it might be improved—your advice has been valuable to me, for you have been able to take a calmer view of things than I. Some part of this work must be credited to you!"

Bertha reddened a little more, but deprecated the statement. She drew Bertram's attention to certain details and he made alterations quite as a matter of course.

At last the pictures were completed and sent in. Hardcastle was in a state of great excitement; he made no attempt to conceal his feelings from Bertha Oakley; he treated her now as he would have treated a sister. He was tormented by the fear of losing, and he expressed that fear in order to hear the words of encouragement that always came from Bertha. She spoke quietly, and with her usual unassuming manner, yet with evident sincerity and sympathy.

"I think you will win—I hope you will!" she would say. "That will make you happy, and I am sure that it would please us very much indeed, mother and I, to know that you had attained your desire!"

"Thank you!" he would reply, without even giving a thought to the strangeness of the position in which Fate had thrown them, he and his landlady's daughter.

It was not till the morning of the day on which the result was to be made that this thought occurred to him, and he explained it thus:

"You see, we are from the same village, and the people of our county are very clannish. When they are away from the county they will hold together notwithstanding the greatest difference in social position."

He made his way to the Gallery. It was part of Wontner's plan that the winning artist should learn the result by seeing his pictures with a printed card underneath, on which was the word "Prize."

The four competitors were there at the appointed hour; with straining eyes each sought his own productions. Bertram Hardcastle saw the card attached to the frame of "The Almsgiver," and a similar card under "The School Treat."

His breath came in short gasps; he felt stifled and he staggered from the Gallery into the street. He tried to calm himself, but his head was in a whirl; before his eyes was "The Almsgiver," but the face of the central figure was different—it was Bertha Oakley, not Nydia Wontner!

He placed his hands to his burning brows, but he could not still the throbbing. He saw a hansom passing; he hailed it and told the cabman to drive to his own lodgings. He ought to have gone to Wontner's residence, but something impelled him homewards.

"I've won!" he cried wildly, as Bertha opened the door.

"I'm so glad!" she cried, but even in his excited condition she noticed that his face was deadly pale. "You are ill!" she exclaimed in alarm, as he staggered.

Mr. Wontner waited all day for the successful artist to call and be formally presented to his daughter, and be as formally accepted as her future husband, but Hardcastle came not. He was lying in bed with an attack of brain fever, and he was asking why his brush would paint the plain features of Bertha Oakley in place of the exquisite face of Nydia Wontner. He was delirious, but not wildly so; he was speaking quietly, so quietly and rationally that it was difficult to understand that he was not conscious.

He was in the same condition on the following day, when Mr. Wontner and his daughter called to inquire about him. Nydia was self-willed and refused to stay downstairs.

"Why should I not see him? He is to be my husband, and I have a right to see that proper care is being taken of him!"

Bertha tried to dissuade her, but in vain; so the plain girl led the way, followed by the beautiful, but cold, Nydia, Mr. Wontner, and good Mrs. Oakley.

Hardcastle was talking as they entered.

"It was Bertha who helped me and inspired me!" he was saying in low, distinct tones. "It is her face that I have painted in that picture! Yes, yes, Bertha Oakley is the wife we are trying to win, not Nydia! How was it that I never suspected that she loved me? I see it all now, so plainly, her words of encouragement, her sympathy, the grand expression that came into her eyes and made the plain face beautiful!"

"He is raving!" cried Bertha piteously, wringing her hands and trying to evade the searching look that shot from Nydia's eyes. "You must not listen to him!"

Mrs. Oakley laid a soothing hand on the heated forehead of Bertram Hardcastle, and he was quiet for a time, but not for long. He continued to ramble on in the same manner all the time that Nydia and her father remained.

The Wontners made inquiry twice daily concerning his condition, and they sent dainties when he had recovered sufficiently to take them, but they did not come again.

It was not till Hardcastle had been out for a drive that Mr. Wontner called. He saw Bertram alone; the interview was of some length, and they parted in very amiable fashion. Bertha heard Mr. Wontner say:

"I think this arrangement is the best for all concerned," and Hardcastle assented.

"I said a good many things while I was ill," said Bertram to Mrs. Oakley's daughter when she entered an hour later. "I can guess what they were, from what Mr. Wontner has told me, and what has been running in my mind ever since I fell ill. Well, it's true!"

"What?" inquired Bertha, receding a step as he advanced towards her.

"It's true that I love you, Bertha!" he cried, catching her and pressing her shrinking form to his breast. "And it is true—is it not?—that you love me!"

"I—I don't know!" faltered Bertha, blushing divinely.

"But *I* know, dearest!" he interrupted, kissing her. "And Miss Wontner recognises that, as we both love one another, the old plan had better be abandoned. To which I heartily assent! I expect she will marry another pupil! I understand that love is more likely to inspire than pride, and that I have at last opened my eyes to the treasure that has been near me all along. I am quite willing that Miss Wontner should marry someone else! Are you, Bertha?"

In reply she laughed a happy little laugh and hid her face on his breast.

G. Hazell.

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Paul Jerome Saw.

For a fraction of a moment the singular spectacle that had presented itself to the vision of the war-correspondent remained in sight. But a puff of wind had caught the sails of the fishing-coble, and she forged past the anchored vessel at a suddenly increased speed.

The little gust stirred the long golden locks that had fallen upon the clumsy canvas shoulders and brass neck-piece of the diving-suit. They framed in an aureole of dishevelled tresses a delicately girlish head, whose flushed features wore an expression of mingled dissatisfaction and embarrassment.

A few seconds more and—relieved of the huge helmet and ponderous, leaden-soled diving-shoes—she had stepped down into the well of the smack and vanished.

Paul Jerome glanced at his companion—the old fisherman was gazing astern of the fishing-coble, his sturdy figure swaying to its motions, his brows wrinkled under the peak of his worn serge cap.

"Did you see that?" asked the war-correspondent somewhat unnecessarily.

The boatman took off his cap to smooth thoughtfully the thin and grizzled thatch it had surmounted.

"Aye, sir," he said deliberately, "it was a woman!" He replaced his cap, sat down on the weather side of a thwart, put the mainsheet under his foot, and cut a fresh quid from a coil of black twist.

The war-correspondent brought the coble round to skirt the end of the breakwater. His companion hauled in the mainsail-boom for the run up the harbour in the gathering twilight. Paul Jerome piloted the little vessel skilfully.

"Till now," he observed, "I have never heard of a woman diver, much less seen one. Is she a professional?"

The boatman pocketed his coil of tobacco. "No, sir," he said, "and I can't make out what she's doing yonder at all. But it's not the first time she's been down, though, for she's a spunky young thing, and a year or more ago she got round her dad—who's a diver himself, sir, to let her have a dip in the suit."

His lantern jaws worked meditatively upon his quid.

"That was only in a couple of fathoms," he added, "up towards the beach, very early one morning, when the tide was at dead ebb, and there was no wind. I saw it myself, leastways I saw the diver go down, and asked John Davenal afterwards if he was breaking in a new hand. And he laughed and says he, 'Aye,' he says, 'my little lass wanted to know what her dad's job was like.'"

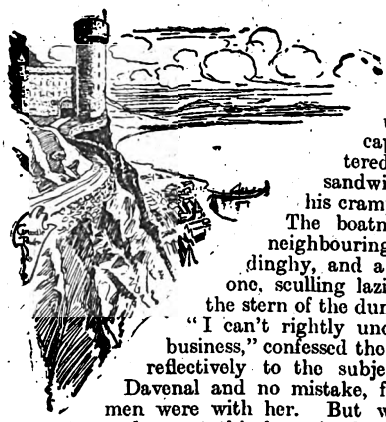
"John Davenal!" exclaimed Jerome, amazed. "You don't mean to say that that is his daughter?"

"Aye, do I," answered the boatman, "that's Mollie Davenal. Moira, her real name is, but we call her Mollie. And a pretty lass she is, and a plucky one. But what she wants to come playing herself yon fashion at nightfall, on the wrong side of the breakwater, I haven't a notion, sir. Not to speak of her dad lying ill at home with a knife-stab in his back, as he is, sir."

"Yes," said Jerome, "I heard about that."

The other nodded, and rose to lower the lug-sail, the coble crept forward in the darkening harbour under her flapping jib. The war-correspondent started from a reverie as the

Digitized by Google



anchor splashed into the smooth water about them, and the coble came to rest. He picked up a huge waterproof cape and a much battered enamelled tin sandwich-box, and stretched his cramped limbs.

The boatman shouted to the neighbouring landing for a dinghy, and a lounger put off in one, sculling lazily with an oar over the stern of the dumpy craft.

"I can't rightly understand yon diving business," confessed the boatman, returning reflectively to the subject; "it was Mollie Davenal and no mistake, for her father's own men were with her. But what a lass like that wants to go down at this hour in five fathoms or them to let her, fair moiders me."

"Five fathoms!" replied the war-correspondent. "Thirty feet! Surely there are not thirty feet so close to that side of the breakwater?"

"Yes, sir," he was told; "every bit of it, the rocks the breakwater's built on shelve away. When Sir Guy Vanburgh's yacht struck the breakwater and sank, she settled off till she was in full five fathoms. It was all they could do to pump her out at that depth.

The boatman shifted his quid, and watched the approaching dinghy.

"And it's not fit to let a lass go down," he said. "Not but what they must have some good reason for it, though what it can be I can't so much as imagine, seeing, as I said, sir, the yacht was got up a week since. John Davenal did the job himself. But if it were still to finish, there are other divers in Groudle without putting it on the lass. Well, well, here's the dinghy, sir!"

He stooped to hold the gunwale of the shallop that had come from the shore. Paul Jerome lingered to pay for his afternoon's excursion, and then, entering the dinghy, he was rowed to the landing. He sprang up the steps to the level of the quay, and hurried round the harbour to the breakwater. But the smack was nowhere to be seen, unless a vague shadow in the dusk off the ragged cliff of Groudle's head were she.

Paul Jerome shrugged his shoulders. The gesture meant that he had declined to come to any definite decision upon the extraordinary problem over which the ancient boatman had puzzled with such characteristic stolidity.

He bent his gaze upon the now scarcely visible surface of the tide that was lapping at the granite wall of the breakwater. Was it indeed true that a young and comely woman had descended into these chill depths, a task usually reserved for the strong and daring among men?

Was there—could there be any adequate reason for so singular, even so hazardous a proceeding, in which, not foolish and irresponsible amateurs, but practical operators, her father's assistants, had aided her.

Her father—that was John Davenal! So the big, pleasant, grey-eyed Cumberland man was her father! The thought of the distressed feminine face, so delicately shy amid its tumbled masses of yellow hair above the metal collar of the diving-dress, lent a new interest to the strange riddle into whose midst he had been flung—the riddle that linked Lady Tarleton's murdered maid to the sinister Hartigan, Hartigan to the little blind girl whose life he had himself saved, John Davenal to his grim brother-in-law, and all to the astute yet blundering Ussher.

As the thought of the detective crossed his mind, the war-correspondent laughed, shook off his absorption, and turned along the sea front. With long strides he passed through the little town, and made for the black and distant silhouette of Groudle Tower.

His route led him over the level crossing. He was conscious of something like a shudder as he traversed the wooden planks that levelled the permanent way.

It had been a desperate leap that he had adventured—the short take-off, the awkward landing on the planks of the crossing, the standing jump into the lane beyond! Well for him and the blind girl that the gallant old hunter had not failed.

The shudder darkened his countenance with a frown. The recollection of that exciting moment diverted his thoughts from the peculiar doings of John Davenal's daughter to those of the man Hartigan. He had seen the latter lead his companion through the gates, disengage his arm from hers, and leave her on the wooden crossing, himself springing forward out of danger.

Was it cowardice—or——? Was it, then, chance that Hartigan and no other had gone out with John Davenal the night that the latter was found dying at his own gate? Was it chance, or——?

Revolving these sombre questions, the war-correspondent pushed on, regained the high-road, and passed the old wayside hostelry, known as the Half Brick. Nearing the large entrance of Groudle Tower, he became aware that he was overtaking a figure of vaguely familiar gait and appearance. Drawing level with it he saw that it was the ex-steward. Both men by now were threading the avenue by which the Tower was approached.

Dennis Hartigan touched his cap with sullen politeness.

"Evening, sir!" he said.

Paul Jerome acknowledged the salutation. Hartigan stepped to his side, an unpleasantly disingenuous smile showed the ex-steward's teeth in the growing twilight.

"I'm afraid, sir," he added, "you've a bad opinion of me about that affair the other day—my losing my head at the crossing over yonder."

"You are perfectly correct," declared the war-correspondent bluntly.

Hartigan twisted the tips of his stiff, pale moustache with his powerful fingers.

"You must think as you choose, sir," Jerome was told, "but, all the same, I'm a man that's given a good account of myself in many a stand-up fight. I've had the thanks of the Board of Trade for my share in putting down a Lascar riot on a liner.

"It mayn't be modest to mention it, but I saved the captain's life. When a man loses his nerve, however, he loses it, and he isn't to be called coward just because something says to him 'Jump!' and he jumps."

Paul Jerome stalked on, his hands behind his back, one bright eye stealing covert glimpses of the speaker from under its drooped lashes.

"I don't believe you to be a coward, Hartigan," he replied, "I should say myself you had no small amount of both brute courage and brute intelligence. I merely remarked that you were either a coward or——"

He paused, breaking his sentence. "Or a what, sir?" asked Dennis Hartigan, loweringly.

"A most unlucky person," said Paul Jerome; "in which latter belief I am somewhat encouraged by the fact that you were arrested in connection with your wife's murder and that you happened to be the one who went out alone with John Davenal on the night of the attempt upon his life. To be continually brought into positions suggesting—mind I say suggesting—criminality, is the worst of all possible luck."

Dennis Hartigan clenched his fist. "You've a clever tongue in your head, sir," he growled, "and it's a bit beyond me if you're insulting me or laughing at me. But I've said what I had to say, and so good night to you, sir."

Digitized by Google

"Good night," answered the war-correspondent; "and if I were you, Hartigan, I would go back to the sea, or get abroad, anywhere where your bad luck wouldn't be quite so conspicuous. I gave you a certain warning the other day, respecting your sister Kit. If John Davenal dies I shall feel it my duty to suggest to the police that they submit your alibi on a particular night to a searching investigation."

The ex-steward set his jaw, his teeth gnashing audibly like those of an angry animal.

"And I tell you, sir," he said, "that there's a law to protect even the poor from such tongues as yours. Don't you slander me in public, my gentleman, or I'll make you regret it. I'm a man known and respected in my profession, and a man who has been called a hero, by one of his Majesty's consuls. So be warned, Mr. What's-your-name, and you may save yourself a lot of trouble."

With a final snarl, Dennis Hartigan dropped abruptly behind and kept there. The war-correspondent pursued his way calmly to the Tower.

Reaching its forbidding portals as the dressing bell was ringing, he mounted leisurely to the upper portions of the house. Not till he reached his own room did it occur to him to wonder what errand relating to his dead wife's affairs was bringing Hartigan to the Tower.

Moving at a slouching, sulky walk, the ex-steward had attained his destination, and at that moment was expecting admission at the great hall doors. He had vented part of his suppressed fury upon the bell-handle—the doors flew open with some degree of precipitation, and a footman appeared. When he perceived the rank of the caller who had ventured so unmistakably to signify his impatience, he drew himself up in an icy disdain.

"I want to see Lady T.," intimated Dennis Hartigan, stepping over the threshold; "you can say Davenal's husband presents his humble duty and will be glad of a word with her ladyship about the little matter she was so kind as to mention the other day. She will remember—the tombstone over my poor wife's grave."

The servant closed the doors. "It is not at all likely that her ladyship can see you," he said; "the dressing-bell has just gone. But I will inquire; there may, of course, be a message."

The ex-steward sat down on an oaken settle and waited ill-temperedly. At length the footman reappeared, motioning to him from the other side of the hall.

"My lady can give you a moment only," he observed, ushering Dennis Hartigan into the cheerless reception-room where the ex-steward had obtained his first private interview with the mistress of the Tower.

He tossed his hat on to a table and lolled in a drab but capacious settee. Ultimately, with a rustle of skirts and the subtle odour of some smart perfume, Lady Tarleton swept into the apartment. The door of the room closed behind her, and she stood looking at the ex-steward.

Dennis Hartigan rose. "Evening, my lady," he said, approaching her; "your ladyship will pardon my little fairy tale to your flunkey—about the tombstone. I knew your ladyship would understand that I wished to see you about the matter we really did discuss at our last meeting—that matter of ten thousand pounds for a bit of—news."

Lady Tarleton plucked at the lace of her tea-gown. "Well?" she demanded, but there was a veiled eagerness in the query.

The ex-steward smiled as he detected it.

"I've not come to tell your ladyship that bit of news," he answered, "*yet*."

A shade settled on Lady Tarleton's features. "Then why trouble me at this absurd hour?" she responded irritably.

Hartigan picked up his cap.

"I can go, if you wish it, my lady," he said; "but I am certain your ladyship would regret it later on, specially as I only wanted a clear understanding with respect to one or two matters."

"And they are?" added Lady Tarleton curtly.

The ex-steward tucked his cap under his arm, and tapped his left palm with his right forefinger.

"This ten thousand," he continued, lowering his voice;

THIS IS NOT A PUZZLE: WHAT IS IT?

You have two minutes to spare, haven't you? Of course. You are not in a hurry to catch a train, or pay a bill? Well, then, answer us this question: *What is the leading sign of a condition of things in your body, which, if not soon corrected, leads straight to the graveyard; and yet none but healthy persons ever have it, and they have it every day?*

You will scratch your head for hours before you hit upon the true answer, and yet it is simple as simple can be. Come to think, you had better read this article straight through, and perhaps the truth will dawn on your mind without our being obliged to tell you outright. Let us then get at it gradually through listening to the tale of a person who once had a very unhappy bit of experience.

Off and on, for twelve years, this lady suffered intense pain in the chest, accompanied often with a feeling of sinking in the pit of the stomach, at times so unbearable that she would roll on the floor in agony. Even when free from pain, which was not often, she scarcely dared venture out of doors for fear of falling—her head went so dizzy and her legs felt so useless. The feeling she would never get better made her terribly low and depressed. She was a wife and the mother of nine children, which made this calamity all the more serious. Dear, dear, what terrible tumbles we take sometimes, don't we? To-day on the hill-top viewing our farm; to-morrow asking employment from its new owner. So life goes. This lady's experience was by no means uncommon, nor was it all cloud and no sunshine, as we shall presently see. But first, let us finish her story. She felt hungry but could not eat. Her tongue was furred and there was a nasty taste ever present in her mouth. A persistent hacking cough shook her from head to foot.

Though constantly under medical treatment, she experienced no benefit, until on the advice of a neighbour she bought a bottle of Mother Seigel's Syrup. This sufficed to relieve the pain and perseverence in its use effected a complete cure. Writing from her home in New Street, Ridley, Kent, she says: "I feel better now than I have done for eighteen years. I relish my food, sleep well and feel well. After twelve years of pain, Mother Seigel's Syrup cured me when everything else failed. I have a family of nine children and attribute their freedom from sickness to the fact that I occasionally give them a dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup."

(Signed) (Mrs.) Sarah Banks.

Now, what is it, in your body which, if not soon corrected, leads to death?—a symptom which none but healthy persons ever have, and they have it every day? Why, *hunger*, to be sure. Unsatisfied hunger means *starvation*, and in the end *all lingering diseases kill by starvation*.

Eat and digest and you live, and are healthy. Lose your appetite and digestion and your death-warrant is signed. Mrs. Banks' trouble began in the mere loss of appetite. When digestion and appetite fail, the wisest course is to restore tone to the stomach and blood by the use of the root and herb tonic which made Mrs. Banks feel better than she had done for eighteen years.

Digitized by Google

"when should I be paid it? When I brought you the news in question, eh, my lady, the news, that is, of the child's death?"

"Certainly," assented the other, unable to avoid a start at the grim significance of the inquiry; "I will provide myself, on any reasonable warning, with notes to the amount I promised."

Dennis Hartigan smiled contemptuously. "I won't insult your ladyship's brains," he retorted, "by supposing that you expect me to risk—what I should risk, on that understanding. I come to you and I say, 'The girl is safely out of the way.' What do you say? 'My good fellow, I am glad to hear it, but now that is so there is really no need for me to part with any ten thousand pounds. As for you, if you don't want to put your head in a noose, you will keep a still tongue in it.'"

Lady Tarleton bit her lip; there was truth in the ex-steward's cynical prophesy. "What do you propose?" she asked.

The ex-steward held up one hand; the first, second, and third fingers stiffly extended.

"I want three out of the ten down," he said; "for that I'll tell you where the child is—then you can be sure I mean business. The rest you can let me have three months after—when you've had time to raise it on your reversion to the estate. As soon as the child is dead you will be the legal heir, at present you are only supposed to be."

"And if you refuse to trust me for ten thousand," sneered Lady Tarleton, "why do you consent to trust me for seven?"

"Because," she was answered, "I shall at least have had something for my pains. And, as your ladyship will see on reflection, if you play me false and drive me to desperation, I may revenge myself by putting my own neck in the noose in order to get yours there."

"On your unsupported word!" said Lady Tarleton. "Do you imagine that I would have risked making this infernal compact before witnesses?"

The ex-steward favoured her with a bullying, sinister glance.

"What did Hannah tell you, my lady?" he rejoined; "'Go down to Groudle Tower and look.' What if I send others to look—that will prove part of my story.

"Do you want the estate thrown into Chancery, or do you want it to drop into your mouth like a ripe cherry? No, my lady, your interest and mine go together, and that's the best fidelity guarantee."

He shrugged his shoulders cynically as he made the intimation.

"Ten thousand will let me get abroad, and settle down like a gentleman. I always did have a fancy for the West Indies; I shall buy a house and some land in the islands—a man can live a rare life out there if he's money. You won't hear of me again when all's done, I promise."

Lady Tarleton went on plucking at her lace—she had picked a hole in one of the cobwebby ruffles at her wrist. "When do you want this—this three thousand?" she demanded.

Hartigan considered the point.

"Let me have it pretty soon," he said; "and not here—I'd rather not come here any more. When the job's done, I'll nip out of the country and let you have my address for the rest of the cash. Just to lend colour to our interviews, you might put up a bit of a stone over Hannah—'Erected by her grateful mistress,' or some such rot."

"Where—where shall I send you the money—the three thousand?" murmured Lady Tarleton.

The ex-steward grinned.

"Bring, not send, your ladyship means," he corrected; "I'll give you a couple of days to get it. You can let me have it the evening of the day after to-morrow. I'll be at—at the mausoleum in the park, about midnight. You can easily slip out. Bank of England notes are good enough for me."

Lady Tarleton stood irresolute.

Dennis Hartigan donned his cap.

"I'll expect you," he said; "and remember, for that three thousand I'll tell you where the child is. Till then, your ladyship, *addios*, as they say in the West Indies. And the sooner I'm there the better for you and me—if not——" he had paused at the door to make the addition, "or someone else."

He came back into the room. "My lady," he added, "don't forget that if you and I can't do this deal—perhaps I can do one with—with——" He screened his mouth with his hollow palm—"With Mr. Stormont," he said, and retreated, chuckling.

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I Wish I Could Tell you Everything."

"Eh, dear, Miss Moira, and are you sure you feel none the worse?"

Moira stepped from the small, dark fore-peak of the smack and turned to help Kit out of the same dingy retreat, where, by the light of a flickering oil-lamp, she herself had been discarding the heavy canvas garments of the diving-dress in favour of her ordinary apparel.

"Not the least little bit, Mr. Travis, thank you," she said, colouring deeply as she faced the trio of rough yet simple souls who had been John Davenal's trusted assistants in many a difficult task and hazardous enterprise.

The smack—making for a sheltered cove on the further side of the Head—was forging through the dusk off the shadowy promontory. The breeze had freshened and she was keeping well out from the rocky foot of the tall cliff.

"You didn't find what you went down for, missy?" pursued her questioner, fingering his harsh black beard.

Moira answered in the negative, and drew Kit to sit to windward of the heeling craft.

"No," she said sadly.

Travis fumbled nervously with the rim of his jersey, he was a lean, hard-featured man, with twinkling eyes that belied his unprepossessing exterior.

"You should have told us what it was, Miss Moira," he said. "I'd have gone down myself in a brace of shakes. You're a brave lass, my dear, and a cool, but there's a knack in seeing under the water, even with the electric light. It didn't stand to reason that you could do much and in that depth."

Moira sighed and answered nothing.

"Not but what I'll be sworn it was just a sick man's fancy," continued Travis, "and nothing there at all. Though what he could have thought he'd lost down there beats me. Anyhow, you can tell the governor you've been down—but if you'd been my daughter, Miss Moira, you shouldn't have done it. I was against your going down that first time, and I was against it now. Of course the governor's word is law, even if it's only a sick man's fancy."

And Mr. Travis repeated his former phrase with an evident appreciation of it. He broke off to issue an order or two, the smack came up into the wind, and one of the men hauled round the dinghy. Mr. Travis himself got in and took the sculls. Moira and her silent companion followed, and the little boat shot forwards over the sheltered waters of the cove.

When her passengers had landed on the dusky beach,

Digitized by Google

Mr. Travis, bidding them a cheerful good-night, prepared to re-enter the boat. Moira laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Mr. Travis," she said, "I—I have been deceiving you, just a bit. Dad did not know I was going down—he—he only said he would be happier if—if—oh, I can't explain, Mr. Travis, and I can't tell you any more, but I felt perhaps I—I——" She stifled a sob.

"I didn't realise that it was so strange and confusing down there," she confessed; "I was only down in a couple of fathoms before and in daylight. But you will let the men think it was father's wish, won't you?"

"Y-yes, Miss Moira, by all means," stammered the other, bewildered; "but it's a riddle to me, that's what it is. And it'll beat me to keep the men from talking about it, to say nought of those fellows that passed us just as I took off the helmet for you. But I'll put the best face I can on it, Miss Moira, for your sake."

"Thank you so much," faltered Moira, and the diver's assistant, solemnly shaking his head, got into the dinghy and pushed off. Moira herself took the blind girl's arm and walked up the shingly beach.

For some while neither spoke. The two crossed the beach, mounted to the level of the road beyond, and followed it in the direction of Groudle Town. At last the prolonged silence of her companion aroused Moira.

"How quiet you are, Kit," she remarked; "are you very curious? I wish I could tell you everything. But I can't—yet. Wait till dad is better."

The blind girl gave a little squeeze of affection to the arm that lay in her own. "I'm not all that inquisitive, Mollie," she answered; "but do you mind telling me one thing? Has all this anything to do with somebody throwing something off the breakwater—oh, years and years ago."

Moira stared at the querist. "Kit," she said, "what do you mean—you—you can't know anything—and yet it might have been?"

Kit laughed. "What is *it*, Mollie?" she demanded.

Moira drew closer to her companion's side.

"Kit," she answered, in a low tone, "I—I don't know—I don't think I ought to tell you till—till father gets better and I can ask him if I may. But can't you tell me what you mean by 'throwing something off the breakwater years ago.'"

The blind girl hesitated. "I suppose I may as well," she said—"not that it's much information when all's said and done. But one night, when I was a mite of a thing—mother and I lived on the quay by the head of the pier then, and the breakwater had just been built. I used to go and sit on the landings out of the wind. I had a little stick to feel the edge of the steps, so I was quite safe."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Moira impatiently; "and one night——"

"As I was saying," proceeded Kit calmly, "one night I was sitting on the steps, on the north side, and I heard someone coming along the breakwater above me. He—it was a man's voice—was singing in a drunken sort of way. Suddenly he stopped and I heard him say, 'This is out far enough, in with it.' Then there was a splash in the water near me."

Moira stood still. "Kit," she said, "how—how long ago was this?"

Kit deliberated. "Oh, about seventeen years," she answered. "I'm no chicken, Mollie; I'm twenty-five in June, and I was eight then. It made a queer impression on my mind that I've never forgotten."

"Seventeen years!" murmured Moira, "and I am nearly nineteen. It—it—oh, what a horrible riddle it all is! But didn't you hear anything else?"

"No," said the blind girl; "only heavy footsteps on the breakwater above, and then all was quiet."

Moira started forward. "Let us go home, Kit," she exclaimed. "I—I want to get back to the dear old cottage and forget everything except how happy I've always been."

(*Continued Overleaf.*)

The Blood and the Skin.

How Bile Beans cure Pimples and Blotches.

Skin eruptions are now very prevalent. They are due to blood impurities. The blood filters through the liver. Therefore, if the liver is sluggish and impure so is the blood. If the blood is impure, pimples and blotches appear. Purify the blood: put an end to the blotches. one thing does both—Bile Beans.

Mr. Geo. Davis, of Wreath Quay Road, Monkwearmouth, says: "I was almost covered with unsightly pimples, boils, and blotches. My arms, legs, hands, and body were all attacked, and the irritation and pain was almost unbearable. Apart from the pain I was most disagreeable to look upon, and was ashamed to go out. My liver was out of order (this was the root cause of his trouble). I was always drowsy and listless—as tired in the morning as at night. Sick-headache often overcame

me. I was costive, and I felt as wretched as a man can feel. On the advice of a friend I took Bile Beans. They soon ended the constipation, and their action on the liver was manifest by the way in which my blood was purified, and the boils and pimples grew less and less. Within a short time of commencing with Bile Beans my skin was quite cleared. I was relieved of the nasty drowsy sleepy feelings which had been so troublesome. The nausea and sickness also left me. I am now quite cured, and enjoy excellent health. Indeed, I have better health now than I ever remember to have had in my life."

For skin eruptions, liver complaints, constipation, piles, sick-headache, female ailments, dizziness, &c., Bile Beans are the finest remedy. All chemists supply them at 1/1½ or 2/9 per box. Be sure to get "Chas. Forde's." You'll see the name on each box.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM (CLOTTED)

absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d.; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free, supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by

MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%

repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

When they were on the verge of the tiny town, Moira halted again and put her arms about the blind girl.

"You won't mind my not explaining for a while, dear?" she asked. Kit kissed her.

"Not a bit, Mollie," she replied; "though it's very puzzling and I am curious."

Moira sighed and they went on, across the top of the harbour and over the dusky quays, to where the windows of Hawthorn Cottage twinkled upon the night.

In the living-room of the cottage a nurse sat at the table writing letters. She looked up as they entered and smiled.

"So you have got back," she remarked; "I hope you have enjoyed your walk."

Moira flushed a trifle—for deceit of all sorts was repellent to her, even the mild subterfuge by which she and Kit had arranged to account for their joint, if brief, absence—and answered gravely in the affirmative.

The nurse put down her pen and rose.

"The doctor has been in again," she said; "he thinks Mr. Davenal quite distinctly stronger. But your father still frets at not being allowed to see you. The doctor was obliged to give in on the point."

She checked Moira's impulsive gesture of satisfaction.

"But he is not to talk," she added; "the doctor was particular your father should promise him that, and you must not say more than a few words to him."

"Very well, nurse," assented Moira dispiritedly. She took off her short cloak and tam-o'-shanter cap and brushed back the yellow curls that the night wind had brought on to her forehead. Kit had stolen to the fire and was warming her chilled limbs—the April evening had grown cold and raw.

The nurse glanced at the clock. "You had better go up now, dear," she said; "for he must settle down soon for the night. I shall be going on duty myself immediately."

Moira stood a moment broodingly, before passing out into the hall and mounting the stairs. At the door of the wounded man's room, she tapped softly. The day-nurse opened it.

"Ah," observed the latter, with the bright unconcern that does so much for the nerves of an invalid; "here is your daughter, Mr. Davenal. Come in, dear. Your father is going to be very good and not talk. He is so very much better that he does not propose to run the least risk of overtiring himself."

Moira stepped forward into the pleasantly warmed and lighted room, and paused at the diver's bedside. His right hand lay on the counterpane, his eyes, meeting hers, travelled to it, and the fingers twitched. There was something in his mute appeal that touched Moira to the heart—she knelt down by the bed and took his hand in her own.

"Father!" she said brokenly, "dear, dear father!"

John Davenal's face shone suddenly and his hand contracted painfully upon hers.

"My little daughter," he murmured; "always my little daughter."

"Yes, father, dear," gasped Moira, and she looked through her tears at the kind, grave features of the strong man laid low.

John Davenal sighed gustily and closed his eyes; his face had relaxed into a quiet contentment.

The watch at the nurse's belt ticked audibly in the silence, and the fire crackled, but all else was still. Once or twice the diver breathed heavily. The nurse heard it and motioned to Moira to withdraw her hand. She did so, with infinite precaution. John Davenal still slept.

Moira crept from the room; the nurse lowered the light and came to shut the door.

"He is doing famously," she whispered; "I am so glad he didn't try to talk much; he seems to live upon the hope of seeing you."

A dry sob forced its way to Moira's lips as she retreated to the lower floor of the cottage. "I wish," she murmured desperately; "oh, I wish he had never told me—never!"

She stopped on a small landing to cover her face and weep noiselessly. Her position stung her to the quick. Not to know who she was or how she had come to the care of the simple, large-hearted man who had been to her both father and mother, not to know whether some ghastly stain might not lie upon her—her, the promised wife of Guy Vanbrugh; it was a situation fraught with too many grim possibilities for her to face it without a pang of misery.

But the pang did not last long. Guy Vanbrugh's words returned to her mind: "You and I against the world, darling, for the best thing in it—love."

She dried her eyes; she would be true to the oath she had taken, she would doubt neither herself nor him. Did not John Davenal love her with all the rough, strong, tender fatherhood of his generous nature? Was not Guy Vanbrugh her plighted husband—the man who had chosen her out of all the world to share his life and dwell in his heart?

Moira comforted herself. At least she was rich in love and she drew it around her spirit like an invisible cloak. But the sob still lingered in her throat—the waters had denied her the secret they held and she felt as vaguely unhappy as a lost child by some good Samaritan's fireside.

NINETEENTH CHAPTER.
What Dennis Hartigan Heard.

"A glass of bitter and some cold meat, and look sharp about it, my dear."

Dennis Hartigan picked a biscuit out of the tray on the bar at the Half Brick as he issued this instruction to the serving-maid behind it. Then he lifted the flap of the counter and stalked through into the sanded parlour beyond.

The room was hazy with tobacco smoke and the mingled odours of "old October" and hot grog; a circle of "habituals" sat round the high black fireplace, puffing all manner of pipes, from a briar to a churchwarden.

Dennis Hartigan nodded to one or two of the peaceful revellers and went to sit down in a corner and munch his biscuit. He folded his arms on his broad chest, drooped his chin on it, knitted his brows, and fell into a profound unconsciousness of all about him.

So sullen and absorbed did he seem as he sat there, his thoughts might well have been as sinister as himself.

The maid aroused him with his meal and he ate it with abstracted deliberation, glancing now and again at the gossippers about the fire.

Unexpectedly a name arrested his interest—it was that of "Mollie Davenal."

An old fisherman, with a grizzled beard and a shiny black "cutty" had taken the latter from his mouth to repeat a prior statement, of which the ex-steward had heard but part.

"Mol-lie Dav-en-al," said the speaker, beating time to the emphatic syllables with his pipe; "I seen her myself with these very eyes, and so did the gentleman from the Tower as was with me. And Peter Travis, John Davenal's own assistant, was taking off the helmet. She'd been down off the breakwater, in full diving-gear, and her hair—she has an amazing lot of fair hair, has Mollie Davenal—was all tumbling loose over her shoulders."

Dennis Hartigan set down the glass he had lifted to his lips. His eyes seemed as though they would start from his head.

(Another long instalment next week.)

Dainty Dishes for Slender Incomes.

Edited by "ISOBEL," of *Home Notes*.

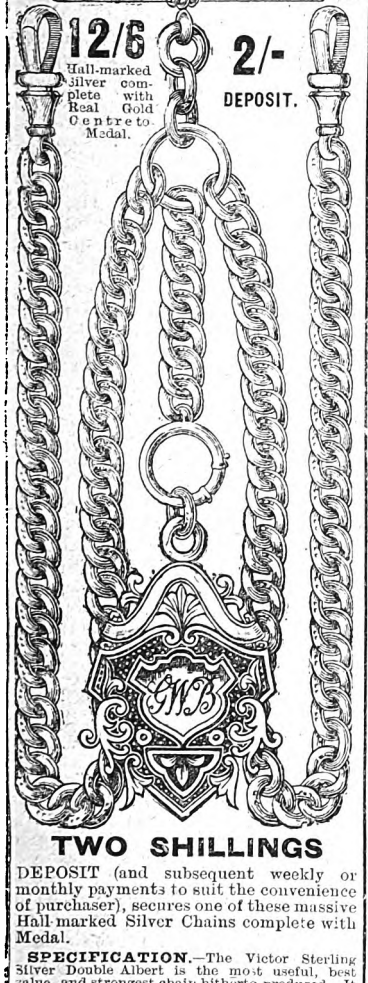
Cloth, Price 1s., post free 1s. 2d.

AT ALL RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS AND BOOKSELLERS.

Digitized by Google

The "VICTOR"

HALL-MARKED SILVER CHAIN PENDANT WITH REAL GOLD CENTRE
DIRECT FROM THE MAKER



TWO SHILLINGS

DEPOSIT (and subsequent weekly or monthly payments to suit the convenience of purchaser), secures one of these massive Hall-marked Silver Chains complete with Medal.

SPECIFICATION.—The Victor Sterling Silver Double Albert is the most useful, best value, and strongest chain hitherto produced. It is of full length, and fitted with fixed drop piece, bolt ring, and two swivels. Every link and ring is Hall-marked, and *every* connection being *permanently closed*, the chain is practically unbreakable—a method not previously adopted with even the most expensive gold chains.

The appendage is cut out of a solid block of Hall-marked Silver, mounted with a real Gold centre-piece, on which the purchaser's initials are engraved without extra charge.

NO DISCOUNT WHATEVER can be allowed to customers sending cash in full with order, but they will be entitled to a week's free trial of the chain; and cash will be refunded if it is not approved.

When writing, please mention this publication.

W. E. WATTS FOUNDED 1855 WHOLESALE DEPOT 106-108 DERBY RD THE ONLY ADDRESS— NOTTINGHAM.

From Factory to Rider.

How Does This Suit You?

Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. **£14 14s** Grade for **£6 10s** Write, H Dept. Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

Do you not envy the woman with a "pearl-like" skin? Then use "**Peralia**" regularly. It soothes, refreshes, clears and beautifies, making the skin smooth and healthy. Preserves a fine complexion and restores a faded one. Makes the hands and arms like velvet. Endorsed by society and professional women all over the world. Gentlemen find it extremely pleasant after shaving; relieves irritation—cools the skin. Use it for Spots, Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, and especially for Red Nose.

Doctor's certificate guaranteeing its purity, and testimonials, sent with each bottle.

In Bottles, 1/- 1/6 2 6 Postage, 3d. extra

NOSE

If your nose is large or badly-shaped in any way, use our Nose Machine, price 10/-. Cheek Plumpers for thin or sunken cheeks, 10/- pair. Ear Instruments for standing-out ears, 10/- each. Send stamp for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **23 Camden St., North Shields.**

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.

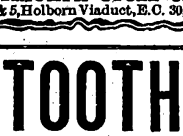
TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with

"KEATING'S POWDER,"

unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

Patronised by Royalty.



TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas AND **15 Guineas** Or from a Guinea per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.

TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.

4 & 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s, 9d, and 4s, 6d. per box.

CHICKEN-HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

ARE YOU LITTLE?

Or Flat Footed? If so, try our Elevators, which will increase your height from 2 to 4 inches without detection. Comfortable to wear. Price from 5/6, Lady's; 6/6 Gent's, per pair Send stamps for further particulars. **Peralia Co.** (Dept. 14), **73, Camden Street, North Shields.**

CRIMPOLINE HAIR CURLING FLUID.

Curls the hair naturally in a few days, and, what is more, the hair will keep in curl. Does not change the colour or destroy the hair But makes it soft and silky, and will curl or friz into natural curls. No tongs needed. Not sticky or greasy like other curling fluids, which only keep the hair in curl. After the hair has become curly it is not necessary to continue using Crimpoline. Give Crimpoline a trial—the result will astonish you. Use it for Ladies', Gents', and Children's Hair. **1/9 and 2/6 per Bottle, Postage 3d.** Ask your Chemist or Hair Dresser to get above preparations for you; if they are out of stock, we will send it direct to you secretly packed.

Have no other or you will be disappointed.

Under Royal Patronage. Used by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc.

PERALIA PERFUMERY CO.

(Dept. 14), **72 and 73 Camden Street, North Shields.**

GIVEN AWAY

with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 484).

Paper Pattern OF THIS **SKIRT.**

Of all Bookstalls & Newsagents.

PRICE 1d.

Rider Agents Wanted

in every district to buy sample cycle at **special price** and take orders for us. Large profits in spare time. **1903 Models £3.10 to £6.10** New Departure Coaster Brake, Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories. **200** Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10 **Ten Days Free Trial** is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory in any way.

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. Address Dept. 44B,

MEAD CYCLE CO., Liverpool.

Digitized by Google

THIS BOOK IS FREE.

The Mysteries of Hypnotism and Personal Magnetism Revealed.

The American College of Sciences of Philadelphia, Pa., has just published a remarkable book on Hypnotism, Personal Magnetism, and Magnetic Healing. It is by far the most wonderful and comprehensive treatise of the kind ever printed. The Directors have decided, for a limited time, to give a free copy to each person sincerely interested in these wonderful sciences. It is the result of the combined effort of twenty of the most famous hypnotic specialists in the world. You can now learn the secrets of Hypnotism and Personal Magnetism at your own home free. Hypnotism strengthens your memory and develops a will of iron. It overcomes bashfulness, revives hope, stimulates ambition and determination to succeed, and gives you that self-confidence which enables you to convince people of your real worth. It gives you the key to the inner secrets of mind control. It enables you to absolutely control the thoughts and actions of whomsoever you will. When you understand this grand and mysterious science you can plant suggestions in human minds which will be carried out in a day or even a year hence. You can cure bad habits and diseases in yourself or others. You can cure yourself of insomnia, nervousness, and business or domestic worry.

You can instantaneously hypnotise people with a mere glance of the eye, without their knowledge, and powerfully influence them to do as you desire. You can develop, to a marvellous degree, any musical or dramatic talent you may have; you can increase your salary; you can develop your telepathic or clairvoyant power; you can give thrilling and funny hypnotic entertainments; you can win the love and everlasting friendship of those you desire; you can protect yourself against the influence of others; you can become a financial success and be recognised as a power in your community.

The American College guarantees to teach you the secret of attaining all these things. It is the largest and most successful school of Hypnotism in the world. It is chartered by the State laws, and carries out every promise faithfully. If you want a copy of its free book, just send your name and address, no money, to the American College of Sciences, Dept. WL 39, 420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A., and you will receive it by return mail, post paid.

CURES ANY DISEASE.

A New and Wonderfully Successful Method of Curing all Chronic and Lingering Afflictions.

A Free Trial Package of this Remarkable Discovery will be Mailed to All who Write.

Anyone who suffers from a weak disordered condition of the heart, lungs, kidneys, stomach, blood, liver, skin, muscles or nervous system should write at once for a free trial treatment of a new method that is rapidly displacing the old ways of curing disease.

DR. JAMES WILLIAM KIDD.

Gout, partial paralysis, dropsy, locomotor ataxia, rheumatism neuralgia or any other disease resulting from high living quickly and permanently removed by the new method.

Weakness or debility in any form whether in man or woman entirely eradicated from the system by the new treatment.

Consumption, bronchitis, asthma, catarrh, impure blood, heart disease, kidney and bladder trouble and liver complaint cured to stay cured by the doctor's wonderful remedies.

If you are the victim of any malady or sickness which you have long wanted to get rid of, try one of Dr. Kidd's free treatments and see how easy it is to be cured when the proper means are employed.

If you have aches or pains, don't feel well at times, if you are despondent and discouraged, tired out, it is because you have some terrible disease lurking in your system.

Why not write to Dr. Kidd, get a free trial treatment, and let him show you how quickly you can be cured by his new method. It makes no difference what your peculiar ailment may be, Dr. Kidd will send you a trial treatment entirely free of charge to prove to you that he can do as he claims.

Write to-day, telling the doctor what you wish to be cured of, and receive the free treatment for it by return mail. There are no conditions whatever. Dr. Kidd's generous offer is meant for everybody who suffers from disease in any of its various forms. Address Dr. J. W. KIDD Co., 522 Baltes Building, Ft. Wayne, Ind., U.S.A. No one should miss this grand opportunity of securing the benefits of the doctor's latest discovery, since it costs you nothing.

SONGS COPIED

Legible as print, 5d. page; transposed correctly, 6d. page.

Mrs. CONYERS,

Morchard Bishop, Devon.

Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Digitized by Google

Pa was Coming.

"Flee!" she cried. "You mean fly, don't you?" "Never mind what insect I mean. Just run. Pa's coming."

Earning versus Receiving.

She: "I thought you told me your salary was ten pounds a week?" He: "Oh, no; I said I earned ten, but I only get three."

Too Big for Other Girls.

Ethel (after a tiff): "I presume you would like your ring back?" George: "Never mind; keep it. No other girl I know could use that ring, unless she wore it on her thumb."

The First Signs of Love.

"What was the first indication you had that she was in love with you?" "It was when she began to examine my coat to see if she could find another woman's hair on the shoulder."

He Wanted to Go, Too.

"It's a shame," cried the young wife; "not a thing in the house fit to eat. I'm going straight home to papa!" "If you don't mind, dear," said the husband, reaching for his hat, "I'll go with you."

Spoilt the Story.

He: "What a daring bicyclist that Miss Dashley must be. I hear that when out riding the other day she went right over a cow lying in the road." "Yes, Miss Dashley went over, but the bicycle remained on the other side."

Why Kate is Single.

She told him her age was twenty-two, but he had looked the family Bible through you see, and knew her to be fully thirty-three. It grieved him thus to see the maid grossly prevaricate, and that's the reason why, 'tis said, he didn't marry Kate.

An Impossible Situation.

Mr. Wickwire: "What ridiculous, impossible things these fashion plates are!" Mrs. Wickwire: "I know they used to be, but most of them are engraved from photographs nowadays." Mr. Wickwire: "This one can't be. Here are two women going in opposite directions, both with brand new gowns on, and neither looking back at the other."

Her Happiest Moment.

"Until I met you, Matilda," he murmured in a voice husky with emotion, "I believed that all women were deceitful, but when I look into your clear, beautiful eyes, I behold there the very soul of candour and loyalty." "George," she exclaimed with enthusiasm, "this is the happiest moment I have known since papa took me to the London oculist!" "London oculist!" "Yes, dear, you never would have known that my left eye is a glass one." Then the moon went under a cloud, and George sat down and buried his face in the sofa cushion.

Where the Wool Came From.

She: "What is this mineral wool one reads so much about?" He: "Mineral wool? Why, that's the wool they shear from hydraulic rams!"

Managing a Husband.

He: "There isn't enough on this breakfast-table to feed a canary bird." She: "I know it, my dear; but there are several things I want you to order from the shops, and I know you'll forget all about it unless you leave the house hungry."

Stuffed Daughters.

Our Gallant Colonel: "Your daughters, my dear Mrs. Tympanum, are looking delightful to-night—simply delightful!" Mrs. Tympanum (rather hard of hearing, and very intent on a *roti* of ducklings): "Yes, aren't they? I've had them stuffed with sage and onions."

An Improving Young Man.

Maud: "How is Mr. Blushman getting along? Has he proposed yet?" Edith: "No, but he is improving. The first night he called he held the album in his hands all the evening; the second night he had my pug dog in his arms; last night he held Willie on his lap for an hour. I have hopes."

She Frightened Him.

Young Saphead: "Do you know, Miss Biggal, I've a gweat mind to fwighten you by wocking the boat?" Miss Biggal (an athletic young woman): "A young man like you tried that with me once, and the boat upset." "Did it weally? What did you do?" "I swam ashore and notified the coroner."

Too Expensive a Luxury.

"I know we are poor, dear papa," said Evelyn, nestling her head against his shoulder, "but Charles is brave and hopeful, and he says that love will make a way." "I know it will," said the old banker grimly. "It made away with two tons of best coal and two pounds' worth of gas last winter, and before long we will begin again, I suppose."

Time to Go.

"Claribel," called out the old gentleman in a loud, rasping, and emphatic voice from the head of the staircase at 11.30 p.m., "you tell that long-haired, sallow-faced, spider legged feller in the parlour there to take his hat and walk off; and if ever he comes here again I'll kick him right through his necktie." "Alfred," murmured the young woman pensively, "something seems to tell me we'd better part."

A Vile Plot!

"John, my dressmaker called to-day, and I must have the material to-morrow," said Mrs. Adam, "Eh? What? You said you had written to her not to come until next month," replied the husband. "Yes, I did, but she never got the letter." "Woman! This is a plot—a vile plot!" cried Mr. Adam, clasping his hand to his breast-pocket. "If you really wanted her to stay away you would have posted that letter yourself; you wouldn't have given it to me."

A Man Without a Heart.

"You have no heart!" Pale but tearless she stood before him, and looked him squarely in the eye. She was poor, but proud. Adverse fortune had reduced her wardrobe to a calico basis, driven her and her only surviving mother to the top flat of a back street house, and hardened the lines about her still beautiful mouth, but it could not dim the lustre of her blue-black eye, or tame the unconquerable spirit that animated every fibre of the lissom form, standing erect with unconscious grace, and awaiting his answer. "You have no heart!" she repeated. "No, miss," replied the butcher, "but we've got some very good liver. Will that do just as well?"

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Regarding Pseudonyms.

READERS have been adopting such long and awkward pseudonyms lately that I must ask them in future to use either their initials, or names which are quite short, for this purpose.

Wants a Wife.

"A NEGLECTED MAN," who lives in Cape Colony, is thirty-two. He is earning a good income, but up to the present has not been able to find a girl suitable to become his wife. He is expecting to visit England next year, and in the meantime would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony, or find some other way of leaving the state of bachelordom.

* * * * *

I am sorry I cannot help you to find a young lady, but I did not undertake to become a matrimonial agent. There surely must be plenty of nice girls in Cape Colony, on one of whom you could bestow your affections. If you have not found one by the time your visit to England takes place you perhaps will have better luck then.

Eighteen and Twenty-three.

"PADDY'S DARLINT" is eighteen, and is keeping company with a man of twenty-three. Her parents think the difference in age is too great for marriage to result. "PADDY'S DARLINT" is going away from the town in which she lives, and wants to know whether it would be wrong for her to write to the young man during her absence—it is his suggestion that she should do so.

* * * * *

I should hardly consider a difference of only five years a bar to matrimony, "PADDY'S DARLINT." If it were more than that there might be some reason for your parents' objections. As regards writing to the young man during your absence, you must be guided entirely by your own inclinations. If you really care for him, by all means write. If not, your going away will be a good opportunity for dropping him.

How to Become Engaged.

"S. H. Y." is in love with a girl, and his affections are returned. He is wanting to become engaged, but hasn't the slightest idea how to set about it; whether he ought to ask the girl if she is willing to marry him or what.

* * * * *

I suppose you intend your engagement to end in marriage, "S. H. Y.," so, of course, you must ask the girl if she is willing to marry you—that is always the first step in a serious engagement. I am really very surprised that you should ask such a foolish question.

An Explanation Necessary.

"W. S." (Alloa), who is a man, was asked to a dance by a lady who had always been very affable to him, but at the dance she was decidedly cool, and when asked for an explanation of the coolness would not give any. "W. S." was rather persistent in asking for an explanation, and at the end of the dance she would hardly speak to him. He now wants to know whether he should write and apologise for his persistency, or not take any further notice of her?

* * * * *

If I were you, "W. S.," I should wait for a few days in case you might meet her, when you would see how she treated you. If she was quite friendly, you could apologise for your persistency; if otherwise, you could do nothing.

* * * * *

If you do not meet her inside a week, I should write her a letter asking why she was so cool to you on the night of the dance, and offering to call on her if she would allow you to do so, in case an explanation might be necessary. You would have to be guided by her reply as to your future behaviour.

A Disheartened Lover.

"T. L." (Glasgow) is very much in love with a girl. He is a Protestant, but she is a Roman Catholic, and she says they could never marry because of the difference in religion. "T. L." has offered to become a Roman Catholic, but she will not hear of it. She does not appear to return his love, and he has written to her, but received no answer. What ought he to do to get to know if she really cares for him?

* * * * *

I should advise you to do as you suggest; that is, write asking her to meet you at a certain place. You should then declare your love for her and ask her if she cares for you in the same way. If she does not, then, of course, you can do nothing else but give up all hope of ever winning her. If she does love you she will tell you so, and then your difficulty will be at an end. I must say, however, that I do not counsel marriage between Protestants and Roman Catholics; it is difficult for people holding such widely different beliefs to live happily together.

Wants an Introduction.

"F. G." has fallen in love with a girl whom he sees every evening in the train. He knows where she lives, but doesn't know her name, and thinks that they have no mutual friends, so he wonders how they can obtain an introduction.

* * * * *

If you have no mutual friends, "F. G.," your best way of getting to know the young lady will be to perform some little act of politeness to her in the train. You can open the door for her when she wants to get out, reach her umbrella or parcels down from the rack, or perform some other little service. If you do this repeatedly—don't make yourself too obtrusive when doing it—in time you will feel that you know each other quite well, and a formal introduction will be unnecessary.

A Lame Lover.

PUZZLED has fallen in love with a young lady who keeps a tobacconist's shop. Their courting has been conducted over the counter, and he has only just discovered that the young lady is lame. What ought he to do in the matter?

* * * * *

There is no reason why a lame girl should not make just as good a wife as one without an infirmity, provided the lameness does not prevent her getting about easily. So I see no reason why you should not propose marriage to the young lady if you really love her.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ARE YOU USING "WILL POWER"

YOU satisfied with yourself? Are you as successful as you wish to be? Is your health what it should be? Have you perfect control over your nerves and body. . . . . Are SURE that you are making the best of your mental abilities? Are you not often desponded and discontented? ALL your discomforts, worries, all your NERVOUS AILMENTS, in particular, can be overcome by THAT precious gift, with which Nature has endowed all of us, namely, a . . . . . strong THOUGH we all have that gift, yet many put it to a wrong use, or fail to train, exercise, and strengthen it in the right way. Once YOU HAVE RELEASED YOUR . . . . . .WILL- success, happiness, and health is assured you. A rational system of training and strengthening Will-Power is now offered to the public by Prof. EBBARD, whose publishers will send you full particulars free of charge on receipt of a post-card to

DEPT. 38, THE MODERN MEDICAL PUBLISHING CO., 57/58 CHANCERY LANE, W.C.

"NO BETTER FOOD."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

Fry's

Pure Concentrated

Cocoa.

300 GOLD MEDALS, ETC.

The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET," "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and "MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its

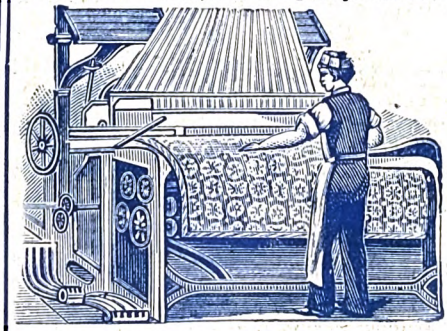
ABSOLUTE PURITY.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.—Sold only in tins with gilt top.

10,000 RUGS GIVEN AWAY

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

This Phenomenal Offer is made to the readers of *Short Stories* (18/4/1903) only. On receipt of Postal Order for **5/-**, or **62** stamps, we will forward, DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS,** suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an Advertisement for our goods, *below the Actual Cost of production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our Looms, thus saving the purchasers all middle profits.



With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very Handsome Rug to match, or we will send Two Carpets and Two Rugs for **9/6.**

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED. THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

GALAXY ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, ETC., POST FREE,

if mentioning *Short Stories* (18/4/1903) while writing.
Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SONS (Dept. S.T.S.) Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,
WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

"G.P." ASK FOR Government Tea

Eighteenpence Everywhere.

RICH, RIPE, REFRESHING.

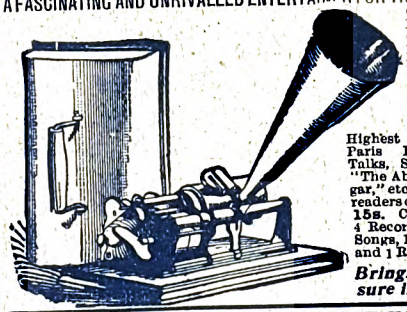
You May Know It by Its Red Tape and Seal.

WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE TO C.P. GOVERNMENT TEA CO., 16 AMERICA SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S GRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.

A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

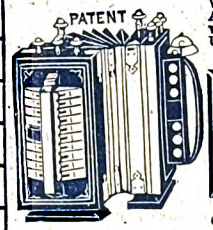


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. No Home should be without one. *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, „ 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, „ 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, „ 16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount. Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1 01 2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW. *Established 50 Years.* BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!

PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.

A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

THE ONLY PERFECT FIRELIGHTER.

BREAKFAST READY IN FIVE MINUTES.

OF OILMEN EVERYWHERE.

BRITANNIA CLEANS HER HELMET WITH

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

AND EVERY BRITISH HOUSEWIFE SHOULD POLISH ALL METALS WITH IT, TOO.

Most foreign polishes set up acid, are *sticky* in use, and require much labour in cleaning. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is entirely made in England, and by using it you support British Trade.

Manufacturers: THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co. Ltd., LIVERPOOL.

SHORT STORIES

THE DAINTY HOME STORY PAPER.

TARTAN COVER — No. 9.—BRUCE.

No. 747.] Week ending April 25, 1903. [Price One Penny.

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ Inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 BROWNIE is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3½ by 2½ Inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 46 West Strand, W.C.

J. G. GRAVES

CUTLERY

THE "ENTERPRISE" PARCEL, 25/-

Contains: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white 'Ivorette' Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

Casting "Columbian" Silver.

The Spoons and Forks are made of 'Columbian' Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.

THE "ENTERPRISE" PARCEL of Household Cutlery and Plate, 25/-

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.

TERMS. Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under 'Positive Agreement' to refund the full amount of the deposit if you are not perfectly satisfied.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Cutlery, etc., Post Free.

Good Agents Wanted. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of any one suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the safe remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

SOLD BY ALL UP-TO-DATE DEALERS

THE

"OCEANIC"

THE UP-TO-DATE

HALF-GUINEA

BRITISH BOOT.

STYLISH—DAINTY
DURABLE—COMFORTABLE

ASK FOR AND SEE THE STAMP 'OCEANIC' INSIDE EVERY BOOT.

SHORT STORIES

No 747.] Week Ending April 25th, 1903. [One Penny.

The Chronicles o' Glencrackit.

By G. VINCENT HOLYTOWN.

The Witch o' Linogil.

At the side of a mossy path which wound its way through the heart of Glencrackit Woods, a wizened old woman sat crouching by a fire of twigs.

Over the blaze a little pot swung from a low-hanging branch, and she was gazing steadfastly on its bubbling contents, mumbling to herself the while.

"Aye, bonnie laddie," she muttered, "what a day o' bitterness lies afore ye; an' a' for love. What though I warn ye tae turn, it'll mak' ye but the keener tae gang on. But I'll warn ye, for your guid, a' the same."

Elspeth Strachan, reputed amongst the superstitious to have powers of witchcraft, bent closer over the pot. She seemed to see therein something of surpassing interest.

"There, he's left the hoose noo," she whispered hoarsely. "He'll pass this wey within half an 'oor."

* * * * *

Captain David Ogilvy, the Laird of Linogil Estate, was the descendant of a long line of soldiers, with an oft recurring fatality for dying in battle. When not quartered with his regiment he spent his time on his estate, looking after the interests of his tenantry. Twenty-seven years of age, handsome, dashing, and generous, he was deservedly popular with all.

To his humbler tenantry he was particularly agreeable. Poor old Elspeth had held her lowly cot, rent free, with a pension thrown in, for four generations of Ogilvys, and was probably the humblest of all. She was, therefore, the recipient of the courtly Laird's special attention, his kindly attitude towards her being that of one actually honoured by her tenancy.

No wonder then that the "Witch o' Linogil" adored her Laird.

On this lovely morning things seemed fair and full of promise to the Laird of Linogil. His cheery whistling broke in upon the rustling of the forest, stirring the very birds to chorus his joy, and the quick time of "My love is but a lassie yet" heralded his sprightly gait.

A raucous voice arrested his progress. Turning he beheld old Elspeth beckoning him to approach.

"Come here, ma braw son," she was repeating.

"Oh, is that you, Elspie!" said the Laird genially.

"Yea, Laird, it's me. I've come three lang miles tae prevent ye in the day o' your calamity."

"Come now, Elspie," bantered the Laird, "you mustn't talk to me about calamity to-day. You should prophesy good about me and not evil. They tell me you're a bit of a sorceress, Elspie, so you can spae me a golden fortune, and I'll cross your palm with a golden piece."

"Na, na, Laird," replied Elspeth, "I'm nae witch, wi' pooers o'er guid an' evil, sae I canna mak' or mar your destiny. Ye speak like Balak an' Ahab. But whiles I ha'e the gift o' second sight an' I'll tell ye, withoot fee or reward, what'll happen tae ye between noo an' sunset."

"Well, well, Elspie," said the good-humoured Laird, "tell me the worst," and he leant against a tree in a pose of smiling resignation.

The old woman fixed her bright black eyes on his face and responded abruptly:

"Ogilvy, there's danger aheid, turn back!"

"For that very reason, Elspie," laughed the Laird, "I must push on. An Ogilvy never turns his back on danger."

"I ken that, my laddie, so ye maun e'en gang for'a'd. But, eh, sir, ye little reck the anguish that awaits ye."

"Never mind, Elspie, tell me all about it," said the Laird tolerantly. "Forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"Then list ye, Ogilvy o' Linogil," she began. "Your lady love will this day refuse ye——"

The sceptical smile faded from Ogilvy's face, and he shifted his posture uneasily. He was astounded that Elspeth was aware of his intention, that very day, to seek the hand of Lily Allen in marriage. Impressed thus by her knowledge of fact, he was impelled to attach some weight to her prophesy. To believe it, however, meant the premature blasting of his fondest hopes, and his buoyant heart struggled against belief.

"If she does so, Elspeth," he said gravely, "I shall ask her again on a happier-omened day."

"Ye will not, Linogil," she responded decisively. "It's written that this day, but never again, will ye ask her to mairry ye."

Captain Ogilvy did no longer doubt but that Elspeth's words would come to pass. Pale-faced but calm, he stood bolt upright now, like a soldier receiving sentence of death.

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

"You talked of danger, Elspie," he said gently. "I see nought but sorrow in your words."

"Ye havena heard me oot, Ogilvy. Your troubles only begin then."

"Not so, Elspie, all else after that can matter little. Robbed of all hope——"

"As ye will be!"

"Robbed of hope, life itself would lose its charm."

"Oot o' despair springs the danger o' cooardice. Remember ye're a sojer, Ogilvy, an' resist it. But that'll no' be your chief danger. Ye'll be tempted sair tae dae evil. Ye maun wrestle wi' temptation an' vanquish it. The Deevil himsel' will proffer ye the cup o' specious bliss. Dash it frae your lips, Linogil, for, as surely as ye quaff, it will be bitterness in the latter end. Be wary, ma son, o' the first stranger that speaks tae ye, but mind that he comes tae nae hairm. Further than sunset ma second sight grows dim, an' I canna tell ye mair. But suffeecient for the day is the evil thereof, an' may Heaven grant ye the strength ye'll need."

Depressed but determined, hoping against despair, Ogilvy resumed his walk through the forest, and the trees seemed to be sighing forth their sympathy for him in his sorrow.

As he approached his trysting-place hope gained the ascendency over despair. He would evade, and defeat, the prophecy by reserving his proposal. The prophecy would fail in that he would *not* be refused that day. If it failed in part, it would fail in all. He laughed aloud in the joy of his triumph over superstition.

* * * * * *

Lily Allen kept her tryst. They met. The moments sped, bright-hued, and fleeting into hours, and still he lingered in her smile. That sad, sweet smile, which through the three short weeks of their acquaintanceship had haunted him night and day. Never had her presence seemed so radiant as on this meeting, when they wandered together, in unwhispered love, on the banks of the brawling Prossen. Reaching at length a pleasant little dell where, amidst a grove of trees, the trickling Burn of Pearsie merges into its noisy rival, they stopped.

"Here is the meeting of the waters," she said softly, adding hesitatingly, "and here must be the parting of our ways."

"Till to-morrow only, Miss Allen," he remonstrated gently.

"Yes, Captain Ogilvy," she responded sadly, "till the to-morrow that never comes. I leave Glencrackit to-day, and you will not see me again."

Ogilvy's heart sank.

"This is the ultimatum of the fate which I cannot evade," he muttered. Then he queried in a voice that quivered audibly, "But why leave so suddenly, and why for ever?"

Her lustrous eyes filled with tears, and her tremulous lips could scarcely frame the simple words—

"Forgive me, I cannot tell you."

Ogilvy's colour returned with added warmth. It seemed that Fate was forcing him to resistance. He feared that resistance would be futile. But nevertheless he would do battle. He felt better now that the first blow had fallen, and thus he spoke—

"Forgive me instead. I did not wish to search out your reasons through mere idle curiosity. My words were the wail of a heart that will break if you pass out of my life. Oh, Lily, you are all the world to me. I have loved no other, I can love no other but you. I ask you now to accept that love. Be my wife, my adorable one, and instead of the parting, let this be the blending of our lives for ever."

The girl was weeping bitterly now.

"It cannot be, David. I love you, ah, how much you will never know. But I cannot marry you. There are circumstances in my life which absolutely prevent me——"

"Lily," he said, looking straight into her truthful eyes, "I care not what those circumstances may be. I love you. You have the word of Ogilvy of Linogil that they matter nothing if you love me and will marry me."

"Love you, for ever! Marry you, never, David! I should be a curse to you, not a blessing. We must part, my love. Good-bye."

She held out her hand. He took it and held it in his.

"May I kiss you once?" he whispered.

"Yes, David, you may, I love you so," she breathed.

He released her hand and folded her in his arms. Responding to his embrace she held up her lips to his. One long, clinging kiss and then murmuring, "Good-bye, my love, be brave," she tore herself free and was gone.

* * * * *

This little love drama had been witnessed and overheard by a third party. Scarcely had the lady disappeared, when the eavesdropper rose from his crouching position behind a clump of foliage. He was a very handsome, well-dressed man of thirty, clean-shaven, barring his neatly-waxed moustache. His features, though prepossessing, wore a look that perpetually flickered between cunning and nervousness, that of a sharker and that of a hunted man.

"I presume I am the villain of the piece," he whispered to himself. "How opportune. I must turn this to account, and quickly."

He was about to advance, when he paused.

"I am a villain, I know," he told himself, "but I have my limitations. I will not interrupt the man at his devotions."

For David Ogilvy had knelt and was praying for strength to bear his great trial.

When he rose he moved over to the broiling pools where the Prossen, congested between rocky banks, plunges over the boulders, with a dull roar of anger. The churning and seething of the water suited the turmoil of his mind.

How he yearned to know what dread obstacle stood between him and Lily Allen, that he might hurl it aside.

Presently he perceived the scent of a cigarette, and, turning, he found himself face to face with the stranger, whose approach had been unheard mid the noise of the waters.

Admirably cool, bland, and even fascinating, the newcomer promptly addressed him.

"I believe I can tell you what you probably wish to know, Captain Ogilvy."

"In regard to what, sir?"

"In regard to your rejected proposal of marriage, which I inadvertently overheard. Forgive me if I seem abrupt. I am in haste, but willing to be of service, ere I go."

The inflection of his voice was delicately polite. The speaker was so obviously a gentleman that his words gave no offence to Ogilvy, whose one thought was to seize the opportunity presented to him.

"Then tell me why my proposal was rejected," he said.

"With pleasure," replied the stranger. "Might I here interpolate that if you could oblige me with the loan of fifty pounds, with I confess, but slender chances of repayment, you will render me an equal service?"

Ogilvy was expecting some request of the kind, and, drawing out his pocket-book, he counted out and handed over in silence the stipulated sum.

"Pray accept my best thanks," said the other, "and, in reply to your query, I may state that the lady cannot marry you because—bigamy is illegal. She is already—unhappily—married."

Ogilvy stared in vacant horror at the speaker.

"Are you sure—you know—the lady?" he faltered.

"Positive. She is my wife," replied the other placidly.

Ogilvy put his hand to his eyes to brush away the mist

Digitized by Google

Why did the landscape reel and totter as it did? Then recovering himself, he replied to a question put to him.

"Your nearest way to a station? Across the suspension-bridge a little lower down. Stop! not that way," he shouted, above the roar of the water.

The other, deliberately disregarding instructions and warning, poised himself on one boulder for a dangerous leap across a swirling pool, to another boulder in the centre of the torrent. He did so successfully, but in taking off again to reach the other bank, he slipped on the slimy stone and plunged headlong into the gushing flood.

Instantly sucked below by the current and jammed between two semi-sunken slabs, his efforts to save himself were powerless against the tons of rushing water that forced him down. He raised a despairing hand in mute appeal for help.

It seemed to Ogilvy that in that instant some foul spirit whispered in his ear, "Let him drown—drink deep of the draught I proffer—quaff the cup of love."

But the horrid suggestion found no lodgment in his mind.

Dropping into the pool, he clung to a fallen tree, and struggled over to the drowning man. Succeeding he contrived to extricate him and drag him to the bank, senseless and bleeding, but alive!

And a wizened crone, witnessing the rescue, clapped her hands with joy. "I kent Ogilvy o' Linogil w'u'd dae what was richt," she croaked.

Ogilvy's exertions were not yet over. The man became conscious but was too weak to walk. He stood in urgent need of medical aid, and Ogilvy bore him tenderly to the nearest farm-house. Elspeth Strachan nodded her approval as he passed with his burden.

"See," she exclaimed, pointing west, "the sun begins tae set, for a' I ken your troubles may be near an end."

Ogilvy shook his head grimly and staggered to the farm-house. *She*—Lily Allen—stayed there, he knew, and when with blanched, affrighted face she gazed upon him, he laid his burden gently down before her with the words:

"There, Madam, is your husband, I—I saved his life."

She tried to speak but her lips moved voicelessly.

The man raised himself weakly on his elbow.

"I owe you my life," he said to Ogilvy. "That I can never repay. I owe you some money which I will repay now. I owe you more, an explanation, and—the truth. I am Victor W. Allen, escaped convict, blackmailer, fugitive from justice. That lady is not my wife, she is my sister. Disgraced by her relationship to a wretch like myself, she was at least determined that the contamination should not extend to you."

But long ere the explanation was completed, Ogilvy was by her side with his arm around her once more.

"Was that all?" he scoffed. Apparently it was, and seeing he didn't mind, no one else need trouble.

As a matter of fact, no one else knows anything about it. Victor W. Allen is abroad now; nobly retrieving his past.

The gallant Laird of Linogil and his lovely wife are as popular a couple as exist in the whole county. And it may also be suggested that those who wish their fortunes spaed cannot do better than consult Elspie, the "Witch o' Linogil."

Love, the Postman.

The Tale of a Sprained Ankle, a Girl, and a Cyclist.

"I WISH we had brought our bicycles," repeated Nora disconsolately, "and I'd take it myself in a minute."

Her twin-sister raised herself on her elbow on the sofa.

"Are you *quite* sure there is no one?" she asked.

"*Quite* sure, all the men on the place are harvesting to within an inch of their lives, even the women are in the fields. If only Martha were here, we might have harnessed the cob between us, and I'd have driven there and back in no time."

"There's the pony," said Dora eagerly, "could you put him in by yourself, do you think?"

Nora, equally a town-bred girl with her sister, looked a little scared at the suggestion.

"If he's in the stable I wouldn't mind trying," she said at last. "I've helped Martha several times, and I believe I know how the straps and things go now."

"Look, look, then," said Dora—"can you see him anywhere in the field?"

Nora went to the window.

"Yes, yes, I see him," she cried distractedly, "he's careering about like mad. I could never catch him."

"Oh, if he's in the field it's hopeless," said Dora wearily. "I've seen Robson try to get him then, and he's too artful for anything. Besides, you're strange to him, and I don't believe it would be safe. Oh, what is to be done. Here I am tied to this wretched sofa and my darling, darling Charlie who loves me so, will think I don't care if he doesn't get my letter by to-morrow. He said so."

"Well, but if you can't post it, you can't," said Nora practically—"suppose you send a telegram first thing in the morning, and I'll be up ever so early so that I can bribe one of the men to put the pony in during their breakfast time."

"Oh, I couldn't possibly send a telegram," said Dora, with a deep blush. "You have never had a proposal of marriage," she went on, with an air of consequence, "so you don't understand, but you can't accept one in that way."

"Well, leave out that part," said Nora, "and just say you would be very pleased if he accepted the English appointment. He says he'll abide by your decision, and as he has to decide to-morrow, you *must* wire. Yes, Dora, I see no other way for it, you must send a telegram to-morrow."

"I can't—I can't," wailed Dora. "Oh, if it were not for this dreadful sprained ankle, I declare I'd walk every step of the way into Milchester and back, and ask no one to post my letter."

"It's nearly nine miles there and back," said Nora, "and it's pretty late now, but I'll have a try, if you like."

A gleam of hope came into Dora's eyes and died out.

"Oh, no," she said, "I daren't let you, it's such a lonely road, and you don't know the way very well, and it might be dark before you get home, and I know you're frightened of the dark—well, not frightened exactly," she added hastily, "but you don't like it, and it's not as if it were your love-letter either. No, I can't let you even for Charlie, I should work myself into a fever before you got back."

Digitized by Google

But Nora was putting on her hat even while her sister was speaking.

"No, it's all right," she responded, in reply to Dora's expostulations. "I've got a splendid idea. I'll just stop someone riding or driving by and ask them to post a letter in Milchester for me. And mind you write important on the envelope, so that they can't forget it's of the utmost consequence."

"Nora, you're a clever darling," said her sister. "Yes, I'll do that, and be for ever grateful to you. You understand my feeling about the telegram, I'm sure, don't you?

"I couldn't do it, could I? It would make me appear so—so forward. And yet if he didn't hear at all, not knowing how we are fixed, he'd think I didn't care."

"Well, it's going to be all right now," said Nora, "I think I've settled it. Give me the letter; is it ready? Now, don't get anxious if I'm gone a long while. You see, it's no good intrusting it to the first comer. I must just sit by the roadside and wait till I see a good honest, trustworthy, intelligent face."

Nora, having possessed herself of the precious love-letter that was to mean so much to its recipient, set out on her errand with her courage screwed to the sticking-point, for although she would not confess it to her sister, the last few minutes had robbed her plan of some of its brilliancy.

She was shy by nature, and it did not now seem at all an easy task to accomplish, this waylaying of some stranger, whom she was to press into her service.

At this point of her reflections she closed the farm gates behind her, and found herself in the long, lonely, Milchester road, stretching and winding for mile on mile over flat country.

No relief offered in the landscape beyond the occasional clusters of trees which, grouped here and there in a hollow, marked the outlying farms.

Dorothea and Eleanor Conynghame were orphans, and lived with an aunt who chaperoned them, and with whom they shared their small fortune. But she had gone to pay a long promised visit to old friends, and the girls were spending a long summer holiday in a farmhouse amid surroundings that delighted them—an ideal holiday, until one day Dora sprained her ankle, which mishap had since kept her sister almost as much a prisoner as herself.

Nora, rejoicing in the soft summer air and the lazy sense that pervaded everything, sat herself down by the side of a clover field to await the person who was to be her sister's messenger.

Presently the clatter of horses' hoofs broke on her ears, and she strained herself to listen and be on the alert. They came nearer and nearer, and a dog-cart with four young men in it, bowled past.

They were laughing, talking, smoking—Nora was dismayed at the mere idea of asking a favour of them, a more favourable chance, she argued, could scarcely fail to present itself.

After a long interval a countryman pedalled by on a worn-out bicycle; from the groaning of the one and the creaking of the other Nora doubted whether either of them would get much further on their road.

At last her heart beat high with hope, for here were two girls, girls of her own age, bearing down upon her. They were almost within hailing distance, and Nora had actually risen to her feet when they suddenly wheeled about and soon became mere specks in the distance.

Next a boy came past driving a bright business cart, and Nora sprang up.

"Stop! Oh! will you stop, please?"

The boy drew up and got down.

"What is it, miss?"

"Oh, please," said Nora. "I want you to post this letter for me in Milchester."

"I bean't going that way, miss," said the boy. "I be only going as far as Ferrymere Mills."

"Where's that," said Nora, "don't you pass a post-office?"

"I dunno as I do," said the boy, "maybe I shall, maybe I shan't. It just depends on the flour."

This was altogether too vague, so Nora thanked the boy, and decided she must wait again.

After this no one passed for a long time, and Nora had begun to despair, when once again she saw a cyclist coming in her direction.

She watched him anxiously, but he was coming at a good pace, and in fear lest he might pass her before she could stop him, if she waited to convince herself of the honesty and intelligence of his features, she flung herself without further hesitation in his path, waving the letter in front of him.

"Would you please—would you please, post a letter for me," she said, in breathless haste.

The young man, whose progress was thus barred, dismounted not ungracefully, considering the circumstances of the abrupt appeal, and lifting his cap politely, inquired very courteously if he could render her a service.

In spite of his even conventional tones, there was so much veiled admiration in his eyes that Nora felt herself grow crimson.

"It is only," she stammered, with downcast lids, "we are so far from the post; if you are going to Milchester, would you please put a letter in the box for me? It is a very important one," she added, giving him the letter, and raising her eyes to him, "or I wouldn't have asked you."

Lawrence Pembroke smiled at the ingenuousness of the remark. He thought he had never seen a sweeter face or a more bewitching glance.

His way, in point of fact, did not lie through Milchester in the least, but he vowed it did, and took the letter, promising to be a trusty messenger.

Nora thanked him and, her mission accomplished, was about to turn gratefully away, but she saw that the cyclist did not attempt to remount his wheel. Instead he walked on by her side, and when she reached the farm, held the gate open until he was voluntarily compelled to let it swing to behind her.

"Enderby Mills," he read on the gate. "Surely I have heard that name before. I wish to goodness I could remember where, for then I might have a chance of finding out something about that sweet girl, not that it would help me much, I daresay, for she's sure to have a lover already; it must be a love-letter she's given me, what else? Hang the unknown fellow!

"But she looks such a child, she can scarcely be engaged. I wish I had asked her name, though I expect I should have had a fine snub for my pains, and deserved it too. Anyway, here goes, I'm going to look at the address on her precious letter, and find out what I can.

"When a fellow falls head-over-ears in love at first sight, as I've done, he can't stand at trifles, and I'll bet my bottom dollar it's to some man."

The inscription on the envelope proved to have fully justified his speculations, for it represented the name of his most intimate friend:

Charles Manners, Esq.,
19, Hewland Square,
W.

"Charlie, by all that's wonderful," exclaimed Lawrence, "then I'm done! For this must be the girl he's always talking about. Well, I understand his infatuation now. I might have recognised her from her photograph, but no, it doesn't half do her justice

Digitized by Google

"Well, of all the unlucky brutes, I'm one, for I don't believe I'll ever get that girl's face out of my head or the love of her out of my heart. Now I know where I heard the name of the place she's staying at.

"I suppose old Charlie has had that appointment offered him, and he wrote straight off to her, and this is the answer to it. I wonder if it is to be or not to be. I'm as anxious to know as Charlie can possibly be.

"I promised to be a trusty messenger. I'll take the night train to town, and post her letter there myself, and call on Charlie first thing, to know his fate—and mine!"

Early next morning Lawrence called at his friend's place. He found him at his breakfast, perusing for the twentieth time his love-letter just received, and after one look at his face Lawrence felt he scarcely needed to ask the question that trembled on his lips.

"Will she or won't she, that's what I want to know?"

"She will!" exclaimed Manners, "congratulate me!"

"I do with all my heart," said Lawrence. "I acted special messenger to you, old man," he went on, indicating the letter, and slightly stretching his adventure. "You're a lucky chap!" he added enviously.

"And the happiest in the world!" said Manners. "I'm going to start straight off there to-night. She's down at Enderby Mills, you remember I told you. I say you might come with me."

"Yes, and play gooseberry," sneered Lawrence, unable quite to control himself—"a nice *rôle!* No, thank you."

"Oh, but there's a sister," said Manners. "I've seen her too—Nora—a jolly nice girl, not up to my Dora, of course, but still pretty enough."

"Oh! I don't think I'll come," said Lawrence morbidly. "Girls aren't much in my line."

"Don't you think Dora the prettiest girl you ever saw in your life," exclaimed Manners. "But, I forgot, you've not seen her. Wait till you see her."

"I *have* seen her, man," ejaculated Lawrence impatiently. "I told you."

"Oh, you saw Nora, I expect. You've mixed them up, the names are so confusingly alike—not to me, though, of course."

"I don't know what you're driving at," growled Lawrence.

"Well, you saw one of them, that's certain," laughed Manners good-naturedly, "and it certainly couldn't have been Dora, because you see what she says—she's laid up with a sprained ankle. That's why I'm going off to her now, the darling. It was Nora, her sister, who gave you my letter."

"Then, which on earth," Lawrence stuttered in his excitement—"which on earth are you engaged to?"

"Dora," said Manners, "not the one who gave you the letter," he explained. And then in view of his friend's altered countenance, a light broke on him, and he exploded with laughter as he began to grasp the situation.

"Upon my word," he said, "if I don't believe you have fallen in love with her twin-sister. Well, she's as free as air, I believe."

"That settles it," cried Lawrence, grasping his friend's hand. "I come with you to Milchester. Start any time you like. I'm ready."

"I'll write at once," said Manners, "and say we'll be with them this time to-morrow."

"Nora," said the pretty invalid, as next morning Charlie Manners' letter fluttered in her dainty hands, "what *do* you think, you know that cyclist that you admired so?"

"I didn't," protested Nora, with crimson cheeks.

"That you said you did, any way," went on Dora remorselessly, "well, that you gave my letter to. Well, what do you think! He's a friend of Charlie's, his greatest friend, and he's bringing him with him to-day. Now, what do you think of that?"

Whatever Nora thought on the subject she refused to communicate to her sister, but it was noteworthy that she shortly found occasion to leave Dora's room and go to her own, and that when she returned Dora asked, not without a gleam of mischief, why she had put on her new muslin frock.

"For whose benefit is that?" asked the naughty prisoner to the sofa, "not for Charlie's, I hope. Come now, no poaching!"

"Dora, how can you," exclaimed Nora. "I never thought of such a thing. It's so hot and this is my coolest dress."

"And your prettiest," said Dora, "and you look very pretty in it. I foresee Mr. Pembroke will be vanquished with great slaughter!"

"Dora, I shan't stay to listen to your nonsense any longer! I shall just go away and leave you to your fate, and tied to the sofa."

Nora was as good—or as bad—as her word, for in spite of the protestations of her twin, she went downstairs and out in the garden, taking a book with her to sit on the lawn reading.

But her thoughts would wander, and when she heard the click of a gate and the scrunching of gravel underfoot, and descried two male figures standing in the porch they went further afield from its pages than ever.

She reproached herself for not having stayed in the house, and taken Mr. Manners up at once to see her sister. Well, it was too late now, for somehow an unaccountable shyness had possessed her, and she felt that not even for Dora's sake could she enter the drawing-room and make formal acquaintance with Mr. Manners' friend.

But Lawrence Pembroke was a young man who did not usually let the grass grow under his feet.

Mrs. Clay, the farmer's wife, had already carried off his friend to his sweetheart, and his own impatience would not allow him to remain in the pretty flower-scented drawing-room, so he boldly stepped out through the open French windows and went to reconnoitre. Fortune was indeed more than kind for the object of his admiration and his search sat before him in full view.

There was no escape possible for her now, even if she had wished it.

Mr. Manners' friend stood before her, introducing himself.

"Do you remember," he said eagerly, "two days ago you asked me a favour. To-day I am going to beg one of you. Will you grant it as readily as I granted yours, I wonder? That would be only fair!"

"But, but," she stammered confusedly, hardly knowing what she said, "I didn't ask you for myself."

"You darling!" he said delightedly, taking up her words. "No, that's just what *I* am going to ask *you* for."

"And if at that moment Nora's answer was not all that an ardent lover might desire, at any rate Fortune usually favours the bold, and events proved that Lawrence Pembroke certainly lost nothing by his impetuous wooing.

Ellice Beere.

"Mary, has anyone called while I was out?" "Yes, ma'am; Mr. Biggs was here." "Mr. Biggs? I don't recall the name." "No, ma'am; he called to see me, ma'am."

Papa: "Yes, my son, you will realise some time, when you are old, that your schooldays have been your happiest ones." Tommy: "Oh, papa, why can't I wait, then, until I grow up, before I go to school, so that I can appreciate it?"

The following Tartans have already appeared on the covers of "Short Stories":

No. 1.—MENZIES	*Issue dated*	*August 2nd, 1902.*
No. 2.—MACPHERSON ...	,, ,,	*August 16th, 1902.*
No. 3.—MACLEOD	,, ,,	*September 13th, 1902.*
No. 4.—ROB ROY	,, ,,	*October 4th, 1902.*
No. 5.—MACMILLAN ...	,, ,,	*October 25th, 1902.*
No. 6.—MACDONALD of SLEAT	,, ,,	*November 29th, 1902.*
No. 7.—ERSKINE	,, ,,	*January 3rd, 1903.*
No. 8.—CLERGY	,, ,,	*February 7th, 1903.*

Digitized by Google

HIS CLEVER RUSE.

Telling of the Discovery of a Hidden Love.

"No, Tom, it is useless. It is not that I do not love you, but marriage at this time would be an obstacle which would prove insurmountable to the working out of my plans and my ambitions. I am so confident of my talents that I know I will succeed on the stage if only given a fair chance."

Tom Lawson was wise enough not to argue the matter further this time. He had watched Cora Barton struggle with other illusions, and knew that time acted as a safe and sure curative.

He would wait for the operation of the same medicine to purge from the girl's mind the complacent belief in her own histrionic ability.

That Cora Barton did possess a talent for theatrical work was a fact not to be denied. She also possessed the temperament, and what was much in her favour, a stage presence that made managers look up and wonder "if something might not be made of that girl."

Her mother and father died when she was quite a young girl, leaving her a competence, and making the girl more or less independent in spirit. The guardianship of a maiden aunt did little or nothing to curb her artistic longings.

At the age of twenty-three, with a seminary education, improved by a few years of travel at home and abroad, she determined to seek a stage career.

Tom Lawson had known her for many years, and so devoted was he in his affection that he had followed her from one end of the continent to another.

Enlisting the services of a friend who was only too happy to show his little importance by securing her an introduction to one of the big theatrical managers in London, Cora Barton had been given a hearing.

The manager was favourably impressed, and in putting on the second play of the season she was advanced several steps on the ladder.

The girl's enthusiasm painted pictures in her mind of the audiences rising from their chairs and demanding her to bow and bow as the curtain would be raised and dropped at the end of each act in plays written specially for herself by the master playwrights of the day. It was at this time that Tom Lawson renewed his suit.

He had been so constant in his attentions that the girl had ceased to consider them as such.

Although he was strongly opposed to the career she had set for herself, he advised her from time to time, and his counsel had been followed with appreciable advancement in the stage work of the young actress.

There was no doubt that the girl would make a complete success on the boards, and this was a source of new discomfort for the man who loved her.

It was always a pleasure for him to see her from one of the orchestra stalls, but upon leaving the theatre he was more ill at ease than when at home reading or wondering what the end of things would be.

Then came the third and decided success. The critics had ceased talking of the girl as formerly a member of Society, and were contented to judge her work on its merit.

Tom Lawson stopped his idling and hovering about the flame of Cora Barton's stage splendour. He went to his clubs oftener, dined out with friends and entered generally into the social pleasures of a very merry winter. His visits to Cora at her home, and in her dressing-room became less frequent.

One night there was a theatre party, and Tom was one of it. The seats were well in front, and very soon after her first entrance, Cora Barton caught sight of her faithful old friend with what seemed a very happy and very pretty girl.

That night the actress repeatedly changed her position on the stage to get a better view of the girl who was seated next to Tom Barton. When she was driving home from the theatre her mind was troubled. She admitted to herself that she did not like things as they were.

The play was an unqualified success, securing for the star an abundance of well-merited praise from critics and public alike. It was such a piece of dramatic art that the theatre lover might find even the second and third performances more to his liking than the first.

This may have been the reason why Tom Lawson and the fair young lady whom he escorted on the evening of the theatre party saw several performances of the play during the first part of its run. They always occupied seats well in front or in the left proscenium box.

The social columns of the newspapers said a great deal of Tom Lawson that winter, and one Society reporter went so far as to hint at his engagement with a girl "fairer than all the fair." Cora Barton read it, and her sweet disposition suddenly changed.

At the performance that night she stuttered over her lines, and the manager said some unpleasant things to her before she retired to the dressing-room after the last curtain.

Other papers made the same insinuations about Lawson, and instead of reading the theatrical news with her morning coffee, Cora Barton found herself running through the Society columns with the eagerness of a débutante.

The girl changed inwardly and outwardly. This was apparent to her companions of the stage, and the manager grew greatly displeased with her work. One day he sent for her and told her that unless more snap was put into her part he would be required to fill it with some one else.

"Why, Miss Barton," he said, "you nearly ruined that scene in the third act last night, and Miss Galter told me that if it were repeated she would not go on with you again. I am sorry, but you see for my own protection I have been forced to put another at work studying your part in case of emergency."

As a climax to her nervous discontent and uneasiness of mind, Tom Lawson, with the same beautiful girl, appeared in their customary places in the left proscenium box on the night following.

To aggravate Cora Barton's disquietude they arrived in the midst of one of her finest declamatory efforts.

The girl finished bravely enough, but she knew in her own heart that when the one scene in which she was supposed to show her talent would come, that this night she would make a signal failure.

It was not exactly a signal failure. The leading lady fumed and said:

"What wishy-washy work that is. Either you or I go, Miss Barton, and"—with a fine sarcasm—"I don't think it will be I."

The manager said:

"Really, Miss Barton, I dislike this very much. From to-night on your part will be filled by another. I may have something for you later in the season, or, if you care to go out on the road, I will place you."

"I might as well give it up at once," Cora Barton said to her aunt the next morning. "Oh, if I could only see Tom. I know his advice would be just the right thing, and he would comfort me in this misery. I wish I were far, far away!"

There was no need to send for Tom Lawson. He knew already what had happened, and when he called upon Cora Barton that afternoon there was an air of assurance about him that portended a victory of some sort.

One hour after he was ushered into the living room of the pretty little flat all was settled, and a honeymoon planned for early in the Spring of the next year. **Louis Honig.**

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.

Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

The Duke of Midlandshire.

It was a merry party that Lady Filby brought together for a week or ten days at Grindewald that Christmas. We were having a short vacation lasting until New Year's Eve, so Yorke Donovan was one of us, and Prince Kia was there, and a German Count.

We had a separate suite of rooms at the hotel, and all the men had plenty of money, which, of course, made it jollier for us.

I suppose Prince Kia was looked upon as my particular admirer, but, as a matter of fact, the German Count ran him very close, and Yorke Donovan was too attentive for my peace of mind.

The two first did not worry me in the least, they were both such thorough rogues of a certain class, that I did not care whether they languished with imaginary heartache or not. But Yorke Donovan was a good fellow, not yet spoilt by success.

Lady Filby had set her heart on him for the time being, and I did not want to have any unpleasantness with her. So I shunned him so far as I could, and amused myself with the two foreigners, only hoping I should not get them involved in a duel, or anything of that kind.

The first day we were there we spent all our time on the ice, but the second we boldly ventured forth on a tobogoning excursion. The Prince and Count both tried to persuade me to start down the slide with them, but I insisted that they should go alone first to get their hands in a little.

About twenty yards down the slide there is a sharp curve round the top of a bank, and, if you are not very careful, you shoot over this bank on to your head in the snow. Well, the Prince started first, and of course, when he reached the curve, his tobogan became unmanageable, and over he went, head first down the bank.

Almost at the same moment the Count pushed off after him, and, to my intense amusement, shot off at exactly the same spot, and landed head first on the top of the Prince. For some minutes Yorke Donovan and I laughed so much that we could not speak, and then we became aware that the two men were almost at each other's throats.

"For Heaven's sake don't let them fight!" I exclaimed, and watched anxiously.

"They will, though!" said Yorke, as the voices grew angrier, and the gestures more menacing.

"Oh, it will be horrible!" cried little Lady Filby, "and spoil all the week. Do stop them, Mr. Donovan!"

"I'm afraid I should only make matters worse," he said anxiously, glancing at me as if for advice.

A sudden idea leapt to my mind, and instantly I pulled up my tobogan, squatted down anyhow, and started off along the track. As a matter of fact I think I could have rounded the curve easily, but the quarrel had to be stopped somehow, so I headed for the bank as if I could not help myself, and, with a laughing cry, shot over and toppled in the snow at their feet.

A girl watching at the top told me afterwards that Yorke Donovan exclaimed "Bravo!" and started running forward leaving Lady Filby alone, looking as black as thunder. I fancied it was from that moment she began to dislike me. But I gained my end, for the two enemies were so concerned about me they forgot their quarrel, and we presently returned quite amicably to the top.

"How could you?" were Lady Filby's first words, in a tone of disgust. "My dear, I never saw anything more unladylike!"

"Then I hope you never will!" I replied quietly, and prepared for another descent. This time I rounded the curve and shot to the bottom, including the "devil's leap" without any disaster, and with intense enjoyment.

At the bottom of the slide I found a young man, sitting on his tobogan, awkwardly endeavouring to tie his handkerchief round his right hand. He was an Englishman of aristocratic though somewhat effeminate appearance, and he was clearly in difficulties.

I watched him covertly for a moment, then volunteered my help. He thanked me, and at once held out his hand, which

Digitized by Google

he had cut somehow with his tobogan in a spill, and all the time I was tying it, he sat gazing into my face.

"If I am not much mistaken," he said, "I have the honour of being attended by Miss Maud Cardew?"

"You have," I said curiously, "if it can be called such, though I wonder that you should recognise me out here."

"I ought to," he answered, "seeing I have ten photographs of you, and have seen you in the same piece fifteen times."

"You must have been rather hard up for something to do," I said, feeling myself colour, and trying to laugh it aside lightly, and, just then, to my relief, Yorke Donovan shot safely over the drop, and landed at our feet.

I turned to him at once, exclaiming, "Isn't it delightful?" and added, in reply to his questioning glance, "I have just been helping this gentleman tie up his hand as he had hurt it. Come, are you going to be magnanimous, and pull my tobogan back?"

He took the string at once, and, with a casual farewell nod to my unknown admirer, we started the steep, upward ascent together.

That evening there was a big dance at the hotel in which we took part, and I quickly discovered my morning's patient among the gay throng of people. He was watching me, and, when our eyes met, made a step as if to come forward, but I felt I had quite as many followers on my hands as I could manage, and turned sharply away to chat to the Prince.

The whole evening he watched me, though I persisted in taking no notice, and the Count wanted to call him out for it. Feeling as if I had come away with a cargo of bombshells, I implored him to do nothing of the kind, and was considerably relieved when at last we all met in our own sitting-room for cigarettes and coffee before retiring.

But again Fate seemed determined to pursue me with adventures, and, while cutting a difficult figure in a quiet little spot on the ice next morning, a man floundered clumsily into me, and knocked me flat on my back, just as my unknown admirer chanced to skate in my direction.

Of course he rushed forward and commenced to pick me up in the most solicitous fashion. I was really quite stunned for the moment, and glad to be led to the nearest seat.

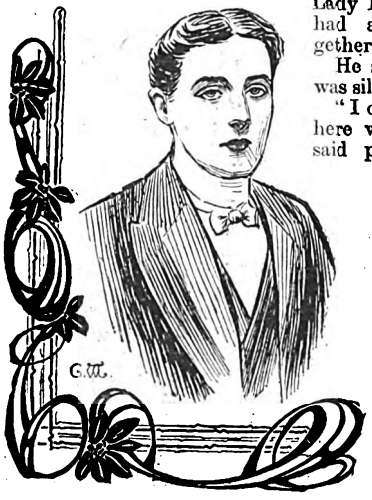
I quickly recovered myself, however, and could not help smiling at the dire imprecations he muttered on the unfortunate individual who had knocked me down. When he saw that I was quite all right, he at once hastened to grasp his opportunity, and I knew that I was caught.

"Why wouldn't you let me be introduced to you last night?" he said. "Or at any rate come and ask for a dance?"

"Because I hadn't one to spare," I replied coolly.

"You mean you didn't want to have one?"

"No, I don't," I told him frankly. "But I am here with Lady Filby's party, and we had agreed to keep together."



He seemed surprised, and was silent a moment.

"I did not know you were here with Lady Filby," he said presently, and something in his speech made me colour. "I concluded you had met here by chance."

"I do not see what difference it makes either way," I answered stiffly. "I think I can skate quite well now," and attempted to rise. I did so very unsteadily, however, and was glad to sit down again.

"I am here to meet Lady Fitzclarence's party," he continued after fussing round me a little. "They arrive to-morrow, are you staying long?"

"No, only a week," I told him. Then I could not refrain from adding mischievously—"That is if none of my bombshells explode unexpectedly, and we have to go before."

He laughed in a boyish fashion that reminded me of Bobbie, and that was decidedly refreshing after my foreign companions, but I wished he had not quite such an effeminate air about him.

He was altogether too pretty, with light, curly hair, carefully parted down the middle, American fashion, blue eyes, and a pink and white complexion. Also he wore an eye-glass and a diamond ring, and I strongly object to both.

At the same time he was emphatically a man who knew his world, and, before we parted, he succeeded in making me promise him three dances that evening.

I remember my two foreigners, or my "menagerie," as he would persist in calling them, looked very black when he came and claimed me, and, as we glided away, he remarked laughingly, "I hope that black chap doesn't carry a knife about with him."

"So do I," I laughed, "for I think I should stand as fair a chance as anyone to make a sheath for it if he did."

"Why don't you palm him off on Miss Delaware?" mentioning another girl in our party; "and tell the German it is a pity his countrymen can't fight or make a living at home; and you would get rid of the two?"

"And what if I don't want to be rid of them?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders and remarked with a sneer: "Oh, of course, there is no accounting for tastes."

"No, and a change from one's own countrymen is a positive relief sometimes," I answered sweetly.

He was very sulky after that for a time, and I was pleased, for he was altogether too well satisfied with himself.

By the time our last dance came round, however, he had quite recovered, and was all the nicer for his snub. He got his own back a little though by remarking once: "It must be very nice to be so secure in one's own beauty and charm as to feel able to snub at will."

"Oh, very!" I said, and laughed with real enjoyment.

It was not until Lady Fitzclarence's arrival the next day that I discovered who he was, and then he was named among her party as the young Duke of Midlandshire. Yorke Donovan told me, and I was a good deal taken by surprise.

"Do you think it is correct?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he told me; "I remember him coming into the dukedom about three years ago. He went abroad big game shooting or something soon afterwards, and it was said it was to get away from various energetic mothers of beauties."

Afterwards I stood on a verandah, gazing at the towering slopes of the Wetterhorn, and thinking about Yorke's information, for it had made me feel thoughtful.

"Here," I said to myself; "is your second chance. Here is your peer."

A few moments later the young Duke himself came and leant his arms on the rail beside me.

"Well," he remarked; "are you looking for chamois?"

"No," I answered, after a moment; "I am contemplating what appears to be the unattainable."

"That's a thing I have never done," he said. "But if I could discover something unattainable, that I genuinely wanted, I should be thankful, and I should move Heaven and earth to get it. As it is, I have found it always a question of wishing and having."

"Because you are a Duke, I suppose?" I said quietly.

"Oh, so you've found that out, have you?" he asked, with a scarcely perceptible sneer.

"I was told of the fact an hour ago," I replied; "I should certainly never have taken the trouble to find it out."

"By Jove, you can hit hard!" he muttered, with an air of relish, and surveyed me with a new interest in his eyes; "I suppose dukes, and princes, and counts are mere dust and ashes to successful actresses?"

"Not at all," I answered; "they are indispensable to a certain extent in establishing her success."

Digitized by Google

"Do you know," he said; "I think you are too sharp. Beautiful women do not need brains, they are only to be looked at. The combination gives a distinctly unfair advantage. Now, if you had only the average brains, I could easily make you my toy—buy you with my position, you know—but, as it is, you are a deal more likely to make me the toy."

"Only as I am not in the slightest need of a plaything," I retorted; "the unfair advantage, as you call it, need not trouble you in the least."

"Ah, I see your menagerie still suffices," he retaliated; "have you taught them any new tobogganing tricks lately?"

For a moment I felt annoyed, then I laughed.

"I think you have made things even," I said; "now I am going to look for Lady Filby."

That evening the Duke introduced me to Lady Fitzclarence, who received me with a good deal of gush. I did not care for her at all, but at the same time, found her amusing. Also she took a fancy to the German count, for which I was most grateful, but I think she was really there on the Duke's account. She had a husband somewhere, but she did not seem in the least clear as to his whereabouts, nor at all interested in them.

"I suppose as you are here with Lady Filby you are very gay," she said to me with a meaning laugh, and I felt myself grow very hot and angry without knowing why.

"It seems to be your handsome hero of the drama this time," she ran on; "I declare Betty Filby does like variety. It was an Italian singing-master last time. Why that fool of a husband of hers did not show her up, I don't know; but I daresay he felt so long as he could get quit of her nothing else mattered."

I got up suddenly, feeling as if I had received a blow, and crossed the room to a cool balcony. There Yorke Donovan joined me presently, looking worried and anxious.

"Ah," he said, in a relieved tone; "I wanted to see you."

Then he sat down and folded his arms, staring somewhat gloomily at the mountains.

I was glad to see him, and waited. I had a feeling that somehow he was like a rock among shifting sands compared with the rest of our companions.

"In some way you have made an enemy of Lady Filby," he said presently; "I think if she could, she would do you an injury."

"Do me an injury?" I exclaimed; "but why?—I have never harmed her and she is so friendly."

"I don't know," he said warily; "but I don't think she is quite what she seems."

I was silent, and he added:

"I only want to warn you to be on your guard. I may be mistaken, but it it is best you should be prepared."

I thanked him, and tried to laugh lightly, but my heart was beginning to sink a little.

That night we all met together in Lady Fitzclarence's sitting-room for a chat, and I must admit the conversation was not eddifying. Tales were told which will not bear repetition, and again and again I was on the point of leaving the room in disgust. I certainly should have done, had I not been a guest, and momentarily expecting the party to break up. When we finally left, the Duke strolled out with us, and persisted in lighting and carrying my candle. My room was at the end of a long passage, and before we came to the door, I stopped and held out my hand.

"There is no violent hurry, is there?" he asked, looking hard at me.

"I am very tired," I said shortly.

"Then I am sure you will drop the candle if I give it to you. If you have a headache, let me come in and bathe it for you."

"No, no," I exclaimed; "give me my candle at once!"

He gave a low laugh that sent the blood rushing to my face.

"I believe you are afraid of me," he said; "and I am surprised you are in such a hurry to send me away. Lady Filby's friends are not usually so particular. I rather expected an invitation to stay a little."

"How dare you!" I gasped, in a white heat of passion; "I have never been so insulted in my life!" And, pushing into my room, I slammed the door to and locked it, leaving him outside still holding the candle.

Then I went to the window and leant out, full of a sudden longing to feel the keen mountain air bathing my face. I felt as if I wanted purifying—as if I had become a loathsome creature because of my associates.

To me a nauseous atmosphere seemed to hang about the inside of the hotel, a hot, sickening, pestilential air of passion and degradation.

I felt as if I would like to go bare-foot up the mountain, and wash myself clean away from all humans, in the pure, eternal snows, nearest the quiet stars.

Instead, I went to bed in the dark, unable to face even my own reflection, and cried myself to sleep, wishing with all my heart I had listened to Di.

But there was worse to come, and I was to learn a good deal before I was safely in my own cosy flat again.

(Next Tuesday I will tell you why I returned from Switzerland.)

Digitized by Google

Just Pals.

How an Illness Brought on a Love Affair.

He smiled at her across the table and she flashed a look of saucy defiance back, and said:

"So you think it has been a great success?"

"Why of course it has—don't you think so?" he answered, with an intonation of surprise.

She lowered her eyelids until he could only see a fringe of dark lashes along the pallor of her cheek, and said slowly:

"Yes, I think it has—for once pure platonics have been tried and found possible."

"You were always the doubter," he said triumphantly, "so you admit that you were wrong."

"I admit that in *our* case it has worked all right, but I still think that as a general rule it is a very dangerous experiment."

"Well, you see I was quite right, and it is just a year to-day sinced we formed our contract—and I for one, hope that this time five years will see it still in existence."

She thoughtfully drew patterns on the tablecloth with a fork, and still kept her eyes down.

"Five years is a long time," she said. "Did it never occur to you that this may get monotonous, or one or other of us might want to marry, and then our respective husband or wife might object?"

"Yes, but *I* don't want to marry, don't intend to marry, don't believe in it, as you know perfectly well, and you have always said that you quite agreed with me."

"Well, it is the natural fate of all mankind and womankind too, and I do not see any reason why you should escape it."

"But what is the use of spoiling the present by vague imaginings of what *may* happen and probably never will."

She made no reply, and he looked at her downbent head wondering—as he so often did—whether all women were alike, and why they could never rest content with things as they were without puzzling and worrying over some mythical future into which it was impossible to see.

Personally, he was perfectly content with the present and could not understand why she was not equally so.

Few men probably would have been surprised that he was—for over a year the girl sitting opposite him had been his constant companion—and few weeks passed without seeing them together, either dining, lunching or spending long hours in Clarice Davenant's little drawing-room, discussing various subjects of vital interest to themselves, although of very little moment to the outside world.

Although only twenty-eight, Miss Davenant was entirely alone in the world, and in spite of Mrs. Grundy, she elected to live a perfectly independent life, without the assistance of the usual chaperon.

Naturally unconventional her life had tended to make her more so, and her contract, made a year ago with Denis Miller, to be "just pals" and no more and no less, as if they were men, instead of a good-looking bachelor of thirty-five and an extremely pretty woman, had been carried out as thoroughly as she did everything she entered into.

At first their somewhat erratic actions had caused much gossip and speculation among their mutual acquaintances, but as time wore on, people were content to let them alone, finding that they seemed to be quite oblivious to outside opinion, and they had adhered rigidly to the terms of their contract. Their dinner to-night was held to celebrate its first anniversary.

Clarice looked sweet enough to have tempted any man to lapse into love-making, however platonic his intentions, as she leant back in her chair, a little smile curving her perfect lips.

Denis Miller, as he looked at her, wondered for a moment why she was still without the golden circlet of matrimony round her slim fingers. He knew that more than one man had tried to tempt her to forsake her independent life for that of "double harness," but without success.

"Well," he said, breaking the silence that had fallen between them, "what are you thinking of—still worrying over the future?"

She laughed and roused herself from her reverie.

"Nothing at all," she said, "I was just dreaming in an aimless kind of way. At any rate, whatever comes afterwards, the present is very charming and you are certainly the most satisfactory of friends."

"And you are the most ideal pal that any man could desire."

"That being so, I think we had better adjourn our Mutual Admiration Society or we shall be late. I only hope you will continue in the same mind."

"Of course I shall—why shouldn't I?" he demanded.

"Oh, no reason at all, except——oh, nothing, let us go," she said hurriedly, rising as she spoke.

He sprang up and came round to help her with her cloak. When he could no longer see her face, Miss Davenant's smile became more decided, in fact in anyone less pretty it might almost have been termed a "grin," and a keen observer would have guessed that *she* perhaps did not believe quite so implicitly as her companion in the purely platonic theory, in spite of the fact that she pretended to do so.

* * * * * *

A few weeks later Miss Davenant was entertaining a visitor at her flat—it was a depressing November afternoon, and outside in the street the rain fell with that persistent, depressing drizzle which is characteristic of London—not a good, thorough downpour, but a steady drip, drip, drip, which makes everything sloppy, takes hair out of curl, and straightens feathers, and otherwise afflicts the temper of the feminine mind, and, curiously enough, of the masculine too, although they are exempt from the burden of curls and feathers.

But comfort, warmth and light reigned supreme in the little drawing-room, and the good-looking, long-limbed youth who stretched himself lazily in a long chair, while his pretty hostess busied herself with the tea-table, looked the personification of contentment.

It was a curious fact that when in the presence of Clarice the majority of men wore a satisfied and generally-pleased-with themselves-and-everyone air.

She possessed that subtle power which some women seem to be born with and others can never acquire, of making a man feel satisfied with himself—a feeling of being appreciated and understood which acts as a balm to the male mind.

Their conversation flagged a little, and Clements said abruptly:

"Hard luck on Miller getting laid up just now, isn't it?"

"Laid up," she said, with a start. "Is he ill? I have not heard anything of him for three or four days and was wondering what had become of him. What is the matter?"

"I thought you have would been sure to know," answered Clements. "I suppose he was not well enough to write. He got a bad cold, and, instead of taking care of himself, went and

Digitized by Google

got wet and is in bed with—well, I don't know if it's pneumonia, but he will have it if he is not very careful.

"He won't have a nurse and he only has a man there, who is an awful ass, as they all are, and no use to keep him in order. I went in to see him, and he was banging about all over the shop and flinging the clothes off, and he was in such a beastly bad temper that I came away. I will look him up again to-morrow. By Jove, I must be off, it is late."

Clarice shook hands with her versatile visitor in a kind of dream, and was conscious of a feeling of intense relief when the door finally closed on him. For some time she stood and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"Denis was ill—he would have pneumonia if he did not take care. Supposing he were to get worse, why he might even die—people die of pneumonia very often——"

With an air of determination she walked across the room, and, going to her bedroom, she proceeded quickly and decisively to change her tea-gown for a plain black dress; then from some hiding-place she took out—two large nurse's aprons.

She looked at them with a little smile; relics of some nursing classes she had once attended, she had not thought then to what practical use they might some day be put.

She folded them carefully and put them into a handbag, then she paused and said aloud:

"Supposing he does not like it—if he should be angry with me—what shall I do?"

She hesitated for a few moments and then said decidedly:

"Well, if he is I can't help it. I could not leave him alone when he is ill to run such risks, it would not be acting as a friend if I did."

She put her hat and coat on, and picking up the bag, she returned to the drawing-room. She rang the bell, and when her maid appeared, said:

"Emily, I am going out to see a friend who is ill. I may not be back till late so I shall not want dinner. You need not sit up for me if I am not in by ten."

The maid withdrew, and Clarice moved towards the door. On a table stood a photograph of Denis in a silver frame. She stopped and picked it up, and looked at it steadfastly for a long time. Then with a half-shamed air she kissed it hastily, and went out.

* * * * *

"If you please, sir, there is a lady here."

"Lady, I can't see ladies now. What the dickens do you mean by coming to me with such messages, you——"

The awe-struck countenance of the faithful James was abruptly withdrawn, and was replaced by a vision—outwardly perfectly self-possessed, inwardly the very reverse.

"Clarice!"

"Yes, Clarice. I heard such an account of you from Mr. Clements that I decided there was nothing for it but to come and see for myself what was the matter, in fact, it was my duty—as a pal."

"What did that ass Clements say? I did not mean you to know that I was ill. I shall be all right in a day or two."

"He said that you had caught a very bad cold, and that you had no one here to look after you, and might get pneumonia if you were not taken care of; so I thought about it, and—and I could not rest without coming to see how you were—you are not angry, Denis?"

Her voice shook a little and she turned away, pretending to arrange some medicine bottles.

Perhaps he was weak and more depressed than he had cared to admit, but there was something suspiciously like tears in his eyes, and his mouth quivered under his moustache in a way that it was probably as well that she did not see. He caught her hand and carried it impetuously to his lips as he said in a low voice:

"You are an angel."

A fortnight later Denis Miller—now convalescent—sat in a big arm-chair before a blazing fire and watched the clock and the door alternately.

"Half-past four. She said she would be here by four—what is the matter, I wonder? Hang this pipe, the beastly thing has gone out again." He threw it down fretfully, and at that moment the door opened and Clarice came in.

"At last," he said, "I thought you were never coming. You said four, and it is half-past four now," in an aggrieved voice.

"I am so sorry, I could not help it. Mrs. Carlton came to see me and I could not get away."

"Mrs. Carlton—meddling old busybody, what did she want?"

"Oh, she came to give me some advice that was all—she has very good intentions and means to be kind."

"Her kindness seems to have had a depressing effect," Denis said. "You have been crying."

She turned her face away and began rather aimlessly to poke the fire.

"You need not poke the fire out," he continued. "What did Mrs. Carlton say, something about me, I suppose?"

"Well, she said—oh, that of course it was very kind of me to come and look after you when you were ill, and that of course *she* understood that we were very great friends, but that I was not a hospital nurse, and that I was young, and—and——"

"Very pretty," he put in. "Well, go on."

She blushed and continued:

"And that people would talk—and that they think it has gone a little too far, and that some people may even refuse to know me any more."

Denis got up and stood with his back to the fire.

"Old beast," he said, I expected something of this sort. Only a narrow-minded old gossip like that would say such things, none of your real friends would think of it."

"But still, Denis, you see you are nearly well now and do not want me so much, and I think perhaps I had better not come any more."

"Yes, I do, I want you more. What am I to do shut up here all alone?"

"You won't be alone, lots of people come to see you, and you will soon be well enough to go out again, and then we can meet as we used to. You see, while you were so ill it was different. You don't really want me now."

"Don't I," he said slowly. "Don't I? I am not so sure about that."

"Well, I don't see anything else for it but for you to get well as quickly as possible. One must consider public opinion a little, you know, and we do not consider it much."

He looked down at her dark head with its rippling hair.

"I do, I see one way that I can see a great deal more of you, every day and always."

She looked up at him with a startled expression.

"What do you mean, Denis?"

"I mean we might get married. Clarice, you have tried me as a friend for a year, don't you think you might try me as a husband now?"

"But you don't want to get married, you only want to be pals."

"Well, can't we be pals just the same and more than ever?"

Then, changing his tone, he said earnestly:

"Clarice, look at me—tell me, couldn't you care for me a little that way—is it too platonic for you ever to think of me in the light of a lover?"

She raised her eyes and looked at him, and they told him all he wanted to know. He held out his arms; she rose and putting her hands on his shoulders said softly:

"It has always been that way with me, Denis—only I thought you never would feel the same."

He put his arm round her and drew her head down on to his shoulder.

"I think it has always been that way with me, too, only I was such an ass I never knew it, and I thought we were only just pals, and we shall be pals always, sha'n't we?"

"Yes, always, only more so than ever," and she put her arms round his neck and sealed their contract with a kiss.

And it lasted more than five years after all.

Beatrice M. Studdy.

Digitized by Google

The Stolen Coins.

Telling of How a Magpie Nearly Broke two Hearts.

Lucy Brand busied herself in her spacious kitchen while John Norton gazed at her with the same intent, yearning look, which had come into his honest brown eyes every time he paid a visit to the "Thorn."

With his back to the fire, which served to render the bright, but chilly Spring day more pleasant, and his right hand passing over his beard in a manner which indicated deep reflection, John Norton's thoughts drifted to the farm half-a-mile away.

His eyes were fixed on Lucy, and his thoughts were fully occupied with her and her good qualities, but he did not see her in this kitchen, it was in the same room of the farmhouse where his imagination transported her, and a sigh escaped him.

"What is the matter, John?" asked Lucy, scarcely pausing in her work, but just turning to glance at him.

Very prim and staid was Lucy Brand; the kind of woman who takes life seriously, who sees a duty to perform, and does it without counting the cost to herself. She was approaching thirty-five, and she had not married because she conceived it to be her duty to remain with her mother and give her whole attention to that good lady.

She was the youngest, and, as often happens, the elders had married and gone away, leaving her to see after mother and sacrifice herself on the altar of filial affection.

When the end came and the mother was laid to rest, the elders thought that Lucy had played her cards well, because the goodwill and the stock of the combined inn and general shop had been willed entirely to her.

Lucy had set her teeth hard when the unkind hints reached her ears, and she had quietly informed the abashed brothers and sisters that she would give them the share to which they considered themselves entitled. She worked up the business, made it profitable, and gradually paid off each one, beginning with the eldest.

The years of devotion to her mother, and the time required to pay off unjust debts, had forced her to remain single, although she had received several good offers.

Of all the four or five young men who had looked with loving eyes at Lucy Brand, only one had remained steadfast through these years, and he was the man to whom she now turned with the inquiry, "What is the matter, John?"

"Eh, what?" asked John in reply, flushing somewhat guiltily. Then he answered more steadily, "I was thinking that the old place up there was very pleasant, these Spring days, but I am sorry that I can't have the place done up this year, Lucy! I haven't so much in hand as I expected to have, so I suppose it'll have to wait till next Spring. It's a nice place, but it's a bit lonely for one."

"The 'Thorn' is a nice place, too, John! It's the place where the old mother lived so many a year, and so ——"

"But surely you'll be thinking of selling the 'Thorn,' or letting it," he added the last clause hurriedly as she turned again to him with a vexed expression, "and be preparing to—to go somewhere else, Lucy!"

"Perhaps!" she responded doubtfully.

"Ah!" sighed John Norton.

He had waited patiently enough for Lucy, yet he had never actually asked her to be his wife. He understood the exact position of affairs, and he remained faithful to her, waiting till the time should come when she would consider herself free to take the step for which he so ardently wished in his easy-going style.

John Norton's wooing had been a silent one; by tacit agreement on their part, and by tacit agreement on the part of the neighbours, they were lovers, and destined to become man and wife some day.

"It's a bit lonely up there," John went on in his deep-toned voice, and the pathetic ring in it moved Lucy Brand this time. "There's no one to welcome me at the fireside when I come in from the fields, nobody but the girl, and she's no pleasant body to talk to.

"I'm thinking sometimes that it would be a grand thing to—to have a wife there. A true wife, who would watch for ye when ye came home, tired, and p'raps just a bit discouraged because things hadn't gone well on the farm, then, it would be a real pleasure to tell her the other side—when things had done well, and I'd got a good price for the corn, or some of the stock.

"And sometimes, no doubt, she would feel a little low-spirited about this or that, and I would cheer her and tell her how people can get through troubles all the easier when they're shared, although joys don't lessen when you have a partner, that's the advantage of joys over sorrows, you see, Lucy. Yes, it's a bit lonely!"

Lucy Brand stopped in the process of tidying the kitchen, and approached her faithful and patient lover; the debts were paid, and she was making money out of the "Thorn," but she was delaying the acceptance of that offer of marriage that was represented by the stalwart figure of John Norton. Why?

The old ties of the "Thorn" had held her, she had been reluctant to give it up, and she had thought of amassing a round sum in gold pieces before going to John. He had had a long pull to get his farm straight, and the mortgage with which the place had been encumbered by a thriftless and indolent father was still hanging heavily over John's head.

It would be nice to take a dowry to John, but was she acting fairly in thus keeping him waiting, and so depriving both of the happiness that was within their reach? By a strange exception, she was seized with an impulse, and she looked John straight in the eyes as she said—

Digitized by Google

"The loneliness will be past soon, John, and you will have someone to welcome you, and cheer you, and share your pleasures!"

"Lucy!" cried John. His hands trembled with a great happiness as he placed them on her shoulders and endeavoured to draw her nearer to him. "Lucy, when will you come?"

She was a good half-head shorter than he; she was gazing up at him, and his eyes were full of ardent love. Then the effect of the impulse wore off; she felt that she had been too hasty, and she drew back.

"I did not say that *I* would be the one who would welcome you home, John!" she cried in some confusion. "Perhaps——"

"You are the only woman for me, Lucy!" he cried sternly. "The only woman in the wide world who can make it less lonely on the farm, and you know it! I am waiting for *you*, and I will wait to the end if it is to be!"

She heard his footsteps as he went through the corridor, and out of the house, and she resumed her tidying-up with a heart racked by conflicting emotions; she was rather ashamed of her treatment of John Norton, yet she thought that she was doing right in the interests of both.

"I will go to him soon," she said, trying to silence the still, small voice within. "Then I can make it all up to him!"

John Norton came again on market-day, and she was relieved that his manner showed no signs of reproach. He was full of news.

"There's a circus or some sort of show in the village, in one of Grant's fields," he told her, "and I thought you would like to go, so I've taken tickets for a seat so as we shan't have to push with the others. I thought you would be pleased to go, and I know you don't like crowding!"

Lucy did not favour such variety entertainments to any extent, but as John had gone so far as to purchase a ticket for a seat in the front row for her, she would have gone to the circus but for the fact that she had already promised to let her two maids go while she remained at home to watch over the interests of the "Thorn." This fact caused her to shake her head slowly.

"Oh, it will make a change for you!" cried John, disappointed. "There are wonderful performing animals and birds, and all sorts of things. I've heard that they've got a magpie that will pick out a sovereign from a shilling, or even from a piece of brass gold-plated, and——"

John was proceeding to repeat the lines he had seen in the advertisement, but Lucy Brand cut him short gently, for she appreciated his desire to please her.

"I can't go, John," she said, "for I've promised to let the maids go. Then I must attend to my accounts, and I've quite a lot to do. You had better go, and perhaps you can sell the other ticket, so that the money will not be altogether lost. It's very good of you, John, and I'm sorry I can't go with you!"

"It's a pity you can't see the magpie!" declared John, who was clearly impressed by what he had read of the bird's cleverness.

"The magpie's lost!" cried a customer who had entered in time to hear the last words. He was flushed with the importance of being the bearer of news. "If they don't catch the bird before the performance this afternoon the show will lose a lot of its fun! The bird flew off this morning, I hear, and hasn't come back. The circus man says it's sure to return at dinner time, but I expect he says that because he don't want to spoil his takings."

John went off, promising to look in again as he went to the show in the afternoon.

Lucy Brand sat in her kitchen with the window open a few inches at the top, and settled herself to make up her accounts to the end of the month; this took her beyond dinner-time, and she sat down again to complete the task after the maids had left to see the show, and the "Thorn" was left in quietude.

She was not likely to be disturbed; everyone who could get away would be at the circus, and it was highly improbable that the inn would have a customer till after four o'clock.

Lucy Brand took a small cloth bag from a drawer, and turned the contents into her lap, a little glittering heap of sovereigns and half-sovereigns. Not a great many, perhaps, but numerous enough to represent a good profit on the month's business.

Lucy was not miserly, but the sight of this gold created a feeling of warmth at her heart which was very pleasant. Two or three more little heaps of the same size, added to the figure of her bank balance, would make a nice dowry, and John Norton should have it all!

The ringing of a bell announced the fact that a customer had entered the inn. Lucy, with just a gesture of impatience, tumbled the money into the bag, placed it in a corner of the shelf at the back of her, and hurried to the front in order to wait on this new arrival.

"Good day to you, Miss Brand!" said the cheery voice of an old farmer from the next village. "I thought you might ha' been at the show over yonder in Grant's. I don't like to pass the 'Thorn' without looking in to hope you're well, and have a glass!"

"Good day to you, Master Gibbs!" said Lucy, returning the compliment. "I suppose most of the people are there, or on the way?"

She served him and they began to exchange news. The conversation was interrupted by hasty footsteps along the passage from the kitchen, and John Norton appeared.

"I'm late!" he cried. "So you can't come? Well, I'll run along! Good day, Master Gibbs! Things are pretty backward, eh?"

He was gone. It was not often that John Norton went in for amusement, but he seemed to have set his heart on this circus entertainment. He had passed in by the back to see Lucy, but, finding that she was in the front and engaged with a customer, he had not stopped to say more.

Master Gibbs took his departure, and Lucy Brand returned to the kitchen in order to finish her agreeable task. She went straight to the shelf for the little cloth bag, but it was gone!

She looked on the shelf incredulously; she could not believe that the bag was not there; it must be some optical illusion. Perhaps she had thrust it into the drawer and thought that she had laid it on the shelf?

This idea, however, was dispelled by the discovery of a sovereign and two half-sovereigns on the shelf and a second sovereign on the floor. The money had been taken, there was no room for doubt about it!

A thief in the village! It was an unheard-of event! There had never been any fear of robbery at the "Thorn," and Miss Lucy Brand could not grasp the fact at all. She set to work to discover how the robber had entered.

The window was in exactly the same position as when she left the room, and an examination of the sill convinced her that the thief had not entered by raising the lower sash.

The back door was not in the kitchen itself, but led into a short passage; the guilty person would need to traverse that passage and make three turns before reaching the kitchen. No stranger would know how to do it, and no stranger would do it when he could so easily get in through the window.

That window opened on to the private garden, so that it was impossible for a chance passer-by to have seen her with the money in her lap. Finally, no living soul had known that she intended to make up her accounts!

Stay! A cold chill diffused itself slowly over her whole body and her legs seemed to tremble as with ague. John Norton knew! He had come from the direction of the kitchen, appearing hurried and confused, at a time when he should have been at the circus! She allowed herself to drop into a chair and tried to think it out clearly.

She knew that he was short of money. The interest on the mortgage was due about this time, she remembered. Then, he had said more about marriage, in his diffident way, than he had ever done previously. He had probably regarded marriage as a means of escape from pressing money difficulties, and, finding that she was not ready, had—robbed her!

She tried to get rid of the horrible thought, but the more

Digitized by Google

she reflected, the clearer did John Norton's guilt become in her eyes. No one else could have realised the opportunity; John Norton, yielding to some great temptation, had stolen her gold!

She wiped away the tears that had welled to her hot eyes, wiped them away calmly, decisively, and with a set expression on her white face. She would tell no one about it; the secret of this base act should be kept by the only two who knew it—John and herself.

The old relationship was at an end for ever! For the first time she realised what that meant and she had to shut her teeth hard to prevent the moan that rose from the inmost depths of her woman's heart.

What should she say to him when he next came to her? Perhaps he would repent and return to her with the money and a plea for pardon. Yes, she would forgive him if he did! We are all likely to fall into evil, and we must all show mercy as we ourselves hope for it!

She waited for him to come, but the time passed, the maids returned, the inn was thronged with customers and John Norton was not among them. He had not repented and Lucy Brand grew hard of heart and features.

It was in the quietude of the Sunday afternoon that he came to her and asked her if she would go to the service at church with him. She shook her head.

"No, John!" she declared decidedly. "The people must not think any more that—that we are to be man and wife one day!"

John Norton's face paled under the bronze.

"What is this?" he demanded with quivering voice. "What do you mean, Lucy?"

"I cannot marry you, John! You know why, better than I can tell you!"

She expected him to quail before her steadfast gaze, but he stared at her with brazen effrontery, as it seemed to her.

"I know nothing!" he returned doggedly. "You are mad!"

"Not so mad as to marry a man when I do not love him!" she retorted. "I have changed my mind about you, John, and the reason for it needs no telling to *you!* You can go your own way in future, and I'll go mine!"

"You'll make me the laughing-stock of everyone in the village!" he cried angrily. "I ha' waited for you for years, and now you throw me over! Do you mean that?"

"I do!" was the firm reply.

"It's a woman's whim, and you'll be sorry for it! I'll go my own way, and when you want me to go yours again, you'll have to come and ask me to walk it with you, for I'll never come o' my own free will!"

A whole year passed. The villagers had wondered at the change in the conduct of John Norton, who never went to the "Thorn," and had not been so steady at farming since the discontinuance of his visits to Miss Brand, but the affair was an old story now and they had other things to think about.

The events of the preceding Spring had been recalled to Lucy Brand's memory by the announcement of the coming of the circus. The wonderful animals and birds, and the other attractions, were the subject of much gossip as they had been twelve months before.

"I wonder if the magpie will escape again?" asked one labourer with a laugh.

"I believe that the proprietor let un do it a-purpose!" was the opinion of another. "It makes a stir, it do, and the bird cooms back all right enow for the performance!"

"Jimmy's about right!" asserted a third. "The magpie was there, arter all, last toime!"

The opinion was then put forward that the bird had not escaped at all, and that the whole thing was a get-up, but this was scouted; some of them had actually seen the bird flying about.

The morning of the day on which the circus was to give its first performance was one of bright sunshine and the villagers were merry. Then came the report that the magpie had escaped, and it provoked general hilarity. It was all a trick, a piece of up-to-date advertising, but it had the desired effect of creating interest in the circus.

It was afternoon and the maids had gone to witness the performance. Miss Brand sat in her kitchen, but she was not making up her accounts; she had decided to postpone that process till the following day, in order that this day should not too closely resemble that other day.

As she silently brooding over the past, her attention was arrested by a flutter at the window. Looking up, she saw a bird standing on the top sash, which was open as usual.

"It's the missing magpie!" cried Lucy. "I wonder if I could entice it in here and catch it for them?"

She rose softly in order to find some morsel that would induce the bird to approach her, but the movement startled the magpie, which flew to a small tree in her private garden and disappeared in a hole in the trunk.

"I'll have it if I'm quick!" murmured Miss Brand.

She went quickly through the winding passage towards the back door and so to her own garden. She covered her hand with her apron, so that the bird might not peck her and plunged the hand into the hole.

A familiar sound on another tree made her turn, and she saw the magpie perched on a branch and looking at her knowingly.

At the same moment her covered hand touched something that gave forth the faintest of sounds.

Puzzled by this, she caught it up with the clumsy fingers and brought it to the light. Her arm shook to such an extent when she saw what it was that she nearly dropped it. Her own little cloth bag, with its golden contents!

With a screech the magpie bore down upon her and tried to snatch the bag, but she beat it off and ran indoors with her treasure. Yes, there it was, and the contents——? She counted the money and found that it was three pounds short; that was the amount she had picked up on the shelf and on the floor.

The magpie had entered through the top of the window, just as it had been on the point of doing to-day; it had seen her counting the gold and had carried off the bag, after picking out the four golden coins for amusement. She remembered that the magpie's contribution to the circus performance was to do something like that.

So that was the thief and she had accused John Norton most unjustly! "I will go to him and tell him that——"

A hubbub in the front. She left the kitchen and went to the door of the inn; four men were carrying a rough litter, followed by a dozen or so of the inhabitants. She cast her eyes towards the litter and gave a cry; John Norton lay upon it, his eyes closed as if in death.

"What has happened?" she cried.

"Thrown from his trap somehow! Don't know 'zactly what's happened," replied one of the men. "'Fraid he's dead! We're taking him to the farm."

"Bring him in here!" she said imperatively.

They hesitated for a moment, but finally obeyed. He was put to bed and the doctor intercepted on his way to the farm and brought to the "Thorn."

"Will he die, doctor?" asked a woman, with a white face and a subdued manner.

"I hope we shall pull him through, Miss Brand, but it will take time and great care."

"He shall have the care, doctor."

When John Norton was able to recognise anyone, the first person he saw was Lucy Brand. A strained expression passed over his features; she understood and bent over him.

"I have come to tell you I want you, John!" she said softly. "I have discovered my mistake and the great wrong I was doing you. I want you to get well, and take care of yourself in future, for my sake!"

She bent still lower and kissed him. He flushed with joy.

"Is it true, Lucy? Ah, yes! I have been a bit reckless and careless since *then*, because nobody cared for me! But I'll soon get well now and we'll be happy. Kiss me again, so as I may be sure!"

And she did.

E. Buckland.

Digitized by Google

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A sixth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

FIFTH LIST.

25. The British Museum contains specimens of Coalport and Worcester china, besides Doulton and Belleek ware.

26. She was out with the Quorn hunt and came in at the kill, winning the brush. Her mount, Vernon by name, was very fleet.

27. "I have found a stoat's nest," he explains during the recess. "May Gordon and Hoyland come home with me to take it?"

28. In the road were lying some curious grey stones, shaped like a triangle. They each had one bright side, the others overgrown with moss.

29. We hope to lay on a fresh water supply to the new houses we have just bought. There were only wells before.

30. During Spring cleaning Woodward spoilt two great coats by getting some reddish coloured paint on them. He was very cross because of it.

NAME..... ADDRESS .....

Digitized by Google

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TRAMP.

Telling of a Queer Meeting which Ended in a Love Affair.

WITH a whizzing sound the biting east wind rushed through the streets, driving before it a cloud of fine snow that penetrated everything.

It lashed the faces of those unlucky pedestrians and drivers who were compelled to weather it, the snow filtering through the folds of scarves and other supposedly protective articles of clothing, it soaked into overcoats and made life well-nigh unendurable.

Only those who were forced to go from one place to another ventured outside the house in such dreadful weather, and they battled against the blinding snowdrift as against a flood.

Stay! There were others who had to endure the storm; these were the homeless, the waifs and strays of society, who, unable to get shelter by paying for it, struggled against the elements in search of some place to hide in until the sudden storm ceased.

Phew! A sudden gust, more fierce than its predecessor, drove a man against the railings of a house in a quiet street and made him gasp. He was a man of fair proportions, but weakened by cold and lack of food. His thin jacket was saturated; the strips of brown paper which he had fastened on his legs to keep out the wet were soaked also.

"I c-a-a-n-'t sta-a-nd this! It will kill me!" he said half aloud, as well as his chattering teeth and his generally frozen condition would permit him to speak. "This is awful! I thought I could have reached old Jack's crib, he might have given me a corner if there had been a corner to spare, though!

"For fivepence I could have got a bed, but I haven't earned one solitary ha'penny this mortal day—nor yesterday! And I'm as hungry——! If I had got any coppers I should have spent them in food, I suppose, not in the hire of a bed for the night!"

His benumbed fingers gripped the railings as another blast drove the snow against him. He turned his back to it and pressed close against the ironwork. It gave at his touch, and he found that it was a gate leading to a short flight of stone steps. He knew the kind of house.

The steps would take him to a door under the other steps that led up to the front door. Generally the space under the front steps was built into an apartment of some description, but occasionally it was left untouched, and the basement or lower floor was flush with the window of the lower room.

"I'll go down here!" he muttered in desperation. "There must be some kind of a corner that will be warmer than up here, and if they hand me over to the police, I shan't be worse off. By Jove, I shall be fed and kept warm, so I shall be better off!"

He slipped hastily down the steps, and, to his joy, found that the underneath space had not been built up, so that he could stand back in the most sheltered corner and be comparatively warm.

"This is one degree better!" he muttered, swinging his arms after the manner of carmen and others in an effort to get some warmth into his stiffening limbs. "I am wet through, so I stand a chance of turning into a gigantic icicle! The blinds of the whole front seem to be down, and I couldn't catch a chink of light anywhere! Perhaps there's some servant at the back who might take compassion on me if I ring. I'll try it!"

He fumbled about with his almost lifeless fingers for the bell knob. Ah! He placed both hands to it so that he could get hold of it, and pull, but the knob yielded to the feeble tug, and remained hanging down. The wire was broken.

"I'll get shelter if there's any chance—or prison!" he cried.

Placing both hands on the handle of the door, he tried to turn it and rattle the door at the same time in order to attract attention. To his surprise it opened and he found himself at the entrance of a dark underground hall or passage. There was a smell about it that suggested disuse.

"I'll have shelter, at any rate!" said the man in a tone of determination. "A careless servant has done me a good turn by forgetting to lock up the premises. Is it worth while exploring this passage? I think so! Hunger knows no law!"

Once embarked on an enterprise that might land him in prison, he seemed determined to go through with it. He groped his way along, feeling for a door, but he stumbled against stairs first.

"Hum! This is the way to the upper regions! I'm half inclined to believe that the house is vacant! Here goes!"

At the top of the staircase he found himself in another hall. On the left was an opening, and as he groped his way into it he was blinded by a sudden glare of light that made him start back.

"Don't be alarmed!" he cried involuntarily. "I am a starving and frozen man who has crept in here for shelter and to beg for food. I am honest, I swear it. I have touched nothing! Robert Amfield is not a thief, but he wants food! For Heaven's sake help me!"

He had expected to be seized by a masculine hand, or to hear the cry of a woman for assistance, but all was still. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the glare; he looked about him for the occupant of this illuminated chamber, but could see no one.

"What does it mean?" he asked himself in amazement. "Ah, I see. In groping about I touched the electric light switch! My apology was not needed, there is no one here. It seems to be a kind of dining-room and study all in one. But is there any food? If this electric light were gas I could get warm!"

He was getting bolder. He approached the fireplace and uttered a cry of pleasure. It was arranged for a gas fire, and there were matches at his elbow. In another minute the dull noise of the gas was heard and Robert Amfield was holding his hands as near to the flame as he dared.

"Gracious, it puts life into you!" he exclaimed. He moved the fender and crouched down against the stove. "My clothes are beginning to steam, and that may mean rheumatism, but that isn't so bad as death from freezing. I'll take my coat off to dry!"

Digitized by Google

For fully ten minutes he crouched thus, thawing himself, as he expressed it. He was not so saturated as he had imagined, and he soon felt nearly comfortable. Leaving his coat to dry, he began to seek for food.

"This is the rummiest go I've ever experienced—a sort of Liberty Hall without the consent of the proprietor! Query—Am I stealing this man's gas? Robert Amfield has not descended to anything shady yet, and he doesn't want to. Well, if I am caught I'll undertake to work it out in manual labour. That's fair, and my conscience is easy!"

The expression of tranquility that came over his face changed quickly to one of alarm, belying his statement that his conscience was easy. He heard a noise! He listened; was he caught in the act? What was it? A cry for help?

His manhood was aroused by the fact that someone might be in distress. Without waiting to put on his coat, he went into the hall and listened, the sound appeared to come from below or outside.

He made his way down the stairs and into the dark passage. He could hear the cry quite well now, although it was deadened by the howl of the wind.

He had left the door open, and the cry — it was more like a moan now—came from outside.

He was soon out in the open, where he could just perceive the figure of a man or boy lying in the snow. He caught the form in his arms and dragged it into the shelter of the passage.

He stood aghast at the sight of a young woman gazing at herself in the mirror.

"Oh, don't, you'll hurt!" cried the youth—for it was a lad of about eighteen. "I believe I've sprained my ankle, or broken my leg, or something!"

"Can't you rake up a few more injuries?" asked Robert Amfield, half amused, half sarcastic.

"My wrist may be dislocated for all I know!" declared the boy. "I'll have the law on you, Mr. Gentleman! It's a clear case of compensation! You left the area gate wide open for respectable people to tumble down. You did it on purpose, that's fact. I can get a lawyer to take it up and the judges will be down on you. How much will I take to square it, did you say?"

"No, I didn't!" retorted Amfield. "You can drop that line of persuasion, as I am not the proprietor of this hotel. I am sorry that you tumbled down the area steps—no, I suppose they are *not* exactly area steps. Anyhow, I'm sorry. But I don't think you are hurt much, just a bruise or two. There! You can stand all right enough. You're wet and hungry, eh? So am I hungry. I've got rid of the wet, and that is what we will do for you if you're civil and come upstairs!"

He led the astonished youth to the room he had just left and told him to get "right into that gas fire."

"I say," exclaimed the new comer, opening his eyes very wide, "this is all right!"

"Mind you don't set fire to that jacket of yours!" admonished Amfield. "The sleeves don't come much lower than your elbows, but there are long streamers of thread that might lead to a conflagration! You're a pretty-looking object!"

"Your costume ain't exactly correct for Piccadilly!" rejoined the lad saucily. "It's a case of the pot and the kettle, ain't it?"

"You're right!" said Amfield with a hearty laugh. "I forgot that I hadn't seen myself in a glass lately. We seem to be well matched! How did you come to be out in the wet?"

"How did you?" inquired the lad. "I expect your answer will do for both of us!"

"Right again!" declared Amfield. "Well, I'm on my beam ends, with no friends, no home, no money — no nothing!"

"I am ditto to every one of them," said the lad laconically. "Go on!"

"I tumbled into this vacant house for the homeless by accident. I had good prospects once on a time, and ambition, Tommy! Is that your name? If not, what is it?"

"Joe!" was the short reply. Then, in his former defiant manner, he added, "I can't ditto all that. The only good prospects I've ever had were good prospects of being in the workhouse. Perhaps I did have ambition—of a sort. I wanted to keep out of the union!"

"Poor beggar!" said Amfield sympathetically. "You're young to pass through these experiences!"

"Not so young as when I begun!" laughed Joe, who seemed pleased that Amfield spoke pityingly. "If you're running this superior boarding house, fetch out the eatables."

"I'm running it by proxy," said Amfield with an amused smile. "I will try to find something!"

He tried the mahogany cupboard while Joe watched him. Presently he drew out a dish with a cover, under which he discovered a wedge of cheese, about three pounds.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "This cheese is like a man

Digitized by Google

fresh from the country in one respect; yet it is a long, long time since it left the farm!"

"You mean that it's green!" grinned Joe. "Never mind, it will pass muster!"

"Musty, muster, mustard," suggested Amfield. "The last would destroy the first, but we haven't any. Here we are once more—some biscuits! We can fall to, Joe, it's a feast!"

The boy, who had forgotten all his injuries, real and imaginary, seated himself at the table, and fell to with much zest. There was no exchange of observations, each was as hungry as the proverbial hunter, and they ate of the plain fare with such avidity as to seriously threaten organs of digestion that had not been in regular practice for some time.

"That was good!" asserted Joe decisively. "There's nothing to wash it down with, is there?"

"Haven't you had enough moisture to last you for a time?" queried Amfield. "By Jove—I mean, by Joe! You *were* hungry, poor little beggar!"

"I can't return the compliment properly because I didn't have time to look at you and see how you were eating!" said Joe. "I don't know that I'm so little, though!"

"You're small for a lad," responded Amfield. "I say, Joe! We are both without friends, but we needn't be so any longer. I like you; I believe you are a thorough straightforward chap down on your luck, and I've taken quite a fancy to you. We'll be friends, eh? We may be able to help one another!"

"Y-e-e-s!" hesitated the boy. "Oh, don't be offended!" he added hastily. "I should like it above all things, but—you might not!"

"Yes I should!" The tone was positive. "Now I am going to see if there is any chance of a smoke. You do not smoke? You ought not! You're too young—and just a bit too delicate. You've been starved, that's flat, otherwise you would be fatter in the arms, and look more sturdy."

He rummaged again, but did not find the desired smoke. They drew chairs to the gas fire, and prepared to enjoy it. Amfield's eyes, wandering over the room, fell upon an album on which was printed in gold letters the name James Amfield.

With an exclamation that startled his companion, he sprang up and seized the book. Turning over the portraits inside, he stopped at one and gazed sadly at it.

"That is my father's photo! Then this house belongs to my cousin, James Amfield! How strange! The man who did me out of my inheritance, and this house should belong to me!"

"What's it all about?" asked Joe mystified. "Have you seen a ghost?"

"Almost!" said Amfield, replacing the album and returning to his seat. "Joe, as we are friends, I will tell you all about it!

"My father was a man of money, but a hard, harsh man, with very little parental love. My sister, Mary, was older than I and she had set her heart on a man who hadn't money. My father forbade the marriage; my sister rebelled, and I took her part. My father turned us both out. My sister married; she sailed for Australia, and the vessel was lost. I tried to make a position for myself, with what brains I had, but I was too good-natured, got into difficulties through standing as security for false friends—and here I am!

"My cousin James was a hypocrite; he saw his chance and toadied to my father, embittering him against his children. When my father died all his money went to James Amfield.

"I wonder where James is now? This house is not occupied; perhaps he is away and a man comes in to look at the house now and then. Suppose he were to come in upon us now?"

"I should be off!" declared Joe unhesitatingly. "I think somebody must come in because this room isn't dusty. Look! Here's a letter addressed to Mr. John White. Yes, it's got a foreign stamp on it."

"New York," explained Robert Amfield. "The Glasgow post-mark is the 20th—five days ago, so somebody does come. I think I'll take a peep."

He took the letter from the torn envelope and read it. The signature was that of James Amfield, and the letter was to inform the butler and general factotum that the writer would be at home on the 25th.

"That's to-day! Why, he may be here at any moment! I wonder why there is no one here to receive him? Where are you off to, Joe?"

"I'm not fit to receive company!" was the reply, as the lad took up his coat and made for the door. "I heard a noise at the front somewhere. He may be here! Are you coming?"

"I'll stay and face him! Don't go!" But the lad was out of the room. "I haven't seen dear James lately! We hurled some lava-like language at one another through the medium of the post after my father's death, so the present meeting will be a warm affair! Well it will counteract the cold outside!"

Robert Amfield waited, but he heard nothing. It must have been a false alarm. He looked at the letter again, and saw some pencilled words on the back page. "I find that I shall not be home till four days later."

"That explains the absence of Mr. John White! I feel at home here! I am sure that cousin James, who was so good and charitable, will not grudge me a rest and food! Yes," surveying himself in the glass, "I am not neat in appearance! There ought to be a bath-room here, with shaving utensils. Perhaps another suit of clothes! I'll see!"

He moved to the door, switched off the light and made his way upstairs to the first floor, uttering his thoughts aloud and not noticing a slim figure outside the door of the room where he and Joe had made themselves comfortable.

"I'll make myself presentable. Where did that silly boy go? Upon my word, I feel quite attached to the poor beggar! Never felt so taken with anybody before. I call it mean of him to go, after swearing friendship! His were tolerably dirty, but they wouldn't have soiled mine! They were honest hands nevertheless—I am positive of that!"

"Right!" murmured the listener. "They may be sooty, but they've never been mixed in anything dirty like dishonesty! Shall I stay? I wonder if I ought?"

It was quite three-quarters of an hour before Robert Amfield descended to the room which he had mentally designated the study. In that time he had had a bath—his body was tingling all over with the effects of the vigorous towelling administered to it—and had shaved. He had turned out a tweed suit of subdued pattern, together with some clean linen and a pair of boots.

He was a changed man; a thorough gentleman in appearance and deportment. The transformation was complete, and he resembled only in the remotest degree the outcast who had penetrated without permission the deserted house in the fashionable suburb.

He pushed open the door of the well-lighted room, but stood aghast at the sight of a young woman gazing at herself in the mirror.

She was posing before her own reflection, with amusement written large on her face, and Amfield continued to stare at her in bewilderment. Here was a new development! Who was this? Had she been in the house all the time? That was hardly likely. Then had she been sent by White to dust and clean? That also was improbable, for it was late in the day to begin work, and she was not dressed for cleaning and scrubbing. She was neatly attired in a dress that must have

Digitized by Google

cost a fair price at a West-end establishment, but Amfield noticed that it was not so well-fitting as it might have been.

In making another pose in order to see as much of her back as it is possible to do with one mirror, the girl caught sight of Robert's reflection in the glass, and uttered a cry. Turning hastily to him, she asked, in confusion :

"Are you Mr. Amfield ? I thought that you would not be here just yet, although your letter said so. I was thinking that I should see—— Never mind ! I hope I am not intruding ? "

"She mistakes me for my cousin James ! " thought the transformed tramp. Aloud, he said evasively : "I *am* Mr. Amfield ! May I ask to whom I am indebted for the honour of this visit ? "

"Oh, dear ! " cried the girl. "How formal ! Well, I'm—er—my name is—Mary Amfield ! "

"What do you mean ? " demanded Robert sternly.

Who was this, taking the name of his dead sister ? He had no time to demand further explanation, for the bell of the front-door rang violently.

"Stay where you are ! " commanded Robert. "Don't move till I see who it is ! "

The girl, who had recovered her composure to some extent, bowed defiantly, and Robert went to the front-door and shot back the two bolts. A rush of wind and snow followed the opening of the door, and Robert heard a boy's voice :

"Telegram ! White ! Is that here ? "

"Yes," answered Amfield mechanically.

"Here you are, then ! " pushing it into his hand.

Returned to the light and warmth, Robert Amfield deliberately slit the envelope with his finger and read the telegram.

"James Amfield died here yesterday. Last words that his property goes to cousin Robert. Try find him."

The cablegram was from New York, where, it was to be conjectured, James had been on business ; he had died after a very brief illness, and on his death-bed his conscience had smitten him.

Perhaps he had already made a will in England, leaving the property to Robert ? It mattered little ; for, if there were no will, the attested death-bed statement would be accepted as a legal bequest. He, Robert Amfield, the outcast, was rich ; he had entered into his own again !

"You're a cheat, a fraud ! " cried the girl, bending over him and shaking her fist at him. "You're not James Amfield, and you've killed the man who was here an hour ago, swearing friendship to a girl who never had a friend in her life. He told me he would be a friend, and I heard him say that he liked me, as he went upstairs ! What have you done with him ? "

"What ! Are you Joe ? Well, I——" Robert could not continue for a second, his amazement was too great. "So you are transformed, like me, only more so ! Don't you know me now that I have had a wash and a brush up ? "

"Oh ! " cried the girl, shrinking away. "It *is* you ! I see now ! I was so confused when I thought you were your cousin come home that I didn't recognise you, and I gave you the name of your sister, because that was the first that came to me ! "

"Why did you masquerade in boy's clothes ? "

"Mine were so torn and ragged and I got frightened. I couldn't get a place as a servant, and no one would believe I was honest. I got into a suit of boy's clothes and did all sorts of jobs, and so I got a sort of a living where a girl would have starved."

"You shall be poor no longer, young lady ! " declared Robert, rising and taking her by the shoulders. "Look at me, Joe—or Josephine ! I said we would be friends, and so we shall, for now that I am well-off, it is my fixed intention to endow thee, my dear Joesphine, with exactly one-half of all my worldly goods ! Do you understand ? "

Apparently she did, for she blushed.

"And to seal the contract," concluded Robert Amfield exultantly, "I claim a loving kiss ! "

G. Merriam.

Your Editor Chats.

The fifth list of sentences in the competition to discover buried names of railway stations will be found on page 527. Five more lists of sentences—making ten in all—will appear.

I receive daily a large number of letters from readers, asking me to clear up certain points in connection with the competition on which they are in doubt. There would be no doubtful points were competitors to read the rules carefully. No information regarding the competition will be sent privately ; any point likely to be of general interest to competitors will be dealt with in the paper.

Below are some questions asked this week, together with my replies :—

Question : If a part of a word forms the name of one railway station and the whole word forms another, may I put both down ?

Answer : If you will carefully read the conditions of the competition, you will see that it says that "no word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a railway station."

Question : Are the sounds of the words in the sentence to be taken only as they would be read, or may they be taken according to the way in which parts of the words might conceivably be pronounced ?

Answer : They must be taken as the word would be read.

Question : May I pick out words or parts of words from any portion of a sentence, and put them together so as to form the name of a railway station ?

Answer : No ; it is clearly stated in the rules that words or parts of words taken together to form the names of railway stations *must be consecutive.*

Question : If the name of a railway station occurs several times in a sentence, must I underline and write it down each time ?

Answer : Yes. This is distinctly stated in the rules of the competition.

The cover this week is a reproduction of the Bruce Tartan. This is the ninth tartan which has appeared as the wrapper of Short Stories. A list of the others, together with the dates of their appearance, will be found on page 517.

I don't want my readers to forget that there is such a thing as the Fresh Air Fund, and each week during the Spring and Summer I shall give them a reminder of its existence. For the small sum of ninepence, one child, who has lived amidst bricks and mortar all its life, and probably never seen grass and trees except in one of the parks of their city, can have a whole day in the country, with plenty to eat and drink. Think what this means to a child—how it will enjoy the freedom and freshness of the pure air, and the joy it will have in being where there is no notice to "keep off the grass," and where it may actually gather buttercups and daisies to its heart's content.

£8 2s. provides for a party of 200 children with the necessary attendants. Donations of whatever size will be gratefully received and acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly.* They should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., who will forward collecting sheets on application.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

A GAME OF CHAFF.

The Tale of a Rich Girl's Wooing.

THE great house loomed darkly before the young man who paused for a moment at the iron gates. Then he stepped forward briskly and passing round the mansion rang the bell at the side door. It was almost immediately answered by a young woman who put her finger to her lips as she ushered him in.

"Please be very careful," she said. "The family is so fussy. Come this way."

She took him into an apartment that might have been the breakfast room, and motioned him towards a chair.

"Can't I shake hands with you?" he asked. "It seems like quite an age since we parted."

"Thank you," she said, and gave him her hand. "It was just two weeks ago to-day—if that can be considered an age."

"Thank you for remembering the day," he gravely said.

"I will admit," said the girl, with a little blush, "that it was quite an episode in my life. I'd never had such an opportunity before."

"No?" he said, with a slightly rising inflection. He looked at her with a curious expression. She was a pretty girl, a very pretty girl, and though her hair was smoothed into plainness and surmounted by a simple little white cap, its beauty and lustre seemed brightened by this attempt at concealment. Her gown was plain, too, and over it she wore a fresh white apron.

"Yes," she said, and her inflection took the opposite direction. And she in turn looked at him. He was a man worth looking at. Well knit, well featured, and well spoken. "Some men," she shortly added, "are easily deceived."

"Some deceptions are preferable to the truth," he said. "But pray go on—you have something to tell me."

"Yes," said the girl. "No doubt you have guessed it. You saw me at the seaside for those few days. The glamour of the place dazed you. You took appearances for realities."

"They were such charming appearances," he softly said.

"Please don't interrupt," she cried with another little blush. "You saw me with Miss Ainslie's aunt. You took me for Miss Ainslie—and I let you deceive yourself. I was only the dear old lady's companion. I am only Miss Ainslie's companion. One moment. Miss Ainslie showed me your note asking the privilege of calling. She suspected I knew what it meant. I confessed. I told her the whole story—how I let you think me a great heiress and how I led you on. She advised me to write and tell you to call——"

"At the side door," said the man.

"Of course at the side door," exclaimed the girl. "I couldn't ask you here on the footing of the family guests. I wouldn't have asked you here at all, but Miss Ainslie advised it. She said it was my duty to undeceive you. That is all, I think. Good night."

She stood up as she spoke the last words and moved towards the door. But the man did not stir.

"The evening is young yet," he said, "and short calls disagree with me. Pray sit down. I, too, came here this evening to make confession. I was not the only one deceived."

"What do you mean?" she asked, as she resumed her chair.

"I mean," he replied, "that I represented myself to you in what you must have regarded as a rather favourable light."

"I think," she said, "that you gave me the impression that you were a person of some importance."

There was a silence.

"I fancy there must be something in the air of the average watering-places that encourages these fanciful deceptions," he said. "We seem to long to be something other than what we really are. And yet I am very glad to-night to know the truth."

"May I ask why?" said the girl.

"I was about to tell you," he replied. "You see, that as the petted heiress, Grace Ainslie, you seemed as far above me as a star. I was mad to write to you to-day. But now it's different. You are nearer my social level. I do not have to storm the bastion of wealth to reach you."

"That's rather pretty," said the girl. "And you are not disappointed?"

"No," said the man, "I am glad."

"Glad that I am a dependent instead of an heiress?"

"Glad for my own sake, yes. And now may I ask your name?"

"M-my name?" stammered the girl. "Why should I tell you?"

"Do as you please about it," said the man. "It will be easy to give you another."

"And may I ask what yours is?" queried the girl demurely.

"A truce to names," he said. "They count for nothing to-night."

"And yet I'm foolishly particular regarding them," she said, with a smile.

"You are thinking of the possible change," he thoughtfully remarked. "I don't blame you for being a little fastidious. It does you credit. You wouldn't fancy a name like Hoopenlooper, would you?"

"No," she gravely answered. "I wouldn't like any name that ran over the edge of a calling card."

"But, after all," he cried, "it is the man, not the name."

"Then," she said, "you leave me to infer that your name is an atrocious one."

"My name is all right," he said. "But let it go. There are other things to hold our attention. In the first place, how do we stand socially and financially? Wait, please. I am about to tell you something concerning myself."

"Not the story of your life!"

"Not exactly. But pray do not interrupt. I am thirty-

Digitized by Google

one, in good health, no serious habits, fairly good-looking, measurably ambitious and something of a favourite where I am best known. I have a comfortable situation in connection with a city office, and there is a neat little sum lying to my credit in a certain bank. I think I might even compass the cost of a modern suburban villa."

"That's nice," she said. "I have a little balance on a bank book myself."

"That's nice, too," said the man. "Do you think it would cover the cost of the furniture?"

"If carefully invested," said the girl, "I think it would."

"I'm glad of that," the man commented. "I never believe in adopting the instalment plan where you can raise the cash. And now be equally frank and tell me about yourself."

"No," said the girl, "I'm too much prejudiced in favour of the subject. Let's hear your opinion."

"All right," said the man, "but, of course, I'm prejudiced, too. At the same time it is a good thing to air one's prejudices occasionally. If our prejudices do not agree pray correct me from time to time.

"To begin with, you are beautiful. Then you are fairly intelligent. You have a nimble wit, but you have been somewhat spoilt. Eh, you don't like that? Nevertheless, it is quite evident that your employers have been too indulgent. Oh, yes they have. And yet one who really—admired you, could overlook this—shall I say painful—defect, in time."

"Is that all?"

"All! I could dilate on your attractions until the grey fingers of the dawn beckoned me away."

"How nicely you express yourself. I had only to shut my eyes to hear the surf beating on the shore and the band softly thrumming on the hotel verandah."

"What a lovely time we had—while it lasted. How those golden moments scuttled through pleasure's hour-glass!"

"There you go again. But we did have a lovely time deceiving each other, didn't we?"

"It was our foolish vanity that did the deceiving—our hearts were as true as steel."

"Steel is very hard, Mr. Thingamy."

"Mine is ductile steel, Miss Whatsyourname. 'Tis a heart of wax when thou art near. And your face is the only impression it bears."

"But, ah, if your heart warmed up unduly that impression would soon be obliterated."

"No, no, it is indelible. Ah, if I only knew your name how delightful it would be to make love to you."

The girl made a quick gesture of dissent.

"You would take altogether too much time," she said. "I shudder to think of your verbosity if you had a three-syllable name to encourage your efforts. Besides, you must remember that this is my night in."

"Your night in?"

"Yes, it's my night to have company and to receive it—or him—in this particular apartment. All the other servants go out in order to leave the lucky one a clear field. My chance doesn't come again for ten days. But that will not excuse me for overdoing the present opportunity. You really must go. I fancy I hear footsteps now. Hush!"

The footsteps came down the hall. They paused and the door opened. An elderly man with a heavy white moustache looked in.

"Oh, there you are, Grace!" he cried. "Excuse me, I didn't know you had company. Bless my soul, if it isn't Warren Hayes! How are you, my boy? I didn't know Grace knew you. Helping her with private theatricals, I see. Don't let her work you too hard. There, there, I won't interrupt any longer. Glad to see you at any time, my boy."

"I'll drop in on you at the office in the morning," said Warren Hayes. "I have a little important business I want to see you about."

"All right, my boy. Any time after ten. Good night."

"Good night."

There was a short silence. The man looked at the girl. The girl looked at the floor.

"I was silently admiring the way your father says Grace," remarked Warren Hayes.

"Come," said the girl sharply, "what is that special business you have with papa to-morrow morning."

"And here I've been openly crediting you with unusual cleverness," said Warren Hayes, with a despairing gesture. "Yet I fancy you half suspect. The fact is, Miss Grace Ainslie, alias Whatsyourname, that when a young woman admits her devoted admirer through the side door it is about time for papa's consent to be asked."

"You are a rude and nasty man," said the girl. "And I suppose you are just conceited enough to fancy that you will succeed with the father as well as—I mean that you hope to succeed with the daughter as well as you think you'll succeed with the father."

"Exactly," said Warren Hayes.

The girl looked at him with a little scowl.

"Well," she said, "you'll not get in the side door again."

"Oh, the front door will do," said Warren Hayes.

And then the girl softly laughed.

Amy Richards.

"I HEAR that Miss Woody is inconsolable over the loss of poor little Fido." "Yes, poor thing. Every time it rains cats and dogs she rushes to the window to see if he is among them."

LITTLE GIRL: "Ma, that man on a bicycle knocked me down and made me break the glass jug." Mother: "Well, break the pieces up and throw them out where he'll run over them and puncture his tyres as he comes back."

"How is the razor, sir?" asked the barber. "Didn't know I was being shaved," said the victim. "Very glad, I'm sure, sir," began the barber, feeling flattered. But the victim cut him short: "I thought I was being sand-papered."

Important to Those About to Marry and others.

Small Homes and How to Furnish Them.

By Mrs. Waldemar Leverton.

With 16 Illustrations, cloth, price 1s., or post free for 1s. 2d.

CONTENTS:

Choosing the Home—The Furniture—Wall Papers—Floor Coverings—On Colouring, etc.—Red Rooms—Green Rooms—Blue Rooms—Yellow Rooms—Pink Rooms—The Entrance Hall—Staircase Nooks—Cosy Sitting Rooms—The Dining Room—The Kitchen—The Scullery—The Bed Rooms—A Girl's Bed-Sitting Room—A Bachelor's Room—Nurseries and School-rooms—Beautifying the Bath Room—Wall Decoration—The Use and Abuse of Drapery—Piano Decoration, etc., etc.

At all Booksellers; or of the Book Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To the BOOK PUBLISHER,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please forward me a copy of "SMALL HOMES," for which I inclose the sum of one shilling and twopence.

Name.....

Address .....

.....

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister, maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

NINETEENTH CHAPTER.
What Dennis Hartigan Heard.

A MURMUR passed through the group of listeners round the fire of the bar-parlour, a murmur of surprise and doubt. The old fisherman knocked the ashes out of his black "cutty."

"Believe it or not, as you like," he said, and at the table in the distant corner Dennis Hartigan strained his ears to catch the words. "I saw her, and I ought to know Mollie Davenal. Why, it was my missis did everything for her when John Davenal brought the little lass to Groudle after his wife died. Not that it's the first time Mollie has been under water, there's some of you here knows of one other time."

"Aye," agreed a member of the meditative party, "I can speak for that, for John Davenal was chaffed about it, and told us the lass had wheedled him into letting her have a dip in the suit. But what for would she go down with him lying at death's door?"

"We've no proof she did," commented a neighbour drily. "Maybe the gentleman from the Tower was over free with the spirits for John Thomas. He's told us already he had his fill of as good whisky as man need wish for."

There was a chuckle of mirth from the stolid revellers, but the old fisherman smote his huge fist on his knee.

"Now if it was to be my last word on earth," he retorted, "yon was Moira Davenal, and there's an end of it." And he began irritably to refill his pipe.

Dennis Hartigan lifted his glass to his lips, and drank a mouthful. His lips trembled slightly, and the glass jarred against his teeth. He set it down, and affected to busy himself with his meal. But under his drooped eyelids his gaze was fixed on the gossipers. They were pondering, with North country phlegm, the emphatic statement of their grizzled companion.

The opening of the bar-parlour door broke in upon their silence. A lean, brown-skinned, black-bearded fellow, with twinkling eyes, and a certain gruff shyness in his bearing, entered the apartment. He had a sou'-wester on the back of his head, and his garments were a jersey, a rough jacket, and blue trousers tucked into the tops of his sea-boots. At his appearance the fisherman started up.

"Here's a man as will go bail I'm telling the truth," he said; "Peter Travis, you was on a diving job off the breakwater this afternoon. Who was your diver?"

The newcomer removed his sou'-wester, and looked into it.

"Oh, a green hand," he answered. "Just a bit of practice, John Thomas—I—I wanted him to see the place where the *Sylph* had laid, and to give him a notion what working in five fathoms was like."

"John Thomas" put the shiny black cutty into his vest-pocket, and stepped towards the diver's assistant. A smile had gone round the semi-circle of listeners. Yet it had found no reflection on the sombre features of Dennis Hartigan.

"Peter Travis," said the person challenged by the smile, "you're a perverter of the truth. Your "green hand" was Mollie Davenal. I saw her with my own eyes as you took off the helmet. And Mr. Jerome, a gentleman from the Tower, as I was finding a day's fishing for, saw her, too."

Mr. Travis plucked at his coarsely-pointed black beard.

"Pity but there hadn't been two gentlemen of you, John Thomas," he observed scathingly, "then you'd have held your tongue. The lass was but doing as her father wished her."

Digitized by Google

"Her father." The exclamation had broken from more than one of the listeners.

"Aye," said Peter Travis, "her father. He'd a notion in his sickness he'd lost something down there—something he'd only trust her to look for, and because she wanted to ease his mind, and give him a chance of pulling through, she persuaded me to let her go down. And a brave lass she is, and fitter to be John Davenal's daughter than to be spied on by such as you, John Thomas."

With which crushing, if involved rebuke, Mr. Travis strolled to a seat and deposited himself in it. The old fisherman had coloured a deep brick-red.

"I'm—I'm sure I meant no harm, Peter Travis," he said. "I—I only spoke of the thing as it happened."

"You couldn't," declared Mr. Peter Travis, cutting himself a half-inch length of Irish twist. "For that was just what you didn't know!"

The retort was too much for the delinquent, and he collapsed into silence, while Peter Travis stroked his beard with an air of triumph.

"And—and was there anything there?" queried an irrepressible. The diver's assistant sniffed disdainfully.

"How could there be?" he said. "The whole thing was naught but a sick man's fancy. But the lass was above telling John a lie to satisfy him, so, as she'd been down once before in a sort of joke, I let her put on the suit and do as she wished. With the wind in the south, the spot is no more than a big pool for smoothness. And the bottom's clear enough now the yacht is up."

A murmur of intelligent approval greeted the final instalment of Mr. Travis's explanation, and the talk drifted upon other topics.

Assured that there was no more to hear, Dennis Hartigan got up slowly from his table and lounged, with conspicuous indifference, out of the room. From the bar of the Half Brick he passed forth into the night, and went along the lightless road.

In a darker angle than ever of the lonely thoroughfare, the ex-steward arrested his steps, and some fierce syllables spat themselves from his clenched jaw.

"Kit!" he said, "Kit—it can only be Kit!"

He flung himself down in the thick undergrowth of the tall hedgerow, and put his chin in his palms. A whistle shrieked far off, and the red of the railway-signal in sight along the descending lane changed to green. A moment more and an express shot by, to whisk past the level crossing, and vanish into the obscurity beyond.

Dennis Hartigan snarled viciously.

"Why did that fool interfere?" he growled to himself. "My rotten luck all over! I don't suppose she'd spoken then, she said she hadn't. And now—now they're on the track, or why—why does John Davenal send Moira down to look for—for *it?*"

The ex-steward shook his head.

"But how did they guess that what Kit heard had anything to do with—with Moira?" he muttered aloud. "Kit didn't know anything to suggest that. There must be someone else at work."

He shook his head again as he sat in the dark of the hedgerow, and kept on shaking it occasionally in a sullen, futile reverie. The moon emerged from the clouds above to look at him—her light was too vivid for his liking, and he rose, to wander down the lane. As her wan radiance touched him between chance gaps in the irregular banks that fringed the road, it might have been seen that he was walking without haste, almost without attention to the route he followed.

Wrapped in his own thoughts, the ex-steward went on through the night, a dusky, powerful figure. When, after a long detour, he reached the sea-front, there was no whit of decision in his lowering, anxious visage. It was late for Groudle; the clocks were striking the half hour after ten as he moved athwart the deserted wharves and came to Hawthorn Cottage.

The ex-steward halted and surveyed it. A light burnt in.

(*Continued overleaf.*)

A Remarkable Letter.

The Lady Typist and Bile Beans.

The following letter, written by a London lady typist to the proprietors of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans, will interest many of our readers. It shows how effective Bile Beans are in cases of headache, dizziness, morning sickness, and general debility:—

"38 Moncrieff Street,
Peckham, S.E.

Gentlemen,

It gives me much pleasure to send you an account of the benefits I have derived from Chas. Forde's Bile Beans.

Three years ago I was engaged as a lady clerk in the office of a City firm, and had to be at my work by 8.30 every morning. This meant having to catch an early train to the City in all weathers, sitting in a stuffy office all day, taking food irregularly, and reaching home again late every evening to such comforts as one can get in lodgings.

One morning I awoke with a violent headache, a thing almost unknown to me previously, but I found it had come to stay! For the next three months it scarcely ceased! Then there came a nasty sickness in the morning, followed by dizziness, and, occasionally, fainting during the day. I attended the Women's Hospital for months, after having advice from three doctors. Yet, though at first I benefited by the treatment, I soon went from bad to worse again. My friends told me I looked like death, and I think I gave up all hope, for I was almost a skeleton, and the pain in my side, due no doubt to liver complaint, was like knives going through me!

After trying everything I could get, and doctor's medicine and hospital treatment so long, with so poor result, I adopted a friend's advice—gave up everything else, and tried what Bile Beans could do for me.

They did wonders! Before the third box was finished I was like a new woman. In two months they cured me, whereas doctors had failed to do so in two years. I am writing this letter almost a year after my cure, and during that time I have had no recurrence of my old symptoms. So there is no question as to the permanency of my cure.

Yours truly,
(Signed) A. CAMPBELL."

The same Bile Beans as did so much for Miss Campbell may be applied to your case. They are obtainable from all chemists at 1/1½ or 2/9 per box. Many people are of the opinion that Bile Beans are an ordinary medicine. They are not. They are the product of the latest scientific research, and have been obtainable only within the last few years. They do not merely purge and give temporary relief, like the old-fashioned remedies of forty or fifty years ago. They act directly on the liver and digestive organs, strengthening and stimulating them to do their own work, so that further medicine taking becomes unnecessary. They are purely vegetable. They contain no harmful drugs, and they are the finest family medicine obtainable.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED); absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d.; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free. Supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.**

Digitized by Google

but one of its windows—that of the wounded man's room. The rest of the cottage was in darkness, and seemed to share the sleep of the sleeping town.

Dennis Hartigan climbed the fence at a sheltered corner, and, keeping in the shadows of the garden, made a curious little tour of inspection. As he prowled this way and that around the silent dwelling, his half-seen form had a skulking, wolf-like air.

Presently he darted into the shadow of the house itself, gained the small porch, and tried the door. It was unlocked, he stepped noiselessly into the tiny, darkened hall, closed the door behind him, and crept towards the stairs.

Suddenly he halted.

"No," he said, in a whisper, "not to-night, it would be all over the place to-morrow, and I should lose Lady T.'s three thousand pounds. I've got to tell her where the child is, and what she is, a nice fool I should look with the girl dead already. The old cat would strike a cheaper bargain, or bluff me out of it altogether."

He retraced his steps and stole out into the garden. By way of precaution, he crossed it to scale the fence at a different point. As he peered about for something to mount by, the murmur of voices reached him, and he shrank into the bushes about the small summer-house. The voices came from its interior, and one of them was Moira's. The other, though the ex-steward could not know it, was Sir Guy Vanbrugh's.

Hartigan's pulses, still thrilling with the alarm that had seized upon his guilty spirit at the sound of human speech so close to him, beat to a sterner and more ferocious measure.

Within an arm's length of him, unsuspecting, yet not alone, was the girl whose life he was pledged to take, the girl who had become, if he could interpret aright the story he had heard at the Half Brick, not only his destined victim, but a dangerous antagonist. To whom was she speaking, and, above all, what was she saying?

Dennis Hartigan listened breathlessly. Moira's voice was low and tender, her words significant.

"And you don't mind a wife who doesn't know her own name," she asked, "or who her father and mother were?"

"My dearest little woman," was the answer, "I don't want to marry a birth-certificate. You know at least that your Christian name is Moira, I will give you a surname, and when you are Moira Vanbrugh, what will it matter who you were before?"

There was a pause, and Dennis Hartigan's ear caught a faint something that might have been the vague echo of a long-drawn kiss. The listener ground his teeth.

"But father said," pursued Moira, "that is, Mr. Davenal said, he wished he knew because he would be glad to think that the man who called himself so wasn't really my father, for he was a blackguard and a wastrel. That means that I may not be—probably am not—quite respectable, dear. And what would people think if some shocking person or other turned up and claimed to be Sir Guy Vanbrugh's father-in-law?"

A sharp inspiration stole between Dennis Hartigan's lips. But it was lost in the sighing of the bushes about him. Guy Vanbrugh laughed.

"I will deal with any such person when he arrives, my darling," Moira was assured; "perhaps when Mr. Davenal has told us all there is to tell, we shall not find the matter quite so puzzling as it is at present. But, meanwhile, Moira, I want you to promise me something. You will, won't you?"

"How can I till I know what it is?" asked Moira rallyingly.

"How can you say," demanded Guy Vanbrugh, "that you love me if you do not even trust me sufficiently to venture on a promise without an elaborate explanation?"

"Well, then," replied Moira, penitent, "suppose that I have promised, may I not learn to what I have bound myself?"

"Not to do any more diving," said her lover gravely. "Moira, you are very courageous, and so I won't speak to you of the danger to yourself. But I can't run the risk of losing you, my darling—you are the best thing Fate ever put within my reach, and I want you to be mine—my very own—some day.

"I am a sad coward. I fear, but all the time I am away from you I experience a wild desire to jump on a swift horse and gallop over to see if any harm has befallen you. Promise me, dear, freely and openly, that you won't put yourself in danger any more."

"I—I promise, Guy dear!" murmured Moira. "I—I believe I was a little frightened myself down there. But I was so confused and so disappointed at finding nothing that I hadn't much room to be frightened. Oh, what time was that?"

The last strokes of the third quarter after ten—chimed from the spire of Groudle Church—were dying away upon the air. Moira's companion leant out of the summer-house to hold his watch in the moonbeams; the ex-steward pressed closer into the shadow.

"A quarter to eleven," said Guy Vanbrugh. Moira sprang up.

"I must go in, Guy!" she exclaimed. "Kit is only a light sleeper and she might wake—we sleep together, you know. She was such a time going off to-night, poor child, and I wondered what you would think of me, writing to you to meet me, then keeping you waiting."

Her tones were muffled again, as though she had been clasped in her lover's arms.

"You could not have pleased me better," said Guy Vanbrugh, "than by such a Romeo and Juilet appointment. Night, the moon, my darling, love and mystery, what more could a man ask?"

"I wish you had a nicer Juliet," added Moira; and once more her utterance was smothered as though by a protesting embrace.

"And now I must go," she said. "I have left the door on the latch."

"Well, if you must," yielded her lover—"good-night; and may the sweetest of sweet dreams hover about your dear little head!"

Another momentary pause brought a sneer to the unseen face of the ex-steward; and, Moira, slipping out of the summer-house, glided to the cottage.

Guy Vanbrugh followed her a pace or two, and halting, watched till she had entered, and he heard the click of the key and the latch on the other side. Still he waited. At last a curtain was lifted at an upper window. Guy Vanbrugh kissed his hand, sighed pleasurably, and turned to go.

The ex-steward rose from his cramped position and imitated the younger man's example. Once he was safely out of earshot, and on the way back to the Half Brick, he stopped and chuckled. Then, without a word, he returned to his lodging at the inn on the Groudle Road.

TWENTIETH CHAPTER.
"What are you Going to Do?"

"Oh, Guy, how beautiful! Why, it is a perfect picture!"

Irene Tarleton had flung over the back of the oaken settle in the hall of the Tower a great square of dead-leaf silk, across whose wide expanse spread a trail of briar-rose, worked in delicately-tinted ribbon and scarcely less delicately-hued threads. It represented the completion of the task at which Moira Davenal had worked for so long. In the dark old place, and lit by a few chance rays of sunshine from the high mullioned windows, the mimic flowers gave to the beholder an impression of fragile, scented life.

"I'm glad you like it," said Guy Vanbrugh, surveying the splendid panel with a kind of tender reverence; "it isn't all of my present, but I think it's the prettiest part. The other parts are in London, where I expected you'd be when your birthday came round. They are a little cottage Broadwood

(*Continued on page 539.*)

Digitized by Google

ALFOSCO REGD

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

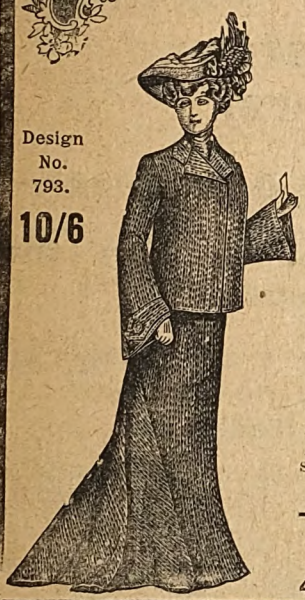
47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

ALFOSCO REGD

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 793. 10/6



Design No. 793. **10/6**

Design No. 793. 10/6.

The Fashionable Coat and Skirt for Spring and Summer Wear. It has a short full Sacque Coat, single breasted, bell sleeves. The Skirt is a good shape and carefully made. Produced in ALLEN FOSTER & Co.'s new **Zibeline Cloth**, also in their celebrated **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth**. Colours: Black, Green, Light and Dark Grey, Royal, Fawn, Brown, Red, and Navy. Patterns post free. This excellent Costume complete, only **10/6**; carriage 6d., or Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d. If lined throughout the price will be **16/6**; carriage 6d. A Bargain.

Design No. 1019 **4/11**

Design No. 1019. **4/11**

Design No. 1019. 4/11.

Costume Skirt in good-wearing Black and Navy **Serge**, trimmed two flounces and braid; lined throughout linenette. Price only **4/11**, carriage 5d. In ordering, give length of skirt in front and size of waist. Post orders receive prompt attention.

Design No 899. 10/6.

New Style. Costume with tight-fitting back, pouch front, made in A. F. & Co.'s new **Zibeline Cloth**, also in their **Specialite Serge** and **Venetian Cloth**. Colours: Navy, Royal, Green, Oxford, Fawn, Brown, Purple, Light Grey, Dark Grey, Black, &c. Stylish Costume with bell sleeves, tastefully trimmed fancy braid. Bell-shaped Skirt. Wonderful value for **10/6**. Sent carriage paid. 6d. ex. Skirt alone, only **5/6**; carriage 5d. This Costume may be ordered in the fashionable "**Alfosco**" Tweed, trimmed glacé silk instead of braid, price **21/-**.

Design No. 899. **10/6**

Send Post-card for **PATTERNS AND NEW SKETCH BOOK OF SPRING FASHIONS IN COSTUMES AND JACKETS.** FREE ON APPLICATION. - - - - - CALL OR WRITE.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles**, and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc.

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6 0 0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN**, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.

TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with

"KEATING'S POWDER,"

unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

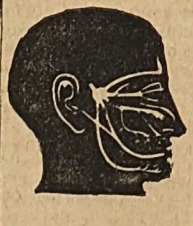
Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "I pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 57 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS



Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C. "In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

HE CURES THE SICK.

Makes the Lame Walk and Performs Modern Miracles Which Astound and Mystify the Doctors.

"I Want the Sick to Write Me," says the Great Healer.

Tell the People My Services Are Free, So are the Services of My 20 Eminent Specialists.

Tell Them They Can Be Cured At Home: That I Am Giving My Great Discovery To the World, That All May Be Well and Enjoy the True Blessings of Perfect Health.

PROF. THOS. F. ADKIN.

"My ambition in life is not money," says Prof. Adkin, the great healer, who is daily curing men and women of the very worst diseases after learned doctors have pronounced their cases hopeless. His method of treatment is somewhat mysterious, but the fact that he cures the sick when all else fails, when the doctors lose hope and science despairs, is demonstrated beyond controversy. No matter whether you have Consumption, Kidney Trouble, Rheumatism, Catarrh, Dyspepsia, or simply an ordinary cold or fever, they are all alike to Prof. Adkin. He cures them all, he cures you quickly, painlessly, permanently at your own home. He also tells you a secret method by which you may keep yourself in perfect health. Without exaggeration, it can be safely said that Prof. Adkin is the most interesting, remarkable and wonderful physician healer of the age. His only talk, his only thought is How to cure Incurables, to bring hope to the hopeless, joy, sunshine and happiness to the miserable and suffering. He is truly carrying on a grand work. He is President of one of the largest healing institutions in the world. He employs twenty eminent physicians and specialists to assist him with his work. He spends thousands of dollars every year in giving free advice and help to the sick. No matter where you live, the services of the best specialists may be yours. All you have to do is to write a letter to Prof. Adkin describing your case, and he will immediately diagnose your disease and explain the proper home treatment for your speedy recovery. This will not cost you a single cent. No money is asked for this service, none is taken. If you are sick and want to make a donation for the purpose of carrying on the work, such will be thankfully received. Prof. Adkin will also send every sick person who writes him within the next thirty days, a free copy of his wonderful new book, entitled "How to be cured and How to cure others." This book is highly endorsed by leading physicians, it contains invaluable information in regard to diseases and what to do in cases of emergency. It should be in every home. Remember it costs you nothing if you write to Prof. Adkin now.

Mrs. C. A. Brownell, of Dane, Oklahoma, writes: "I was tortured for months by terrible pains in my head, and this, together with the loss of sleep, began to affect my mind. Your treatment has done wonders for me. I sleep well nights, and those terrible pains in my head are gone. Thank God, hope has taken the place of despondency and I have a new lease of life."

Alex. Moffat, of 338 Brown Street, Rochester, N.Y., writes: "When I applied to you for treatment I was as I might say a physical wreck, suffering from pains in the chest and stomach, also poor digestion and on the verge of nervous prostration. I had tried most everything and had about given up when I tried your treatment. My pains have gone, my nerves are strong and I feel like a new man. I wish you success in your noble work."

Mr. J. N. Purdy, Purdy's, N. Y., writes: "I have been suffering from severe stricture and bladder trouble for over three years. I was given up by my physician as incurable. My urine had to be drawn from me and the scalding and burning was intense. My suffering was almost unbearable. I took advantage of your offer, and to my great astonishment I was relieved the second day. Your cures are certainly wonderful."

Mrs. M. A. Lynch, of 1522 Girard Ave., Los Angeles, Cal., writes: "Two months ago I was almost prostrated with insomnia and general debility, from which I had suffered sixteen years. I could sleep at most only two or three hours out of the twenty-four. I suffered with severe headache and neuralgia, could scarcely endure a sound. I feel like a new being. The results of Vitaopathic treatment in my case have certainly been wonderful."

If sick be sure to write Prof. Adkin at once for free help. Be sure to state the leading symptoms of your disease, how long you have been sick, etc. Your letter will be treated with the strictest confidence and receive immediate attention. Address, Prof. Thomas F. Adkin, office 580 R, Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A.

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

and one of those automatic piano-players. This screen is to go on the back of the Broadwood."

Irene gazed at him thoughtfully.

"It's awfully good of you, Guy!" she exclaimed. "I adore music and I play wretchedly. But that a mere man should think of such a detail as a piano-screen—it passes belief."

Guy Vanbrugh twisted his moustaches in embarrassment.

"To—to be honest," he said, "it wasn't I exactly. I—you see I happened to notice the young lady busy with some of this kind of thing, and I asked her if she couldn't do something for me—that is, for you. You remember you said once that you loved fancy-work, but hadn't the patience to do it. So we—that is, Miss Davenal and I—talked it over, and she suggested quite a lot of things that might be useful."

He continued hastily. Irene's expression was both puzzled and disconcerting.

"Then I remembered," he said, "about my idea of getting you a piano-player, and between us we hit on the notion of a panel for the back of the little Broadwood. She couldn't get a design the right size, so she invented this one."

"Miss—Miss Davenal!" repeated Irene; "my dear Guy, what are you talking about?"

Her cousin adjusted a cuff-link with much intentness.

"It's quite simple," he replied; "I was seeing Davenal—John Davenal, the diver, about my yacht, and his daughter was there at the time, doing something of this sort. It was she who did this."

"Miss Davenal," murmured Irene absently; "but I thought her name was Hartigan and that she was blind."

Guy Vanbrugh raised his eyebrows.

"You must be thinking of Kit," he explained; "she is no relation of the Davenals, except as it appears now that that fellow Hartigan, her brother, married Hannah Davenal, she and Kit were sisters-in-law. Davenal's own daughter is Moira; she is fair and tall, Kit is small and dark. But how did you know about the Davenals?"

"Oh," said Irene, regarding him acutely. "Jerome whisked the little blind girl out of the way of an express at the level crossing, and when I was out riding with him the next day, we passed their cottage on the quay. She was in the garden, so Jerome stopped to ask if she was any the worse. She is a quaint, childish little creature."

Her cousin smiled.

"Kit is not as young as she seems," he remarked; "that is to say, she is by no means a child. But I hadn't any idea Jerome had been playing the knight-errant, and rescuing distressed damsels. Was she in much danger?"

Irene shrugged her shoulders.

"Only standing on the crossing," she answered. "in a species of fright, with a train thundering down on her. The gates were shut, so Jerome, who happened to be on uncle Edward's old hunter, leapt them, snatched her up, and managed to whip over the further gates into the lane beyond before the express shot by. Needless to say, he didn't tell me all this, but the blind girl did."

"By Jupiter!" cried her cousin enthusiastically, "what a clever, plucky thing to do! But there, I always knew J. was one of the best. What a jump it must have been—in and out, with no room to spare, and less than half a minute to do it and avoid knocking the poor girl's brains out at the same time. It deserves the Victoria Cross."

"So I told him, Guy," said Irene Tarleton, and she fingered a corner of the silk over which Moira had toiled so arduously. She looked up and met her cousin's glance.

"Guy," she observed slowly, "I should like to see Miss Davenal and say how much I admire her wonderful talent. What is she—a precocious country girl, or a lady?"

Guy Vanbrugh pulled mechanically at his driving-glove.

"A lady," he answered, "and not one of Nature's only. Her father has had her rather highly educated. But he is devotedly attached to her, and she has the simplest and most womanly of tastes, and is contented to live in the station to which she has been accustomed."

"You said she was fair," added Irene, watching him. "Is she pretty, or only a well-behaved, flaxen-headed frump, clever with her needle and able to read Browning?"

Her cousin's mouth relaxed; his amusement was unmistakable.

"She is more than ordinarily good-looking," he said, "and her hair is not flaxen, but of the tint of a marigold. And I do not suppose she has ever opened a volume of Browning in her life—not that one can be sure, for she is too shy and unpretentious to parade her interests, in books, or in anything else."

Irene dropped the silk she was examining and took a step to her cousin's side.

"Guy," she remarked, with a ripple of mirth in her voice, "would you like me to go and make friends with this wonderful young lady?" She had laid a slight yet perceptible emphasis on the word "friends." Guy Vanbrugh trifled with his gloves.

"I'm—I'm sure she would be very glad," he said. "I—I have spoken to her of you."

Irene burst out laughing.

"You dear, transparent fellow!" she ejaculated. "Well, I'll go and see Miss Davenal, and I won't chaff her or you till you choose to take me into your confidence. I suppose she's merely taking her time—we all do!"

Guy twisted at the button of his glove.

"I mustn't say 'yes' to what you mean, Irene," he stammered, "I—I'm not quite free, yet, to talk frankly. But I should like you to know Miss Davenal, especially——"

What more he would have said must remain matter of conjecture, for he ceased abruptly. Lady Tarleton had emerged from the library hard by. When she saw the two standing in close converse by the oaken settle, her eyes lit with a swift, false smile, and she advanced towards them.

"Ah, my dear Guy!" she exclaimed, "and what brings you to the Tower? Not that it is not a great pleasure to see you, but you really have been ignoring us so shamefully, that a visit from you is quite in the nature of a surprise."

She passed round the settle to offer him her hand. Her glance fell on the silken panel, and she wrinkled her brows, struck by a suggestion of familiarity with it.

Then she remembered; she had seen just such a one at Hawthorn Cottage, during the singular interview with Guy and Moira Davenal—it had occupied a corner, stretched upon its lath frame the better to be manipulated.

Her eyes, sharper than either of her auditors, had chanced to suspect, had marked not only the nature, but the beauty of the work. But she kept her countenance, despite the recognition.

"What a lovely thing!" she said.

"Yes, isn't it?" responded Irene, with secret amusement. "Guy had it done for me. It is part of my birthday present."

"I thought perhaps Irene would be interested in one of those automatic piano-playing contrivances," supplemented Guy Vanbrugh, "so I ordered one to be sent to Portland Place, together with a little Broadwood I took a fancy to, and—and, seeing some of this work that had been done locally, I ordered a panel of it for the back of the Broadwood."

Lady Tarleton's thin lips twitched, and her false smile grew.

"How very sweet of you to remember the dear girl's birthday!" she said. "But there, I might have known you wouldn't forget such an important occasion!" And the speaker gave to the words that extravagant accentuation affected by elderly folk when they think fit to banter the sentimental preferences of the younger generation. She inspected the panel patronisingly.

"Quite creditably done," she commented, "and you are right, my dear Guy, to support local industries. Well, I must run away, I have been talking business to your uncle for an hour, and I ordered the carriage at eleven."

(*Continued overleaf.*)

Digitized by Google

She gave her hand to her nephew again, and her gaze encountered his steadily, and with a cynical, good-tempered significance.

"You ought to show Guy those wonderful curios of your uncle's, Irene," she added, "he would be most interested. They are most marvellous carvings, Guy, incredibly ugly china and jewels, and things that it is death to bring out of some extraordinary country or other your uncle managed to penetrate into. They're all set out now in the justice-room."

Irene took her cousin's arm, it tickled her to poke sly fun at her mother's matrimonial machinations.

"Come on, Guy," she said, "we'll go and look at the curiosities, like good little kiddies on a wet day!"

And, nothing loth to have an additional opportunity of probing Guy Vanbrugh's secret, she marched him off gaily, through the hall, and down the corridors that led to the justice-room.

Lady Tarleton gazed after them.

"Does Irene love him?" she muttered. "That would be a strong lever to part him and this—this village girl. In that case is Irene only flirting with this newspaper man? I wish I knew."

She sighed and turned. The silken panel, still hanging over the back of the settle, attracted her attention, and she frowned.

"Pretty, proud, and clever," she murmured. "The girl is no mean enemy. I must get Guy away if it is possible. Yet, in the alternative, I must not leave him here, with her."

Thus communing with herself, Lady Tarleton had moved towards the staircase, and was ascending it. Sweeping absent-mindedly round a curve, she brushed against someone coming down, and, glancing up, beheld Paul Jerome. He paused and apologised before passing down. Lady Tarleton re-assured him effusively, but peered at his retreating figure through her lorgnette with an evil scowl on her pale features.

"I must get rid of you," she told herself, "you, my dear Mr. Jerome, are a very unimportant, and yet a very inconvenient pawn. It should not be difficult to sweep you off the board."

Oblivious to this contemptuous epitome of his position, the war-correspondent made for the library from which Lady Tarleton had so recently emerged. As he neared the door, a footman came through from the rear of the hall, and followed him into the room.

Edward Stormont was writing at a table in the middle of the great, book-lined apartment. About the floor were strewn various packing-cases, their contents of unmounted skins, horns, native stuffs, and implements of barbaric warfare and agricultural scattered around. The explorer raised his head as his friend entered.

"Hullo, Jerome," he said. "I was wondering what had become of you. I am a lamentable host, I know, but, to tell you the truth; you seemed to have a distinct preference for feminine society, and so I——"

He stopped, seeing the footman.

"Well?" he asked.

The servant stepped forward.

"Mr. Ussher, sir," he said; "would be glad if you could spare him a moment."

Edward Stormont growled an anathema upon the detective.

"Here, Jerome," he observed, "you profess to be interested by this blundering Argus. Help me to grapple with his latest inspiration, his portentous mystery bores me horribly."

"With pleasure," assented the war-correspondent, and sat down on a corner of the big writing-table. Edward Stormont had nodded to the footman, the latter withdrew, to return promptly with Mr. Ussher. The door closed behind the detective, and he advanced into the room. Perceiving Paul Jerome, his brows contracted.

"Mr. Jerome is quite discreet, Ussher," said Edward Stormont, "and completely in my confidence. You need have no hesitation, as I expect you are aware, in taking him into yours."

"Humph!" replied the detective. "Mr. Jerome is a newspaper man, but, no doubt, under the circumstances, and as your friend, sir, he will see the necessity of forgetting entirely his professional claims, even to the extent of a vague and guarded paragraph."

"Of course!" agreed Edward Stormont curtly.

Mr. Ussher produced his notebook.

"I have approached you, sir," he said, addressing Edward Stormont, "as a more or less disinterested party in this matter, and practically on my own responsibility. But I have always had the reputation of a scrupulously tactful investigator. I wish to retain that reputation."

"Yes, yes," he was answered curtly, "we are sure of that, Ussher. But to the point, and, by the way, take a seat."

"I thank you, sir," said Mr. Ussher, acting on the invitation. "Well, sir, my position is this. Pursuing one clue and another, calculated to throw light upon the death of Hannah Davenal, I have by chance stumbled upon an important person—one of your own gamekeepers, sir, who did not, as it happens, know the deceased woman either by name or appearance."

"Good Heavens!" cried Edward Stormont, "then how can he be considered important?"

The detective tapped his finger on the back of his note-book.

"That is the crux of the whole question," he allowed. "I have been carrying about with me a portrait of the dead woman, a photograph that I got from her husband. This I showed—with intention, sir—in the Half Brick public-house, to a group in the bar.

"I was anxious to foster gossip—it is in gossip that our best clues are often found. This gamekeeper of yours, sir, was among the group, and recognised the portrait of Hannah Davenal as that of a woman he had seen in Groudle Park a night or two before the deceased was found dead in bed."

Edward Stormont bent a pen-handle till it snapped.

"But the point, Ussher, the point," he said, irritably. The war-correspondent intervened.

"There is no doubt some reason, Mr. Ussher," he added, "why you come to Mr. Stormont about the matter. You need not, as we understand, report to him at all in the case."

The detective bent his head in solemn approval.

"You are perfectly correct, Mr. Jerome," he conceded, "but I have not fully explained. Taking your man aside, Mr. Stormont, and chatting with him persuasively, I asked him at length why he had not followed the woman, or spoken to her. His answer was that they—she had a companion, a woman closely cloaked and muffled—seemed to wish to avoid observation. Ordinarily, that would, of course, only have led him to be increasingly vigilant. But——"

Mr. Ussher halted, put a thumb in his note-book, and rested the volume on his knee.

"But," he proceeded, "there was something about Davenal's companion that, he hinted, gave him good grounds for—for discretion. She—she was, as he put it, after some considerable persuasion, and a certain amount of liquid refreshment, the 'dead spit'—which, oddly enough, sir, means in these parts, the living image—of your sister-in-law, Mr. Stormont, Lady Tarleton."

"Lady Tarleton!" repeated the master of Groudle Tower. "My sister-in-law—well, and what if it were she? If my sister-in-law goes out with her maid at night, what has that to do with the murder of the same maid a day and a night later?"

"I presume, sir," said Mr. Ussher coldly, "nothing. But it is my duty, sir, to trace every movement, every action of Hannah Davenal's life during the period immediately preceding her death. And, before attaching any weight to this story of a mysterious excursion of my lady and her maid, in the small hours of the morning—for it was in the small hours that Davenal and her companion were seen, it would be as well for me to ascertain, through you, sir, if any such excursion on Lady Tarleton's part took place."

Edward Stormont's answer was to rise and ring the bell.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" exclaimed the detective, rising hurriedly from his chair, "but what are you going to do?" Edward Stormont faced him loftily.

"Ask my sister-in-law to favour us with her presence!" he said.

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

Catarrh and Consumption.

The constantly increasing death rate from consumption is a warning to those who suffer from chronic cold or catarrh in the head, according to the views held by the editor of the "Journal for the Deaf and Review of Diseases of the Ear, Nose and Throat." In the last issue of the "Journal" this subject is discussed and several cases are given as illustrations of the tendency of nasal catarrh to extend to the throat and lungs. The tendency seems to be specially well marked in those who are subject to taking cold easily. In the same issue the editor also points out the success of the Drouet Institute in curing catarrh of the nose and throat in numerous cases where operations and cauterisations inside the nose had failed. As names and addresses are given, this will be of interest to those who have any form of catarrh of the nose, throat or ears. A free copy of the "Journal for the Deaf and Review of Diseases of the Nose, Throat and Ears," can be obtained by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The Journal also contains a Pathological Report Form, by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to the treatment of deafness and ear, nose and throat diseases. The editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination.

Rupture Free Cure.

Wonderful Home Treatment that Cures Without Pain or Loss of Time.

Dr. W. S. Rice (Dept. 953), 8 & 9, Stonecutter Street, London, E.C., has invented a method that cures rupture without pain, danger, operation, or an hour's loss of time from the day's work. To avoid all questions of doubt, he sends free to every sufferer a free trial of his method, and there can be no earthly reason why anyone, rich or poor, should not avail themselves of this generous offer. As an instance of this remarkable method, the cure of Mr. John Foulkes, 317, Beaufort Street, Toxteth Park, Liverpool, is well worth noticing. Mr. Foulkes is 74 years of age, and had suffered from a scrotal rupture for nine years. He used Dr. Rice's home method of treatment, and in a short time was cured sound as a bell. A full description and sample of this remarkable method of cure will be gladly sent upon application. It has cured thousands. Do not hesitate to give it a trial. Write at once—to day.

Mr. J. FOULKES.

COMPLEXION AND HAIR.

We receive, from day to day, many letters from readers asking us how to clear the complexion of Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, etc. The most marvellous preparation that we know of is "PERALIA," manufactured by the "Peralia" Perfumery Co. of North Shields. This wonderful liquid, while it instantly beautifies the complexion, and removes all obnoxious excrescences, such as pimples and blotches, is perfectly harmless, and its purity is guaranteed by a well-known medical man, whose certificate accompanies each bottle. Besides acting on the above, "PERALIA," by frequent application, will remove wrinkles, crow's feet, and, in fact, entirely rejuvenate the features. This is due to its penetrating action, as it makes its way through the pores of the skin, exerting its beneficial effect on each and every one, and cleansing it effectually from dirt, callous growth, and decayed tissue. "PERALIA" is, in our opinion, the only beauty specific that does its work in such a thorough and scientific manner. It is the most successful remedy we have to aid us in the fight against the ravages of either Time or Disease. If you feel that your beauty is waning, or that fine complexion being marred by disfiguring humours, you should at once have recourse to "PERALIA."

We cannot speak too highly of this preparation. Readers can obtain it of all chemists, in bottles, at 1s., 1s. 6d., and 2s. 6d., but the proprietors offer to send a sample bottle, under cover, on receipt of the price, and 3d. postage.

In conclusion we must say a word for their unique preparation "CRIMPOLINE" for curling the hair. Most women, and all young girls are extremely anxious about their hair being trim, and yet having that graceful curly appearance that is so attractive. Unlike other curling fluids, "CRIMPOLINE" is not sticky, nor greasy, and curls the hair so much that once the hair becomes curly you need not continue using it. The rain does not take the curl out of the hair either after using "CRIMPOLINE," so you need not fear that washed-out, bedraggled look again.

It is used and recommended by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc. Prices, 1s. 9d. and 2s. 6d. per bottle. When sending for, or ordering, "PERALIA," we advise you also to send for "CRIMPOLINE." Don't forget the address, "PERALIA" PERFUMERY CO., Dept. 14, Camden Street, North Shields.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

Carr. Paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s. 15/10 | £9 10s 17/6
£9 16 8 | £105s. 19/3

Juno Motor Cycle is the King of Motor Cycles, £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lowest prices; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6.

Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co. Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

SENT ON APPROVAL

Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory. 1903 Models

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44c,

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

Digitized by Google

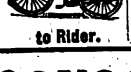
GIVEN AWAY
With this week's
HOME NOTES
(No. 484)
A PAPER PATTERN
of this
SKIRT.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.
PRICE ONE PENNY.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,
For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

From Factory



to Rider.

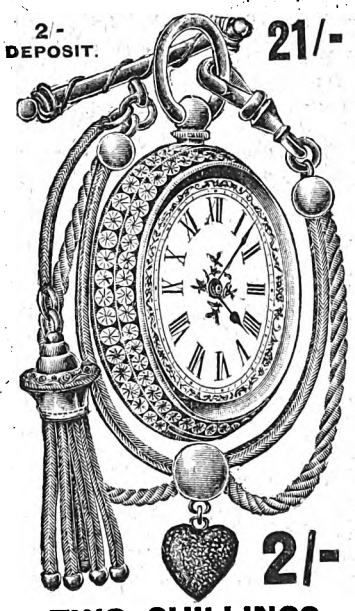
How Does This Suit You?
Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. **£14 14s** Grade for **£8 10s** Write, H Dept, Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

SONGS COPIED.
Legible as print, **5d.** page; transposed correctly, **6d.** page. Mrs. Conyers, Morchard Bishop, Devon. Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

Mrs. Conyers,
MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

THE LADY'S SILVER
"MALVERN"
WATCH AND CHAIN.

2/- DEPOSIT. **21/-**



2/-

TWO SHILLINGS
deposit (and subsequent weekly or monthly payments to suit the convenience of purchaser) secures one of these elegant and thoroughly reliable Watches and Chains for £1-1-0 instead of £2-2-0, the usual retail price.

NO DISCOUNT WHATEVER can be allowed to customers sending cash in full with order, but they will be entitled to a week's free trial of the Watch and Chain; and Cash in full will be refunded if the articles are not approved.

SPECIFICATION.—The Lady's Silver "Malvern" Watch and Chain at £1-1-0 is a marvellous production and equal quality and value has not been attempted by any other firm in the world. The Watch is fitted with a horizontal movement of excellent quality; it is fully jewelled, carefully fitted and finished throughout and thoroughly sound in every respect. The cases are Sterling Silver, beautifully finished and richly engraved, artistic dial and gold compo hands, keyless or key-wind as preferred. The Chain is real Silver of elegant design and finish and strongly made; it is of full length but owing to want of space this cannot be shown in the illustration.

The Watch and Chain are forwarded post free, complete with signed warranty for ten years. *They are produced by special and greatly improved machinery, and are supplied DIRECT to the Purchaser, at a small commission on the actual nett cost of production.*

When writing, please mention this publication.

W. E. WATTS FOUNDED 1858. WHOLESALE DEPOT 106-108 DERBY R^D THE ONLY ADDRESS— NOTTINGHAM.

To CURE Drunkards

Mrs. Geo. Fuller, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

Beauty.
Icilma is the only absolutely safe Natural preparation for the **Complexion.** All who wish to keep a good complexion or who have any skin trouble, however slight, should send id. stamp for postage of free sample and **Hygiene of the Skin** to ICILMA (Dept. 127), 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6
The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

---

2 PENCE DAILY
Any respectable person, male or female, can obtain a warranted cycle on **easy payments of 1 shilling** or more weekly. No guarantors required. **Mutual trust between our patrons and ourselves.** Catalogue Free.
Symonds' London Stores,
124-128, City Rd., London, E.C.

ESTABLISHED 1851.
BIRKBECK BANK,
Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** repayable on demand. **2½%**

The **Birkbeck Almanack**, with full particulars, post free
C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

MACKINTOSH'S
Is DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

Digitized by Google

On the Rolling Wave.

She: "Take care, Alfred! That isn't the remedy for sea-sickness. Don't you see the bottle is marked poison?" He (groaning): "That's the one I want."

A Dangerous Time.

When a girl goes round the house pointing out pictures and things that are her personal property it is a pretty good sign that she is contemplating matrimony.

Sent a Substitute.

"You are not the young lady to whom I give lessons," said the music master. "No. The young lady to whom you give lessons is ill, and she has sent me to practise for her."

Mutual Exposure.

"Can you forgive me and love me still?" said the new bride, "when I confess that my teeth are artificial?" "Thank goodness," cried the groom as he snatched off his wig, "now I can cool my head."

A Gentle Hint.

"I've stopped asking people if my bonnet is on straight." The Husband: "Why, my dear?" The Wife: "I love you too much, John, to disgrace you by calling a body's attention to an old bonnet like this."

Sure Signs.

"I think Annie must have accepted young Willespoon last night," said Mr. Smith. "She hasn't said a word to me. What makes you think so?" asked his wife. "I ran across him several times to-day, and every time he saw me he turned as pale as a sheet."

Her Missionary Work.

The Pastor: "Miss Ethel, you should be engaged in some missionary work." Miss Ethel: "Oh, I am, and have been for some time past." The Pastor: "I'm so grateful to hear you say so. In what field are you engaged?" Miss Ethel (proudly): "I'm teaching my parrot not to swear."

Charlie's Strange Mistake.

Old Mrs. Jones entered the drawing-room unexpectedly and spoilt a very pretty tableau. "I was just whispering a secret in Cousin Jennie's ear," explained Charlie. "I'm sorry," said the old lady gravely, "that your eyesight has become so bad that you mistake Jennie's mouth for her ear."

Taking All the Curls.

"I am glad you like my new watch charm, Miss Laura. It is a pretty ornament I think, though it needs something to make it complete. May I ask you for a lock of your lovely hair?" "Certainly, Mr. Ferguson. You can have all you want, but—but—doesn't it seem a pity to mar the symmetry of these curls by cutting one off?" "It does," responded George, with quick and eager comprehension. "I wouldn't do anything for worlds to destroy their perfect symmetry. I'll take them all." And the youth ornamented the vicinity of his watch pocket with the entire head for a long, long time.

Different Men.

"I love and I am loved." "Then you must be perfectly happy." "But it isn't the same man!"

Trouble Taken in Vain.

Grace: "George, all is lost." George: "Why?" Grace: "Papa has oiled those squeaky shoes you bought him."

A Nasty Smack.

Ethel: "They say that Blanche is to marry a man old enough to be her grandfather." Florence: "Why, everybody knows there is no such man!"

Once Was Enough.

He: "I suppose that young idiot Smith has proposed to you a dozen times?" She: "No. Once was enough. Come and see us when we get settled."

A Dangerous Task.

She: "It must have taken a great deal of persistence on your part to learn to play the violin so well." He: "It did. I had to go constantly armed for five years."

No Fire After All.

He: "I heard an alarm of fire, I think. I must go and see where it is." Returning after twenty minutes: "It wasn't fire," he said shortly. "Nor water either," she replied, still more briefly.

Nicer to Ride.

"Algy, dear," she murmured, "I should be happy if I could walk through life hand-in-hand with you; but——" "But what, dearest?" he anxiously asked. "But I should be happier if I could ride."

Papa Would Not See.

George: "And if things do not go well with us the first year, darling, I—hem—presume your father will not see us suffer?" Birdie (sighing): "No, dear, poor papa's eyesight is growing rapidly worse, even now."

An Unwelcome Visitor.

She: "Papa says that when coming to see me you must not come in a 'bus any more." He: "Really! Does he expect me to walk all this distance?" She: "Of course not. He says all he asks is that you will come in a carriage hired by the hour."

Which Was the More Becoming?

"She is determined to be a musician, but cannot decide whether to make a speciality of the violin or piano." "Has she no positive predilection for either?" "Oh, yes; but some of her friends think she looks better standing, and others that sitting is more becoming to her."

He'd Made an Appeal.

"Wasn't that young Mr. Tiff who left the house as I came in?" asked the judge of his eldest daughter. "Yes, papa!" "Did I not issue an injunction against his coming here any more!" "Yes, papa; but he appealed to a higher court, and mamma reversed your decision."

The Postmistress Knew the Reason.

"Any letter for me?" asked a young lady of a post-mistress in a country town. "No," was the reply. "Strange!" said the young lady aloud to herself as she turned away. "Nothing strange about it!" cried the post-mistress over the counter. "You ain't answered the last letter he writ ye."

No Need to Waste Time.

"Harry," she said, "if a fire were to break out suddenly in the house what would be your first impulse, do you think?" "Well, my first thought would be for you, of course. I would get you to a place of safety, and then do what I could to extinguish the flames." "That would be very nice of you, Harry, to think of me first, but if a fire were to break out now, for instance, wouldn't you lose valuable time reaching me from such a long way across the room?"

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

The Troubles of a Colonial.

"HORTON," who is a Colonial, has been keeping company with a young lady for three years, but they are not engaged, as the young lady's mother will not give her consent. "HORTON" is thirty, and the young lady will be twenty-one this month, and the question he wishes answered is—"If I put up the banns, can her mother stop them? And if she tries to do so, is the minister compelled to take any notice of her? She has no reason whatever to stop them except her dislike to me."

* * * * *

When a girl becomes of age she is her own mistress and responsible for her actions. The mother, of course, can forbid the banns, but will be powerless to make them null and void unless she can show sufficient reason why this should be done. The mere fact of her objection to you would not be considered sufficient. I wish you every happiness, "HORTON," and hope that the young lady's mother will be won over to your side before the banns are put up. The scenes that follow the forbidding of banns are always unpleasant.

Should She Become Engaged?

"MARECHAL NIEL ROSE" (whom I shall call "M. N. R.") has been keeping company with a young man for twelve months, and they are deeply in love with each other. Unfortunately, "M. N. R.'s" mother does not believe in love; she married for position, but has not been at all happy with her husband, so "M. N. R." is not encouraged to have a young man, and has not introduced her present one to her mother. The young man now says that he will have to go abroad for nearly four years, and wants "M. N. R." to become engaged to him before he starts, but she doesn't quite know what to do, because of her mother. Though she does not live at home, she feels she ought to be guided to a certain extent by what her mother says.

* * * * *

You are both very young, "M. N. R."—you say you are only twenty and he twenty-two—and I do not advise you to contract a definite engagement at present. Your mother's arguments would not carry much weight with me, as she has thoroughly proved for herself that marriage without love was an utter failure, but she is right in saying that this may be only fascination because of your youth.

* * * * *

Tell your young man that you do not see your way to entering into a definite engagement at present, but are willing to wait for him on the understanding that if either of you meets someone you like better, you are quite at liberty to become engaged without causing any bad feeling or mutual recrimination.

A Time of Probation.

"M. H." is not quite eighteen. She has kept company with a young man for three months, but he now tells her that they must be nothing more than friends for a stated time. "M. H." has promised to do this, and she wonders whether, if during this time she goes for a walk with any other young man is it likely to cause any difference between her and the original young man.

* * * * *

Provided you are satisfied with the explanation you received when your more intimate relations were turned for the time to those of friendship only, I think it would be much wiser for you not to accept invitations to go for walks with any other young man.

What is the Matter?

"IN LOVE WITH A CUSTOMER"—please do not use such a long pseudonym again—keeps a tobacconist's shop. For some time a young man used to come in regularly several times every day, and always had a pleasant word for her, but latterly he has been coming very irregularly, and when he does come seems as if he could not be civil. "IN LOVE WITH A CUSTOMER" took a great liking to the young man, and wonders if she has done anything to offend him, and how she may find out without appearing to be forward.

* * * * *

You say his brother is a regular customer of yours, so surely it would be quite simple to inquire of him whether anything were the matter with the object of your fancy. Tell him you missed such a regular customer, and hoped you had done nothing to make him want to stay away, or something of that sort. The brother need have no suspicion that you are inquiring out of anything more than ordinary curiosity.

Has She Another Lover?

"VIX" has been engaged to a young lady for a year. They do not live in the same town. He has written to her regularly twice a week, but has only heard from her seven or eight times, and then the letters are exceedingly cold. He cannot go to see her because of his business, and wonders how he is to find out whether she has ceased to care for him.

* * * * *

I should advise you to write to the young lady, "VIX," and ask her to name the day for the wedding. If you receive an evasive answer you will know that her affection towards you has cooled. Then you should ask her if this is the case, and whether she would like to be released from the engagement. It is no use continuing an engagement on such unsatisfactory terms. Your further procedure in the matter must be determined by her reply.

An Indifferent Lover.

"F. N. A." is in love with a young man who has known her since she was a child, and once told her that he was deeply interested in her future. For a month or six weeks he is in the habit of paying her a good deal of attention, and then for a week or ten days he keeps away from her, after which he turns up again as if nothing had happened. "F. N. A." wants to know what she should do regarding his behaviour.

* * * * *

Next time he returns to you after one of these lapses, I should ask him pretty plainly for a full explanation. If he refuses to do this, tell him he needn't trouble to come again to see you. Treatment such as this should soon bring him to his senses, and you will quickly know one way or another whether he is serious or only trifling with your affections.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

THIS IS OUR TRADE MARK

THE

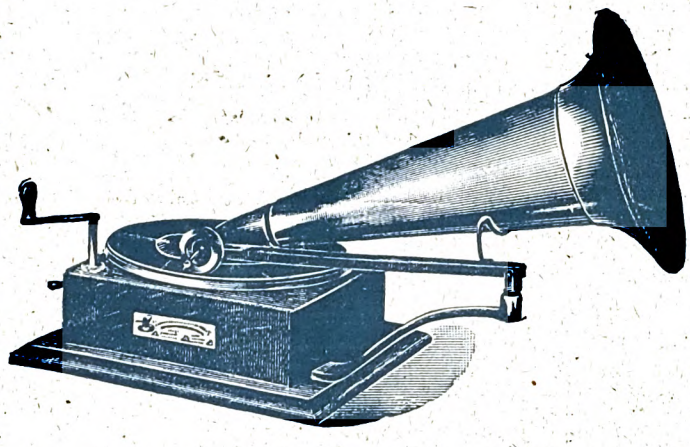
GRAMOPHONE

Entertains, Educates, and Teaches.

If you wish to cultivate voice reproduction, if you are anxious to improve your technique, you should listen to and learn by Gramophone Records made by the greatest singers and musicians of the world.

GRAMOPHONES.

No. 3 - - -	£3 3
No. 4 - - -	4 4
Menarch Junior	5 10
Monarch - -	7 10
Double Spring Monarch - -	10 0
Triple Spring Monarch - -	12 10



GRAMOPHONE RECORDS.

7 inch Records, 2s. 6d.

Grand Concert Records, 5s.

Red Label Records, 10s.

11 Special Records Sung by Cam. F. Tamagno, £1 each.

Monarch Junior, £5 10s.

The Gramophone is not a mere producer of a tune or a song but a scientific instrument which faithfully reproduces the actual voice or playing of a singer or a musical instrument combination. The Gramophone makes a home happy. It is the World's Entertainer. It reproduces the best music from every country in Europe at a trifling cost. Thanks to the Gramophone everyone can become acquainted with all that is best in the world of music.

On receipt of a postcard we will send you Catalogues and name and address of the nearest dealer in our Gramophones.

THE GRAMOPHONE AND TYPEWRITER LTD.,

21 City Road, London, E.C.

Digitized by Google

Cadbury's cocoa

THE STANDARD OF HIGHEST PURITY.—*The Lancet.*

Cadbury's is Cocoa and the Best Cocoa only.

ABSOLUTELY PURE.

"Cocoa alone is an excellent food as well as a stimulant, having a salutary action upon the nerve centres."
The Lancet.

"Cadbury's is a perfectly pure Cocoa of the highest quality."—*Medical Annual.*

A Perfect Beverage for all Seasons of the Year.

TO BE FIRST

Is to occupy an enviable position. Many aspire for first place, but few attain it. To acquire the lead, aspiration and push alone are not sufficient. Merit is required. This is exactly why . . . .

BEECHAM'S PILLS

stand foremost among medicines. They possess real merit, and have proved themselves worthy of a permanent position in the family medicine chest. Trial purchasers become regular users, because they find nothing to equal Beecham's Pills for dispelling

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,
Indigestion, Sick Headache, Languor,

and other such troubles which arise from a Disordered Stomach. They regulate and tone up the entire system. The genuine worth of BEECHAM'S PILLS has obtained for them the unique position of having the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World.

Sold Everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills) and 2/9 (168 Pills).

BIRD'S CUSTARD POWDER

BIRD'S CUSTARD is Pure, Nutritious, and easily digested. It is a delicious article of food for daily use. Exquisite for Luncheon, Dinner, or Supper. Eggs often disagree; BIRD'S CUSTARD never.

In Springtime,

BIRD'S CUSTARD AND RHUBARB. Wholesome and healthful, rich and creamy. BIRD'S CUSTARD is the one thing needed with all Stewed, Tinned, or Bottled Fruits. It enhances their flavor and imparts to them a grateful mellowness.

NO EGGS! NO RISK! NO TROUBLE!

SHORT STORIES.

No. 748.] Week ending May 2nd, 1903. [Price One Penny.

"BY HEAVEN, I RECOGNISE YOU! YOU ARE LADY MADRESFIELD—MURDERESS!"

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "The Mystery of Madresfield Towers." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

GRAVES' WATCHES

"SAFE AS THE BANK OF ENGLAND."

THIS is the feeling of those who deal with the Firm of J. G. GRAVES, because all Goods are sent out to handle and examine at leisure, and NEED NOT BE KEPT unless they give the fullest satisfaction.

THE 'BEATRICE' 25/-

Lady's Sterling Silver Horizontal Watch.

Specification. Horizontal Movement, Jewelled throughout; Automatic Stop to prevent over-winding, Artistic Dial, Handsomely Engraved, Extra Strong Sterling Silver Cases.

A Thoroughly Reliable Timekeeper, and Warranted for Five Years.

Terms. Send only 2/6 with order, and remit the balance in nine more MONTHLY payments of 2/6; or, if you prefer to pay the balance in one sum within seven days of delivery, a *Handsome Bonus Present* will be sent you as discount.

THE LARGEST WATCH-SALES FIRM IN THE WORLD.

No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., etc., post free.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. No risk. Good pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 DIVISION ST., SHEFFIELD

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

£8 8s.	15/10	£9 10s.	17/6
£9	16/8	£10 5s.	19/3

Juno Motor Cycle is the King of Motor Cycles, £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lowest prices; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/8; Motor Horn, 5/6.

Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 Illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co., Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

Thousands of ladies are riding our Cycles, sold by us at £4 to £8. Cash or easy payments. We sell to Wives, Daughters, Teachers, Nurses, Clerks, Cashiers, Typists, Bookkeepers, Factory Workers, School Girls, and others in all occupations. Circulars in plain sealed envelope free.

FOR YOU

SYMONDS' STORES, 124-128, City Rd., London, E.C.

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.

TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with

"KEATING'S POWDER,"

unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere. ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

PUREST & NICEST.

PINK'S JAMS

A good housekeeper thinks The "pink" of Jams is PINK'S.

From Factory to Rider.

How Does This Suit You? Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. £14 14s Grade for £6 10s Write, H Dept. Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

Digitized by Google

Short Stories

No. 748.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending May 2nd, 1903.

The Mystery of Madresfield Towers.

A Story of Love and Sacrifice.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

"You did not expect to be found out. No, you thought you had managed your theft too cleverly for that. You young scoundrel, I'll give you into custody though you are my wife's brother. Not a word, Chèrie; not a word in his defence. What I've said, I'll do."

Lord Madresfield glared vindictively at the two young creatures who cowered before him. He was not much over sixty, but he looked an old, old man, for his constitution had been shattered by dissipation in early life, and his health was wretched.

Five years ago he had taken it into his head to marry, and had selected the daughter of an old friend, who, ruined in health and in pocket, had been glad to force his seventeen-year-old girl into a marriage with the wealthy peer by way of provision for her future.

He had died shortly after the wedding, leaving his only other child, a lad of fourteen, to Lord Madresfield's care. Graham Le Mesurier found a home with his sister and her husband, but it was not a happy one.

Lord Madresfield's fancy for his wife soon gave place to indifference, and he never liked the boy, so he made their lives as miserable as he well could. Through Chèrie's devoted love for her brother he tortured her, and enjoyed her agony.

"Yes," he resumed, after gloating for a moment or two over the terror on the white faces before him, "I have made up my mind. I'm not going to be robbed with impunity. If Harland, my valet, had helped himself to my money I should send for the police. I shall do the same with you."

And with that he marched out of the room.

"Do—do you think—he—he *means* it, Graham?" faltered Chèrie after a pause.

The boy nodded gloomily.

"Old *brute*," he said, with emphasis, "I wish he were dead, I do. *Why* isn't he dead? He is always ill and messing about with quack medicines. *I'd* give him a dose if I dared. If only I were sure not to be found out, I'd put something in his medicine that would cure him of all complaints."

"Oh, don't talk so wildly," cried his sister. "You don't mean it, I know, but——"

"*Don't* I mean it, though? There are lots of chemicals about the house—your photographic things, for instance—a dose of which would soon put an end to him, and I'd have no compunctions about getting rid of him, if only for your sake. He's a brute to you, Chèrie."

All rights reserved.]

"Never mind that, dear. Only tell me—you did not take his money, did you?"

The lad looked at her remorsefully.

"I'm sorry, Chèrie, but—I did. It was only five pounds, and Desmond Fancourt put me up to it. I can't help fancying he told the old man about it, for how else it was found out I can't think."

Chèrie broke into heartrending sobs, and threw herself on a couch in an agony of grief. Graham knelt beside her, kissing her, and trying to comfort her.

"Don't cry, darling. I'm not worth your tears. I'm sick of this life, Chèrie, and I won't stay longer. I've been betting and getting into mischief—Desmond led me into it—but I'm going to turn over a new leaf. Leslie Atherton has promised to help me to get into something, and to-night—he is to dine and sleep here, I know—I'll ask him to do all he can to get me away from here at once."

Chèrie sat up, and fixed her sweet, mournful brown eyes on her brother.

"Oh, Graham, if you will be guided by Leslie, and never listen to Desmond, I shall not fear for you. Now I am going to Madresfield to plead for you. I know he will never prosecute my brother."

"If he does I swear I'll kill him," cried Graham.

Chèrie was right. Lord Madresfield had never had any intention of prosecuting his young brother-in-law, but it cost Chèrie a hard battle to gain assurance of this. Her husband poured out the vials of his wrath upon her, and abused her quite frantically.

His loud, screaming voice, raised to hysterical pitch, Chèrie's sobs of fear and grief, drew the attention of the servants, and two or three lingered round the door, half inclined to interfere, especially when the sound of a heavy blow was heard, followed by a low cry of pain.

But after that all was quiet, and Chèrie appeared at dinner in the evening, very pale, but composed, and looking lovelier then ever, though there was a great bruise on her snowy shoulder which had taxed her maid's ingenuity to conceal under a cloud of chiffon.

The only guests at dinner were Desmond Fancourt, Lord Madresfield's nephew and heir presumptive, and Leslie Atherton, a distant connection of the family. Both were handsome, distinguished-looking men, dark, tall, and thirty years of age.

Digitized by Google

Graham did not appear, and his sister longed for the evening to be over that she might relieve his mind with the assurance that Lord Madresfield had relented.

The old man retired early to rest, and after a little conversation with her guests, Chèrie pleaded a headache and went to her room.

Dismissing the maid she sat by the fire for an hour or so, sadly meditating on her shadowed life, until noticing that it was already past midnight, she went to her brother's room, tip-toeing past her husband's door, from which came the murmur of voices.

He was troubled with insomnia, and liked to have someone to talk to, so his valet, Harland, was often on duty in his master's room until daybreak.

Graham's door was locked, and no answer came to Chèrie's low tap and gentle call. She waited a little, and then went back to her room, resolved to wait till morning with her good news.

"My lady! My lady!" said a terrified voice in Chèrie's ear next morning. "Oh, my lady, wake."

"I am not asleep," returned Chèrie. "What is it, Robson?"

"It's something awful, my lady. Harland went in as usual to his lordship's room with the Benger's food he takes at seven o'clock and he found—oh, my lady!"

"Found what?" cried Chèrie. She had jumped out of bed, slipped into a dressing gown, and thrust her pretty white feet into slippers.

"His lordship is dead, my lady," said the maid, very solemnly.

"Dead!"

"And the doctor says my lord has been poisoned."

"Poisoned!" repeated Chèrie, and into her mind came her brother's threats of the day before. Could Graham have been driven to this terrible deed?

Eagerly she questioned Robson. Harland, it seemed, had at once, on finding his master dead, summoned Desmond Fancourt, the new Lord Madresfield, who had promptly undertaken the direction of affairs, and he, the doctor, and Leslie Atherton, and her brother were now in the death chamber, awaiting the arrival of the police.

Pale and shivering, Chèrie crept back to bed.

"I feel sick and ill, Robson," she whispered. "This is a fearful shock. Leave me to myself; I am best alone. No; I will have no brandy, no tea; nothing. Only leave me alone. Don't disturb me until I ring. I shall not be wanted. The direction of affairs is in other hands. My reign here is over."

Robson retired, weeping ostentatiously, and speedily forgot all about her mistress in the delicious excitement of a tragedy in the household.

The moment she was gone, Chèrie sprang out of bed once more, and began pacing the room in a storm of anguish. It was not grief for her husband that overwhelmed her; he had been a hard, merciless tyrant to her, and, though this sudden death shocked and awed her, she could not sorrow for him.

All her thoughts were for her brother. She never doubted that he had committed this terrible crime, and her one idea was to save him from its consequences. But how?

Married before her seventeenth birthday, doomed ever since to a life of seclusion by a cross-grained valetudinarian, Chèrie was, at twenty-two, as ignorant of the world and as simple-minded as a child of twelve.

It struck her that if she could draw suspicion on herself for a time, her brother would have an opportunity to escape, and, without forming any further plans, she resolved upon flight.

If she disappeared suspicion would rest upon her, and, while she was being pursued, Graham would have time to get away in safety.

It was not until late in the afternoon that Chèrie's flight was discovered. She had been inquired for, but her illness and desire for quiet, as reported by her maid, were so very natural under the circumstances that her wishes were respected, until the detective, whose professional services had been called in, asked to see her.

Robson was sent with a respectful message, but returned after a lengthened absence, in a great flurry.

"My lady's gone," she cried. "I've looked everywhere, and there's not a sign of her in all the house."

"Then," exclaimed Desmond Fancourt, or Lord Madresfield, as he now was, "the mystery is solved. Lady Madresfield is the murderess of her husband."

With the exception of her brother and of Leslie Atherton, this was the general opinion.

At the inquest, it appeared that Lord Madresfield and his wife had lived most unhappily together, that there had been a terrible quarrel on the night before his death, during which the husband had furiously struck his wife, that she had been seen by a belated servant, stealing down the corridor leading to Lord Madresfield's apartments long after midnight, and after she had dismissed her maid and ostensibly gone to bed.

It also appeared that, being an ardent photographer, the poison had been ready to her hand.

Again it appeared that Lord Madresfield was in the habit of frequently altering his will, and that one made some months before, when the young wife chanced to be high in favour, had left her, the estates being unentailed, practically everything he possessed.

Later, however, Lord Madresfield had made a fresh will, leaving everything to Desmond Fancourt, except a small annuity to his wife, to whom he showed the will, vowing it should be his last. This will could not be found.

With all this mass of evidence, coupled with the mute, but expressive evidence of her flight, it is scarcely surprising that the coroner's jury brought in the verdict of wilful murder against Charila, Lady Madresfield, and that a warrant was issued for her arrest.

But Charila, Lady Madresfield, seemed to have vanished into thin air. No out-door clothing had been missed, and yet, without them, she could not have gone far in that bleak November weather unremarked.

No one knew that an imbecile beggar-woman was in the habit of lurking in the grounds of Madresfield Towers for the purpose of attracting the attention of its kindhearted lady, and that from her last interview there she had gone away the poorer by her long cloak and battered sailor hat, and the richer by a goodly heap of silver.

* * * * *

Nell, the flower-girl, as she was known among others of her trade, tramped wearily along to take up an advantageous position at Westminster Bridge.

Perhaps a very close observer might have noted the signs of gentle birth in Nell's clear-cut, refined features, shell-like ears, and small, well-shapen hands and feet, but a ragged gown and apron, a faded shawl, and a battered, aggressive-looking straw hat do not lend distinction to the wearer, and the casual passer-by merely remarked that she was a very pretty girl.

Nell had had no luck all day. It was the end of March, and that turbulent month, having come in like a lamb, was going out in the most lion-like manner.

People did not care to stop and buy flowers in a cutting wind, and it was growing very late besides, so Nell looked up anxiously as a gentleman paused in front of her.

She had selected a lovely spray, and was about to proffer it when her blood turned to ice by a well-known voice exclaiming:

"By Heaven! I recognise you! You are Lady Madresfield. Murderess!"

It was Desmond Fancourt—the present Lord Madresfield.

She gazed at him, helpless, fascinated.

"Come with me," he said imperiously. "I must talk with you. There is a nook not far off, a little alley. Here it is. We can talk there without being remarked. Now tell me, how have you managed to escape justice so long? Where have you lived these past three months?"

"Why do you question me? What have I done?"

"What have you done, woman? You poisoned my poor, helpless old uncle, and then, terrified at what you had done, you ran away."

"I did not poison him," she forced from between her rigid lips. "Let me go. You have no right to keep me."

Digitized by Google

"I ought to give you into custody," he replied sternly. "Do you know that there is a warrant out for your arrest?"

"But I am innocent," she said simply.

"You'll find some difficulty in proving it. But, for the honour of the family, I'm not going to give you into custody. I'm going to take your future into my own hands. Will you meet me here to-morrow night, at midnight? You need not try to evade me, for if you do, I shall put the police on your track."

"I'll come," she promised. "But tell me, where is my brother?"

"Not far from here. He is sharing Atherton's chambers at present, I believe."

"Where?"

He told her, and, with another warning not to try to escape him, he turned away.

Graham Le Mesurier came swinging along towards home at a great pace, and was turning in at the door of the "Mansions," where he lived, when he nearly ran against a flower girl standing there. He gave one look into her face, and drew her swiftly into the shelter of the porch.

"Chèrie, my poor little sister!" he breathed. "Come upstairs quickly, dear. There's no one about. Here we are. Leslie, I have found her. I have found Chèrie."

Atherton started up in astonishment.

"Chèrie! In this disguise! Do you know you are suspected of murdering your husband?"

Chèrie sank wearily down on a low chair.

"Yes," she replied faintly. "I—I wanted them to suspect me."

"You *wanted* them to suspect you?" repeated Atherton in profound astonishment. "But why? *We* never doubted you, Graham and I. We know you are innocent."

She turned her sweet brown eyes on her brother's face, but it only expressed the tenderest sympathy.

"Why did you do it, dear?" he asked gently.

"I thought you—oh, Graham, I was afraid that you——"

"Good Heavens! You thought *I* was guilty?" he interrupted, aghast. "Chèrie, how could you?"

"You said—oh, you said—about poison," she faltered.

"My poor little self-sacrificing sister, you ought to have known me better. I did not mean a word I said. My dear, how pale you look! How you must have suffered!"

He had got out wine and sandwiches, and she ate ravenously, while the two men watched her with anxious eyes.

"I haven't had much food to-day," she said, attempting to smile, "but I feel better now, and will tell you all."

It was a very pathetic little tale, and brought tears to the eyes of both men. Then she told them of her encounter with the new Lord Madresfield, and of her promise to meet him again on the morrow.

"He's very bitter against you," said Graham; "and spoke of you in such terms after your flight was discovered that Leslie and I both quarrelled with him and have heard nothing of him since we left Madresfield Towers. You acted nobly, my dear sister, but yet, it was an act of madness."

"It was," she agreed sadly, "but at the time I thought it the right thing to do. How could I have doubted you, Graham? But who *could* have been guilty?"

"I have an idea," began Leslie, meditatively stroking his moustache; "not yet ripe enough to discuss, but still, an idea. I distrust Harland—your husband's valet—and believe he did not speak the truth at the inquest. I know where he is, and shall interview him the first thing to-morrow."

"Ought I to give myself up?" asked Chèrie, but Leslie shook his head.

"Not yet. Not until you've seen Madresfield again."

* * * * *

It was a wild night, dark and tempestuous. Chèrie shivered as she stood waiting Desmond's arrival, and shivered as she looked into his fierce, deadly pale face as he came up.

"I have made up my mind about you," he began abruptly. "For the honour of the name I will save you from public disgrace. You shall go abroad, but I will supply you with funds to live on in another name. But first, you must sign this confession of your crime which I have written out."

"I am innocent," said Chèrie, putting aside the paper, "and I have decided to stand my trial."

"You fool, if you do, nothing can save you from the gallows. You are the only one who had anything to gain by your husband's death. The evidence against you is overwhelming."

"You have some reason for wishing me out of the way," she retorted. "Perhaps, because if I am got rid of, you will be master of Madresfield Towers."

"I am that already. The missing will has turned up, the one leaving me everything, and you, only two hundred a year. You forgot that latest will when you murdered your husband. For you did it, you know."

"You villain, you did it yourself," cried the girl, in a flash of inspiration. "I see it all now. You murdered my husband. I know you did."

"You know too much," he said between his teeth, and in another moment he had her by the throat in an iron grasp that held her rigid, unable to move, or cry out, or draw a breath. Everything swam before her, and her senses failed her. Then the iron grip relaxed and she drew a long breath, and opened her eyes to see Madresfield struggling in the grasp of Atherton.

"You villain, you infernal villain," panted Leslie, "we were just in time to prevent another murder. *Another*, do you hear? Harland has confessed. Ha! you know what that means, do you? Graham, help; he'll get away."

There was a fierce struggle. Chèrie heard the frantic blowing of police whistles, cries, shouts, the noise of running feet, and then came the sound of a revolver shot, and Chèrie lost consciousness in a dead faint.

* * * * *

More than a year had passed since the trial of Lady Madresfield, for her husband's murder had provided a nine days' sensation for the public.

Desmond, Lord Madresfield had succeeded in wounding himself fatally, but he lived long enough to make a full confession of his guilt, and this, together with Harland's evidence, fully exonerated Chèrie.

Desmond confessed that, being in financial difficulties, and knowing that his uncle had made a will in his favour, he resolved to get rid of the old man before a fresh will could be made.

He at first arranged matters to cast suspicion on Graham Le Mesurier, but the opportune flight of Lady Madresfield had drawn it on herself and suited him even better.

He had administered the poison in a mixture his uncle took for his cough, and with Harland's knowledge, though Desmond contrived to make the man believe it was a harmless sleeping-draught which Lord Madresfield wished to try.

Afterwards Desmond lulled the valet's scruples by promising him a large sum of money. Desmond had hidden the will in his favour, wishing to make the case still stronger against Chèrie, and meaning to produce it when it suited his purpose.

It was a sweet, fair June day, as Chèrie, once more mistress of Madresfield Towers, paced the terrace, waiting the arrival of her affianced lover, soon to be her husband, Leslie Atherton.

Her eyes brightened as she saw him approaching, and her whole face beamed such a welcome that she scarcely needed to speak. The lovely scene lay smiling before them bathed in "the light that never was on land or sea," and as they stood together looking out on the fair prospect, Chèrie's heart thrilled with joy.

"How bright everything looks!" she murmured. "There is not a shadow anywhere."

"And the shadow has been lifted from your life, sweetheart," he said tenderly. "All your life shall be bright from henceforth, bright as my love can make it."

She raised her eyes to his face with a look of touching love and confidence.

"Ah, yes, Leslie," she said, "the shadow is gone from my life for evermore. Henceforth, I live in the sunshine—the sunshine of your love."

Vera Serkoff.

Digitized by Google

THE USURPER.

The Story of What a Baby Did.

Warren Billings looked yearningly across the breakfast-table at his young wife, and his wife looked tenderly at the baby she was holding. A year ago Billings could have felt sure that his wife was looking back at him across the table, looking with love and pride, but now she looked only at the child.

The cloth was still snowy, the coffee-pot was without a speck, the china was of the daintiest, but Billings, who used to feel his wife's especial care for him in the perfection of the table, now knew he owed its present perfection to a well-trained maid.

As he gazed searchingly at his wife, he realised that the beauty of her face had changed. Her radiant colour had faded, and the face she now bent so caressingly over the child was gentle and wan.

"Suppose you let the nurse take baby, Marie?" he said quietly. "I have something important to tell you."

"Hush, baby! Hush, darling!" said the young mother, soothing the fretful child with a concentrated tenderness that made Billings realise how much apart he was from his wife's thoughts. "I'll hold baby, Warren, never mind calling the nurse."

"I have won the Dixon case," he said tersely. The Dixon case was the battle this strong young man had been fighting to win a high place at the bar. It had been their common ambition. Over its vicissitudes she, too, had watched breathlessly, and for its winning she had prayed—before the child had come. But, when at last victory had come, he, single-handed, had won it; for the baby had come to Marie.

"Oh, Warren!" she cried.

Billings hastily pushed back his chair to come to her, but the baby wailed peevishly. Instantly his wife's head was bent low over the child, and she thought only to comfort that which stirred against her breast. The radiance died out of her face, leaving it sweetly troubled—the face of a Madonna.

"I am afraid baby is not quite well, Warren!" she said hastily. "You must ask Doctor Blake to call as you go to the office."

"I have won the Dixon case, Marie," he repeated doggedly, coming no further round the table.

"I am so glad for you, dear," she said, without looking up. "It means a lot for you, doesn't it?"

"A lot for us," he broke in almost roughly. "It means a fee of one thousand pounds, and other important cases. It means for us whatever you may want it to mean, Marie. I had hoped that it would mean a trip to the Continent for you and me this summer. I am tired. I had planned to wander once more over the journey we made four years ago. Do you remember, Marie?"

"Our wedding journey," she said softly. Billings came to his wife and bent over her. But the thought of that journey moved some impulse in her that made her crush the child in her arms till it cried fretfully. "But I couldn't leave baby, Warren," she added hastily.

Billings straightened up and turned away. "You could leave the child with its grandmother for a couple of months," he said. "Baby is a year old now, and is quite well."

"Oh, I couldn't leave baby!" she repeated with great conviction.

"Very well," said Billings, and he left the dining-room without looking at her again. "I shall dine at the club to-night," he called from the hall.

She looked up from the child, vaguely disturbed. She hesitated, then called to the nurse, "Take baby a moment," she said, then hastened into the hall. Billings had gone. "But he never kissed me," she said, somewhat troubled; then she went back to the child.

Billings was a favourite with Matthews, the head waiter at the club. The dinner Matthews set before him was a lure, as Billings seldom dined at the club of late years. But Billings dined in an absent-minded way that cut Matthews to the heart.

Several men strolled over to congratulate Billings on winning the Dixon case, but none of them felt inclined to join him at dinner that night.

"Billings is going to seed," growled old Baldwin, as he came back to the party at his own table. "He stays at home too much."

When Matthews had brought Billings his coat, Billings marched away without remembering the tip that he never had forgotten before. Matthews mourned not the tip, but the sorrow that evidently had come to Billings.

It was late that night when his cab left Billings at his own door. He turned his latch-key, and went upstairs very softly.

On the landing he stood irresolute for a moment, then opened the door to his dressing-room, which had once been devoted to his use, but now a brass crib, canopied with lace, stood where the dressing-table had been, and the furnishings of the room were the useful and convenient things of a nursery.

The door to their bedroom was open, and the room was lighted with the glow of a little night lamp. Billings walked quietly to this door and looked in.

He saw the beautiful profile of his wife nestled against a pillow. He noted the long lashes curving from her closed eyelids, a little hollow in the smooth of her cheek, and the plaintive droop of her mouth.

He saw the rounded white of her throat and the rise and fall of her bosom beneath lace and silk. One loose sleeve had slipped back on the arm that lay outside the coverlet. He noticed how fragile the wrist seemed.

Billings looked till his heart ached. From the day he first had seen Marie he had measured the success of his life by the love he could win from her. In all his strong living the ambition to be loved greatly by this beautiful woman dominated every other desire.

The woman sleeping there so quietly as he yearned over her was the shrine at which he worshipped with perfect willingness to sacrifice whatever offering might be acceptable to her, so that she loved him greatly, so that she chose him over again before all other things life could offer her. Warren Billings' wife was Warren Billings' passion, and he was a passionate man.

Turning, he looked at the crib, then back to his wife; he saw the shadow of a little child grow large between them. Billings loved his child as men love babies, but he loved his wife even more because of the suffering this child had brought to her; but she loved the little life that had made her suffer. A sense of injustice struggled with his loneliness as he knelt beside the crib.

"Baby! Baby!" he said softly. "Give me back my dear wife. I love her more than you love her, baby. I love her with a grown man's love, and you love her just because she feeds you and rocks you to sleep. She is only a nurse to you,

Digitized by Google

baby, but she was my comrade until you came. You have taken my goddess to make her your nurse.

"I cannot hate you, baby, you are such a helpless little chap; but sometimes I wish you were a man and weighed more than I do. Yet you are stronger than I, little one, for your cries make her forget my whispers, and the clutch of your tiny fingers is stronger than the might of my arms.

"No, I cannot find it in my heart to hate you, though you have made me a lonely man before my time. You have only to cry with a fancied pain, and she cannot hear that I have won the Dixon case. It used to be our Dixon case before you dethroned me. Give me back the heart of my wife, little son!"

The baby stirred fretfully, and Billings starting to his feet, glanced hastily over his shoulder. The long lashes still fringed his wife's eyes. He stole to the bed and kissed her white arm reverently. Then he went softly from the room.

In the library he turned up the lamp on his desk, and threw himself wearily into a great leather chair.

He was tired, tired from the last strain of his legal battle, tired of arguing against the dreariness that had grown on him during the last few months.

He leant back in the great chair, smoked moodily for a while and fell asleep.

The light at his elbow shone full on his clean-cut face, bringing out its strength and revealing its sadness too. Sleep strips off all disguises which the will imposes.

Sleep and the light shining so steadfastly on his unshrinking face brought out deep lines about the mouth and eyes; he looked haggard.

All this Marie Billings saw as she stood in the doorway looking at him with misty eyes. Her cheeks were flushed and her bosom rose and fell tumultuously beneath the silk and lace of her gown.

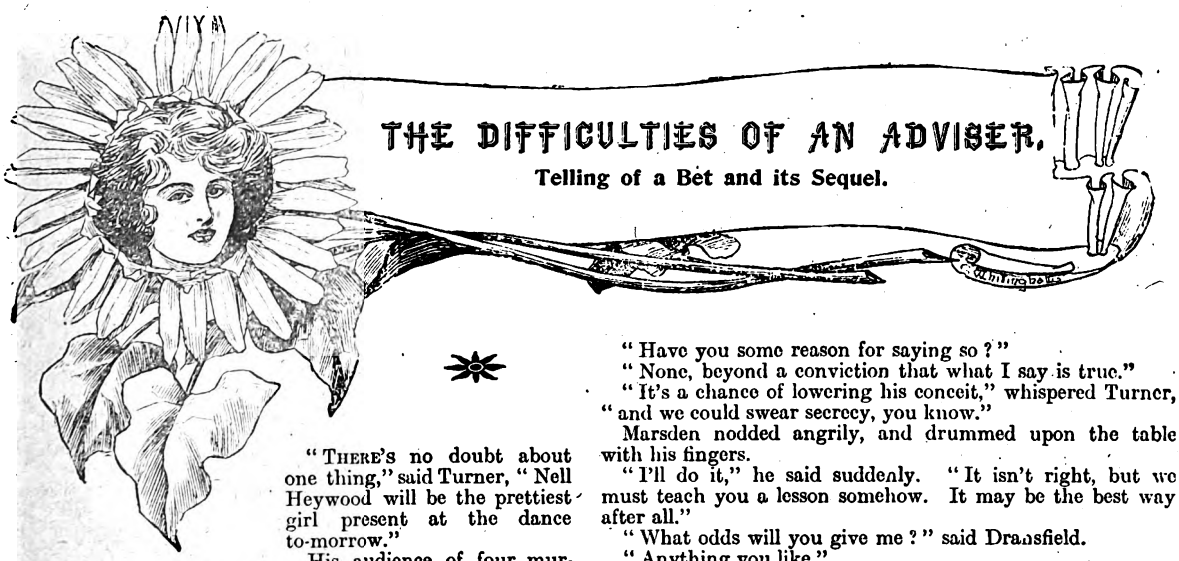
Her face was radiant with love and tenderness as she hastened to him in the silence and knelt beside his chair. She hastily put her bare arms about him; drawing herself close to him, she kissed him passionately. So Warren Billings awoke to the love of his wife.

"I want to go on the Continent with you, dear," she was saying, half crying. "I want to tell you how proud I am of your winning the Dixon case—our Dixon case.

"I want to tie your crumpled tie, dear, as I used to tie it before I neglected you so shamefully. But don't hate baby, dear, because baby only makes me love you more and better. When I love baby, Warren, I love you. I did not realise that a man might not understand. Now kiss me."

Billings kissed his wife and kissed her again. "Now let's go and kiss that blessed baby," he said at last.

A. C. McKenzie.



THE DIFFICULTIES OF AN ADVISER.

Telling of a Bet and its Sequel.

"There's no doubt about one thing," said Turner, "Nell Heywood will be the prettiest girl present at the dance to-morrow."

His audience of four murmured agreement, and cast curious glances at one of the party, who was known to be desperately in love with the girl mentioned.

"That is so," said Dransfield, "are you going to monopolise her, Marsden?"

"Perhaps you think you could cut him out?" suggested one of the others.

"I think she'd say 'Yes,' if I asked her."

"That's a lie," cried Marsden fiercely, "and, what's more, it's a most caddish remark."

"It could easily be proved or disproved," said Turner.

"Yes—if you make it worth my while," interrupted Dransfield.

"Do you actually suggest that we bet upon it?"

"Yes," he answered, his little eyes shining. "You don't expect me to get engaged to a girl I don't care twopence about for nothing. I should have to dance attendance on her for some time before I could make an excuse to break the engagement."

"It would be abominable—it would be an insult to the girl," said Marsden.

"It would prove my words."

"Have you some reason for saying so?"

"None, beyond a conviction that what I say is true."

"It's a chance of lowering his conceit," whispered Turner, "and we could swear secrecy, you know."

Marsden nodded angrily, and drummed upon the table with his fingers.

"I'll do it," he said suddenly. "It isn't right, but we must teach you a lesson somehow. It may be the best way after all."

"What odds will you give me?" said Dransfield.

"Anything you like."

"Four to one," suggested Turner. "A sovereign to five shillings."

"That will suit me," said Dransfield. "Do you agree?"

"Yes," answered Marsden curtly, "and your money shall go into the river; I won't touch it."

"A sovereign you pay me if she says 'Yes'?"

"If I thought there was any likelihood of your winning, I'd declare the bet off now, and you might keep the sovereign as penalty."

"No, no," cried Turner, "the bet is on or off properly."

"Then let it be on," said Dransfield carelessly. "I daresay I shall lose, and it doesn't matter much either way."

Then the four friends swore secrecy, and separated.

* * * * * *

"I think this is our dance?" said Marsden to Nell Heywood. "If I may have the pleasure."

She rose and took his arm, and they moved down the room together.

"Do you mind if we sit out?" she asked.

"Not at all. Here, or in the next room?"

"In the next room," she answered, and he felt her arm tremble as she spoke.

Digitized by Google

He led the way towards the conservatory, with its cunningly disposed palms and subdued light. Here, he had proposed to her and been refused six months previously, and at the memory his heart burnt within him.

"Do you particularly wish to go into the next room?" he asked. "It's very quiet—the place is in semi-darkness."

"I should like to go if you don't mind."

"I do mind," he whispered passionately. "Do you remember what happened there? Let us stay with the crowd. Have you no heart? I can't tell you. The memory of our last meeting in that room would force me to speak again—and I must not."

"You must not? But take me there, won't you? I don't ask you lightly, Jack. I have something to tell you."

They walked into the conservatory in silence. When they reached the doorway, he was turning to the right, but she pulled his arm gently forward, and led him to the seats he wished above everything else to avoid.

"This is the very same corner," he said. "What is it you want to tell me?"

"You are unkind, Jack."

"I didn't mean to be unkind, or anything else that might cause you a moment's trouble," he whispered, "but you have brought me here, and you don't know——"

"I know what you are thinking about," she answered reproachfully. "Do you really think I have no heart? Do you think that I cannot remember as well as you?"

"I am sorry," he said doggedly. "But you have not told me yet."

She drew herself a little further away from him and used her fan with an indignant energy for a minute.

"It is soon told," she murmured, trying in vain to keep her voice steady. "Your friend Dransfield has asked me to marry him."

"Why do you tell me this?" he said hoarsely. "What have I to do with the matter?"

"I told you about it in order to ask your advice."

"You want my advice?"

"As to whether I shall say 'Yes' or 'No' to him."

The net was closing in upon Marsden. This utterly unforeseen result of the bet staggered him. What could he say to her? How could he honestly answer her question? He wished with every fibre of his being that he had never made the bet, but it was too late to draw back now.

"Why do you ask me?" he said evasively.

"Because I can trust you, Jack, and still more because I remember what we spoke about here six months ago."

"That is done with. It has nothing to do with the present matter."

"No, not if your heart has changed since then."

"It will never change," he said, with a burst of passion; "and you know it, but I must not talk further about that."

"Have I forbidden you?" she whispered gently.

"I understood so, your refusal was definite."

"Six months ago," she said, as though speaking to herself.

"Why do you ask me about Dransfield's proposal?" he asked, trying hard to restrain himself.

"Because I will follow your advice—whatever it may be."

"I cannot advise you."

"I say again that I will do what you wish, Jack—whatever it may be."

"And I say again that I can't advise you. Your mother—ask anybody but me. Oh, I would give my life for you, Nell, a hundred times over, but I can't tell you to say 'Yes' or 'No' to this proposal."

"I can't say more than I have said," she murmured, almost inaudibly; "I will marry whom you wish, Jack—dear——"

"If you really care for Dransfield?"

"Come," she said, in a clear, ringing voice; "let us go back to the ballroom. They will think we are lost."

* * * * *

The next evening Jack Marsden received an unexpected visit from Dransfield.

"I'm glad to see you," he said grimly; "what do you propose to do about this miserable business?"

"I have to pay you five shillings first," replied his visitor, who looked rather crestfallen.

"Keep it. I wouldn't take such money with a pair of tongs," growled Jack, and Dransfield slipped the coins hurriedly back into his pocket with a deprecating smile.

"Please yourself, of course. But look here, Marsden, I want to propose a bargain. Only four of us know about this bet and only you and I know that it has been decided."

"Well?"

"Why shouldn't we let the knowledge remain between you and me? We can tell Turner and Clayton that we have decided to call the bet off, and that no money has been paid on either side."

"A very good idea. It will prevent the possibility of Miss Heywood's name being gossipped about."

"Oh, it isn't that exactly," explained Dransfield, "only as I have not won I don't care for those other fellows to know about it."

"Oh, that's your idea," said Jack contemptuously. "Anyhow, it's a bargain."

After his visitor had gone, Jack put on his considering cap and reviewed the situation as it now appeared. Various remarks made by Nell to him on the previous evening recurred to his memory, but with new meaning.

Every thought that came into his mind brought hope and left behind a doubt, so that after half an hour he was exactly where he began. Then he struck out vigorously in a new direction. "I'll go and ask her," he said.

His timid knock at the door produced Mrs. Heywood, who was in a state of complacent delight. She ushered her visitor into the drawing-room on false pretences and then blandly informed him that Nell was out.

"I suppose you've heard the news," she added.

Jack admitted ignorance.

"About Nell's engagement?"

"What! No, I hadn't heard that, Mrs. Heywood. May I inquire?"

"I can't tell you anything more," said the good lady pleasantly. "It only happened last evening, and Nell asked me not to tell anyone. But here she comes, you can ask her yourself if you like."

Nell walked into the room a moment later, looking prettier than ever. Jack stared at her with a wistful admiration, as he muttered the usual commonplaces. Who was the successful man, he wondered bitterly. Had she changed her mind and accepted Dransfield after all, or was it some total outsider?

"Will you allow me to congratulate you," he said quietly. Mrs. Heywood disappeared, and they were alone.

"Upon what?" said Nell.

"Upon your engagement."

"I am not engaged," she answered, "I only told mother that Mr. Dransfield had proposed to me, and I told you that, Jack."

"And then you asked for my advice?"

"Yes, and you wished me to marry him."

"*I* wished you? I said I could not advise you either way."

"It was the same thing," said Nell, almost bitterly.

"You would not say anything, you were indifferent."

"I could not then, my lips were sealed, but now——"

She was staring intently at the carpet, drawing imaginary lines with one foot. Jack came closer and took her hand and she did not resist.

"Do you still wish me to advise you, Nell?"

"Yes, and I will——"

"You promise to follow my advice."

"Yes." If imaginary lines were real the carpet would have been a network by this time. Jack came closer still so that her hair brushed his cheek. "My advice is," he murmured, "that you should forget everybody else and become my wife."

She turned half way round as he spoke until at the last word her face was hidden against his shoulder. There was silence for a moment and then: "Jack, dear," she whispered reproachfully; "why didn't you advise me this way last night?"

Wal Frank.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.

Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

I Return From Switzerland.

It began with the Duke coming up to me in the hall next morning quite naturally, and accosting me as if nothing had happened.

"I hope you slept well," he said, "and that your head is better?"

For answer I turned my back on him, and walked across to the door and out into the snow. To my surprise and indignation he had the audacity to follow, and as I could not ignominiously race him up the mountain, I was obliged to let him catch me up.

"I know you are thinking I've got a consummate cheek, Miss Cardew, and various other uncomplimentary things," he began, "but honestly it is not worth while to quarrel. To tell you the plain truth I was only trying a little experiment on you last night, and now I humbly beg your pardon. I behaved like a cad. But I did not in the least intend to insult you; I only wanted to know how you took that sort of thing.

"The last day or two I have been considerably puzzled to reconcile you, as I seem to know you, and your friendship with Lady Filby and her companions. The notion of testing you took my fancy; you can't think how glad I was that you were so angry, although it made me feel a beast. But you ought to forgive me, because you must admit you have laid yourself rather open to that sort of thing in travelling with Lady Filby."

"But I believe in Lady Filby," I said resolutely.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, in a low, incredulous voice. "You believe in Lady Filby!"

I was silent, and we walked on a few paces

"But everyone knows what she is," he said at last, in a perplexed voice, "surely you have friends."

"Yes, but I would not listen to them," I interrupted.

"That was a pity," he said seriously, and was again silent.

"Might I ask if you believe in the Prince and Count as honourable, straightforward men also?" he asked presently.

"It is different with men," I replied sarcastically, "one never expects anything of them."

"Still it is hardly worth while to court unpleasantness."

"I can take care of myself," haughtily.

"Yes, I believe you can," he said. "But if I were you I would not run risks of getting into an awkward place for nothing. If anything went wrong, you see, you might be called upon as a witness, and it would not be nice to be mixed up in that set at all.

"I don't want to shock your susceptibilities, but, Lady Filby, or Lady Fitzclarence, will either of them discredit a girl by their company. If you won't believe your friends at home, you can believe me.

"Jack Filby used to be a great friend of mine, and I happen to know it was for their child's sake he did not show her up. He had a singing master, a subordinate officer on a passenger ship, and an Indian prince named Kia to choose from."

Growing hot and cold all over, and on the point of tears, I quickened my steps almost to a run, but he had not finished yet.

"I do not know why Lady Fitzclarence's husband does not get a separation from her," he said; "but I daresay it's too much trouble. And as for Miss Delaware, also of your party, I can only assure you that no man with a grain of sense would dream of giving her his name."

I stood still suddenly with a gasp of horror.

"And you thought I—was—another?" I breathed.

"No, I did not think so," he answered at once; "but I could not understand how you came to be of the party."

"Oh, it is really all my own fault," I cried. "I deserve to suffer for it. I must return to town at once."

"If I were you I would not be too abrupt," he counselled. "Wire to someone to wire for you, it often saves a lot of bother."

"Perhaps I had better consult Mr. Donovan," I said anxiously.

He looked at me with keen scrutiny, and then remarked in his usual cool way, "I had almost concluded that Mr. Donovan was the attraction."

I flushed angrily.

"Then you can consider yourself mistaken," I almost snapped. "At the same time I dare swear he is as far apart

Digitized by Google

from the others as the poles."

"I had observed he was a superior being," he said, with that delicate sneer of his, "but why is he here?"

"I don't know," I replied, "except—except——" as a sudden light dawned upon me, "I believe I asked him to come."

"Ah!" significantly, "that would account for a great deal."

"We could both get a wire from the theatre," I said, not heeding him.

"And return together?" he asked, somewhat pointedly.

"Yes, why not?" and I faced him squarely.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, no reason at all," he said, in a way that made me want to shake him, "none whatever." Then he added, "I am travelling to England myself to-morrow, perhaps you will accept our joint escort?"

I said I would ask Mr. Donovan, and we returned to the hotel.

We reached the door just as Lady Filby came up a path in the opposite direction, and I was surprised to see her alone. As she passed us she threw a glance of such vindictive hatred at me that I shrank a moment involuntarily. A second later Lady Fitzclarence appeared with the German count, and judging from her expression, she, too, had passed none too pleasant a morning.

"I hope you have had a nice walk," she said to me sarcastically, "I daresay you found the Duke's naughty tales and glaring flatteries very entertaining."

"I have not any recollection of either," I replied carelessly, "so I think he must have saved them all for you."

"We have been discussing Society in connection with the visitors' list at Grindelwald," said the Duke, thrusting his hands in his pockets with an expression of amusement. "It was really much more entertaining, and open to developments than you might imagine."

Lady Fitzclarence flushed angrily; but with a pretence at good fellowship, patted him on the cheek and remarked—

"Ah, Pip, you do love to try to be sarcastic, don't you?"

Then she, too, flung a somewhat vindictive glance at me before she vanished.

On my way down to lunch a little later I met Yorke Donovan hastening to his room, looking very much disturbed. He stopped me, and without any preliminary exclaimed in a low voice—

"Could you be ready to return to England to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," I said at once. "Why?"

"Meet me outside the English church at two," was all he answered, and hurried on upstairs.

When I joined him he did not speak at first of what had happened, but led the way along the Interlaken road at a pretty stiff pace. Presently, however, he dived straight into the subject.

"I can't tell you much now," he said, "but certain things have come to light this morning that make it impossible for you to remain in Lady Filby's company."

I waited, and presently he added—

"I—I—am afraid I have been much to blame in not finding out sooner."

"But how could you?" I asked. "Did you know anything?"

"I knew there was talk, of course; but I did not pay much attention to it, and, besides, I wanted very much to be here with you. But it was a mistake to come. If you will allow me, I will take you back to England to-morrow."

"The Duke is leaving also," I said, "we can all travel together. I think we had better wire for someone to wire for us."

"Yes, that is a good idea," he said at once. Then he added significantly, "I see you were in a measure prepared for this sudden move?".

"Yes," I said simply, "I was."

He made no further comment, and we tramped along the crisp snow in silence.

I was glad he was silent. I wanted to drink in the loveliness of that winter Alpine scenery, to the exclusion of all else, for the brief while it was possible.

Giant pines spread out snow-laden arms above us, a white carpet of unspeakable purity lay around, blazing suddenly into a cloth of diamonds wherever the sunbeams could find a way through the maze of branches.

Overhead was the deep blue vault of the heavens, bluer than any words can express in that keen atmosphere, pierced here and there with snow-capped peaks rearing their lordly heads above the "littlenesses" of the world. The very silence was a breathing majesty—everything above and around a white radiance of purity.

I tried to forget—I tried to lose myself. My whole being strove upwards, one with those dazzling peaks pointing ever, in storm and sunshine, to the steadfast heavens.

How little, oh, how little, seemed the glare of the footlights, the shouts of applause, the *rôle* of the theatrical conqueror, beside the sublime immutability of these snow-clad mountains. Then it all came back to me—the memory of the morning.

"How can they? Ah, how can they?" I breathed, in a low, passion-strung voice. "In the midst of all this!—in the midst of such unspeakable grandeur—to stoop and grovel in the mud."

"Yes, yes, that is just it," my companion exclaimed tersely. "Here—surely—one might at least be pure. And yet it was here—in such a spot as this—only to-day——" he stopped short, and caught his breath, relapsing at once into silence.

I do not know what it was that had so upset him, except that it concerned Lady Filby, but he did not come in to dinner that evening, nor join us afterwards. Lady Filby evidently chose to think it was my doing, and vented her anger in every little spite possible.

I had made up my mind to retire directly the meal was over, but a veiled intimation that I was going to look for him held me tied, undecided what to do. Then Lady Fitzclarence and the Duke and one or two others joined us, and my way of escape was practically barred.

We were sitting listening to the Duke, who was entertaining us with some of his experiences big game shooting in India, when Lady Filby broke in with—

"Now let someone else tell us of their experiences. You, Maud," with a little harsh laugh, "you must have had some highly entertaining adventures on the stage."

"Nothing very particular," I replied. "Certainly not half so entertaining as the Duke's."

"Oh, come now, I don't believe that!" she said. "What about that motor ride with Cecil Trevor when the motor broke down at night in a little village, miles from anywhere? I'm sure that would make a highly interesting anecdote," and she laughed in a way that made my face burn, Lady Fitzclarence joining in, and all eyes fixing upon me.

For a second I felt dumb with mortification and anger, but I was not capable of acting only on the stage, and played my part now.

"Oh, that!" I said laughingly, "that certainly was rather awkward, but not in the least entertaining. Cecil Trevor and I were both in such bad tempers we could scarcely speak a civil word to each other. We simply went to the nearest inn, ate a big supper in solemn silence, and parted very bad friends."

"Oh, I daresay!" put in Lady Filby spitefully; but I pretended not to hear, and went on:

Digitized by Google

"The next morning I went to town by train, and he returned later with the wretched motor, and I never went out with him again."

"Only to little dinners, I suppose," said Lady Fitzclarence pointedly.

I took no notice; the attack was too transparent to parry, so I maintained a haughty silence.

"You know you are such a saint, Maud," said Lady Filby; "it does one good to hear little stories—well, what one might call '*risqué*,' about you."

"Yes," chimed in Lady Fitzclarence, "and there's a lovely one in which a gipsy girl is mixed up—do let us have it?"

I don't quite know what I did, but almost instantly the Duke, who was sitting next to me, got up in a way that tipped his chair over backwards with a good deal of clatter, during which, and while picking it up, he managed to say to me in an undertone:

"Whatever you do, don't lose your temper."

I was grateful to him, partly because it showed me he took their spite for what it was worth, and partly because it made me feel I had a friend near.

"I will tell the story of the gipsy girl," I said quietly, "if every lady present will undertake to explain whatever rumour against herself the rest of the company shall agree to fix on."

"Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed the Duke with enjoyment. "This is no place for me!" while Lady Filby flushed an angry red, and Lady Fitzclarence burst out laughing.

"Come, Betty!" she cried. "Let's begin with the singing-master."

I got up with a feeling of indignation that almost suffocated me.

"I am going out," I said abruptly; "there is something in the atmosphere of this room that positively chokes me."

"Really scandalous, isn't it?" said Lady Fitzclarence mischievously. She always made a jest of everything all her life, and had at least the merit of being honest about herself, whereas I was by no means the only one Lady Filby had deceived by her clever assumption of childlike innocence.

"Most contaminating, I should think," she said now spitefully; "beyond the leavening of even your spotlessness."

Still in a white heat of indignation I pulled on my snow shoes, wrapped myself in my golf cape, and stepped out into the wonderful, glistening world of mountains and snow. In a few seconds, offering no apology for his presence, in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable, the Duke joined me.

I said nothing, but tramped on through the crisp snow, feeling relief in the mere act of walking.

"Awful cats, women!" was his first remark.

"I don't know what I have done to upset them," I said.

"Phew!" and he whistled softly. "It's plain enough. One has set her heart on our handsome actor, who persists in keeping his eyes and his prettiest attentions for you, and the other"—he shrugged his shoulders—"well, everyone doesn't look upon dukes as dust and ashes, you know."

Something made me turn to him suddenly, and somehow, his fair, delicately-chiselled face looked strangely attractive in the moonlight, in spite of its womanishness.

"Why are you here with them, knowing all that you know?" I asked, awakened to the pity of it.

Again he shrugged his shoulders in that careless way of his.

"Oh, even Dukes can't always be seeking new fields to conquer," callously.

"But it is so poor!" I cried. "Can't you see just how paltry it all is?"

He looked at me from under half-veiled eyes, with a little amused twitching at his lips. Then he spread out his hands with another careless shrug.

"It is the way of the world," he said, "and I, for one, find it a pleasant enough way."

"It makes me tired," I said, feeling suddenly bowed as if under a weight of years, at the knowledge of the evil in the world. "I think I am sorry I ever left my home to win success. I would like to see things again as I used to see them—full of beauty, and hope, and achievement."

"You mean you would like to go back to your first illusions?"

I was silent, and presently he drew from me all about my old home, and my descent upon London in search of fame.

Then he asked abruptly:

"Where is it going to end? Have you a goal?"

For one moment I was nonplussed. I felt him watching me keenly, and the blood crept over my neck and face. I looked at the mountains, and before their calm greatness I could not lie.

"I had a goal last week," I said at last; "I am not sure if it is the same to-day."

He did not answer at once, but remained silently gazing at the scenery.

"There are not many goals open to dukes," he said thoughtfully.

"There is always your country!" I exclaimed.

He smiled with that fine sneer of his.

"An old woman's tale," he said. "I have not the slightest ambition to be mixed up in the general jumble known as one's country."

"You might improve it all round," I suggested, with sarcasm.

"That would be a pity," he replied; "it is really a most laughable farce at present, and very harmless."

"If I were a Duke," I said, "I would pretend to be a poor man and win love."

"Not worth it," he sneered. "A lot of discomfort for a mere fancy."

"Then you don't believe in love?"

"Certainly not. Every girl is biassed by her desire for an establishment, and naturally the best of its kind procurable."

I was silent.

"Yet there must be something behind the majesty of the mountains," I said musingly. "Something that has a place in human souls also. It is often difficult to believe in love in London. It is not so here."

He watched me with a strange expression in his eyes but made no comment; and slowly we returned homewards.

The next morning he, Yorke Donovan, and I returned to England. A few days later, as I stood toying with some flowers my maid came to tell me Mr. Northcote was in the drawing-room; and, bracing myself up, I went to my dreaded ordeal with Di.

"Have you come to triumph?" I asked him, feeling it was only what I deserved.

"Have I ever done so?" he said, and I felt the rebuke. It humbled me more than anything.

"You were right all through," I said. "You always are. Yet, somehow, you invariably make me act against my better judgment. I wonder why?"

"Do I?" he asked.

And I answered him truthfully: "Always."

He grew thoughtful, and getting up walked to the window. When he turned again his eye fell on a lovely bouquet, the spoils of the previous evening.

"These tell their own tale," he said; "these and the critics. Beyond doubt you have the world at your feet. I wonder, are you satisfied?"

I did not reply, thinking of a certain talk under the stars my last night at Grindelwald.

"May I ask who gave them?" he said.

"The Duke of Midlandshire," I answered, and he seemed surprised.

"I thought he was abroad," he remarked.

"He was at Grindel-

Digitized by Google

wald," I told him, "and he returned to England with Yorke Donovan and me."

He walked again to the window.

Suddenly he wheeled round.

"You did not tell me," he said—"are you satisfied?"

"I don't know," I answered slowly. "I am hoping there is still the *best* to come."

When he had gone the Duke came, and evidently they met on the step.

"So you know Di Northcote?" said the latter, establishing himself in an armchair much as Bobbie would have done.

"I have known him ever since I came to London. Why?"

"Strange chap! Half the girls in London would almost give their heads to marry him."

"I don't think so," I said, with somewhat undue resoluteness.

"It's a fact, all the same. He is one of the last men in the world likely to marry, and yet every woman, more or less, wants to marry him."

"But why?"

He shrugged his shoulders in the old way. "Preserve me," he murmured, "from ever having to find reasons for the inclinations of your sex. As a rule they have no reasons. Possibly there is something in the fact that he is a man who could not dissemble, and that must be rather a novelty for your sex in its intercourse with ours."

I did not reply, not being in the mood for repartee. I wanted to think about Di, without knowing why. Yet I was conscious that my goal was before me, and that if I would win it I ought to be playing my part.

I was startled by one of the abrupt, audacious questions the Duke was so fond of asking.

"Why don't you marry Bobbie Lestrange?" said he.

I flushed a little indignantly as I replied:

"Really, Duke, you are somewhat curious concerning my affairs."

"It's only what they're asking in all the clubs," he remarked coolly. "Not high enough position, perhaps?" he continued, searing me with his unsparing candour.

"Is that the conclusion you have drawn from observations of my actions and words?" I asked coldly.

"Not yours exactly," he answered, "but anyone's in your position."

Bobbie's open scorn and Di's veiled sarcasm had never hit me as did the Duke's candour now. But I could not help liking him for it, and being drawn to a similar frankness. I got up and moved about restlessly, while he sat quietly watching, and at last I said:

"I used to be like that—the same as all the rest; I believe I was like it last week. But I'm not now. I don't know why; something seems to have happened that has turned everything upside down, and I do not recognise my own views and feelings."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," he said, "for I have come here to-day to ask you to be my wife."

(*Next Tuesday I will tell you of the answer I gave to the Duke.*)

Lessee: "That sailors' chorus was awful! What was the matter?" Stage Manager: "The tars couldn't get the right pitch."

"I think the picture lacks atmosphere," said the kindly critic. "Fact is," said the artist, "I had a hard time raising the wind while I was painting."

"I hear you were mixed up in a rather shady transaction last week." "I cannot tell a lie. I was. I bought a couple of blinds for the kitchen windows."

"How do you like your new mamma, Johnny?" asked his uncle. "Oh, pretty well. I ate a pot of jam yesterday, and she put the blame on the servants."

Sympathising London Friend: "Where were the remains of your late husband interred?" Russian Widow (sadly): "There were no remains: he—he—met—a—bear."

Your Editor Chats.

The sixth list of sentences in the competition will be found on page 559. Six more lists will appear, making twelve in all.

From the majority of letters I have received it is very evident that readers have not read the conditions of the competition carefully. Some of the questions they ask in connection with it are very absurd. It will save a great deal of unnecessary waste of time on both your and my parts, if you will consider the conditions very thoroughly before writing to me regarding points on which you are doubtful in your own minds.

Below will be found some questions asked by readers this week, together with my replies:—

Question: If the name of a station consists of two or more words, will all the words be contained in the sentence, or only one of them?

Answer: The complete name of a railway station (or words which sound the same as the name) will appear in every case.

Question: May I fill in the names of railway stations with a typewriter?

Answer: Yes, you may do this.

Question: May I make the name of a railway station out of part of one word alone, or must it be made of either a whole word or consecutive parts of two or more consecutive words?

Answer: You may make the name of a railway station out of consecutive parts of one word. This is stated in the conditions of the competition.

Question: May I make the name "Rye" out of the letters "ri" in river?

Answer: No. The sounds are totally dissimilar.

I am writing this on my return from spending Easter in the country, where the bright sunshine flooded everything with its golden rays, making trees and flowers and fields more of a pleasure to look upon than ever. While I was enjoying this scene my thoughts would dwell on the poor little denizens of the slums who seldom, if ever, have an opportunity of seeing Nature in all her glory, and I wondered how many of them would be able to have a day in the country this year.

Of all the institutions founded for the purpose of brightening these little lives, few are so far reaching in effect as the Fresh Air Fund, which provides a day in the country for the children of the big cities in the British Isles, for the small sum of ninepence each. This sum pays for railway fare and an ample supply of good food. Unlike other Funds there are no expenses of management in connection with the Fresh Air Fund, all these being borne by Pearson's and the Ragged School Union. Every penny of the money subscribed goes in providing pleasure for the children.

I hope readers of *Short Stories* will send something however small, to help on this great work. Cheques, postal orders, or stamps should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Collecting forms will be forwarded on application. All donations will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Rose Memories.

Telling of what the Silver Casket Contained.

"WHY, what is this? A silver casket with the monogram 'B—— A——' on it, it must have been my uncle's, I will open it after dinner, the bell will ring in a minute," I thought to myself.

It was barely two months since I had heard of the death of my uncle, Sir Brian Adair, and my consequent succession to the baronetcy. I was in Tasmania when the news was cabled to me by his lawyers, and, needless to say, started for home at once.

I had only seen my uncle once in my life, and as that was twenty-three years ago, it was impossible for me to feel any acute sorrow at his death. The doctors had certified heart disease as the cause of his decease, but old Mrs. Miles, the housekeeper, told me that it was a broken heart, and nothing else. It seems that my aunt Phyllis died just a year after they were married, and with her lay buried all my uncle's desire to live.

My curiosity was aroused, so I did not take long over my solitary meal, but, having ordered a lamp to be taken to the library, I fetched the casket, and wended my way thither.

With considerable difficulty, I at last succeeded in opening the box. Inside were five little parcels, covered with tissue paper, each bearing a date. I took them out very carefully, and found beneath a document in the form of a diary, in Sir Brian's handwriting. On opening the packages one after the other, I found to my astonishment that they each contained a faded rose.

Having reverently replaced them in their coverings, I settled myself near the lamp to read the story of bygone days with which these faded blossoms were interwoven.

"May 6th, 1857.

"Forty years ago, but I remember it as if it were but yesterday. A little boy of six, with a broken leg, my nurse had wheeled me into a sunny spot in Kensington Gardens, and seated herself on a bench a little distance off, where she soon forgot everything in the delights of a paper-backed novel.

"Other children were playing all around me, but there was I alone, with no one to talk to. A feeling of intense pity for myself stole over me, and soon the tears were trickling down my cheeks. All at once I felt a soft little hand laid on my own, and opened my eyes to behold a little maiden, with dark grey eyes, and wonderful auburn hair, holding out a white rosebud to me.

"'Poor little boy, does it hurt you?—smell this, a nice smell always does me good if I am ill,' and she held the rose whilst I gladly sniffed its fragrance.

"'Oh, don't go, please stay and talk to me,' I stammered, blushing to the roots of my hair, for I was a very shy child. 'My name's Brian—please what is yours?'

"'Phyllis,' my little fairy answered. And she stayed with me quite a long time, telling me all her pretty fancies about rose-fairies, and when she went, bent and kissed me, leaving the bud in my hand."

"Jan. 17th, 1860.

"Phyllis, dear heart, I am recalling happy memories to-night—I have opened my jewel-casket, as I shall always call it, though you once laughed at what you termed my 'silly fancy.' A pink rose—you gave it to me just three years after our first meeting. What a passion you always had for roses, my Phyllis! This one you had picked from a little tree in the hothouse that my father had given you at Christmas.

"It was Fate, indeed, that had made you my father's ward, dear, kind Fate, for you brought sunshine into my lonely life. I was a delicate child, so had been kept at home till I was ten years old.

"I remember so well the day I started off to school for the first time, I cried bitterly at having to part with my little playmate. The train was just about to start, that train that was to take me far away for three months when my father lifted you up in his arms to give me a last kiss, and you stuck this little pink rose in my coat, saying: 'Don't forget poor Phyllis and her roses.'"

July 2nd, 1870.

"The faded petals of a crimson rose—Sweetheart, the flower is dead, but the love that gave it still lives on, and will live for ever. I was twenty, and you were just nineteen. My father had died the previous year, and I was now master of Adair Court, where you and my mother lived with me.

"I had just come down from my second year at Oxford, and directly I saw you again, I knew that the one aim and object of my life henceforth would be to win you for my wife. You were fond of me, I knew, but I was dreadfully afraid lest you should only regard me in the light of a brother.

"A fortnight passed, and I had worked myself up into a fever of longing to hear my Fate. So I took you into the rose-garden—it was always your favourite haunt, and then and there I told my love.

"My wife, my dearest! I can see you now, you were wearing a simple white muslin frock, and as you stood on the narrow path, against a background of crimson ramblers, your grey eyes shone with a new and tender light, and the sun's rays glinted on your hair, making it a halo of gold above your happy face.

"Yet never a word! You looked at me in answer to my question, and turning, plucked a rose, and gave it to me. What need for words? The blossom answered for you."

"Oct. 9th, 1870.

"Just the dust of a Marechal Neil rose, but the scent clings to it still—as my memory clings to the day my Phyllis pinned it to my coat—Our wedding-day!

"Not a shadow fell on our two young hearts, no dread presentiment of the future marred our bliss on that—our wedding day. Looking back through the weary vista of lonely years that have been mine since then, I know that God was strengthening me by a great happiness to endure the anguish that was to come so soon, and I thank Him, for it is given to but few mortals to taste the peace of perfect love."

"Dec. 30th, 1871.

"But one more rose, it was white as driven snow when I took it from my darling, as she lay in her last long sleep. Yet the peace on her face quieted the storm of anguish that swept over me.

"There were no lines for the Master-hand of Death to wipe out, but He had left upon the lifeless clay the indefinable impress of a Love that was stronger than the King of Terrors himself.

"People wonder why I do not hate the very sight and smell of roses, for my darling's room was strown with her favourite flowers, blooms of every hue, save only that none but the choicest white buds were allowed to touch her lovely form. But why should I hate them for that reason?

"Can they *remind* me of her, whose image never leaves me? Phyllis, twenty years have gone since then, but I am as much your lover now as I was when you gave me that crimson rose. I feel that my probation is nearly over, and that it will not be long before I join you, my wife, in the Land where there are no more partings."

Maud Hoey.

Digitized by Google

A FREE OFFER.

The Romance of a Fountain Pen and an Inheritance.

"Why do they do this kind of thing?" mused Mr. Fred Poynter, surveying an object which he held in his right hand. "To induce trade!" he continued lazily, answering his own question. "If you get a good advertisement, other people buy the wares.

"If you can get a free advertisement, so much the better; if you cannot, then it is better to spend a certain amount than not to advertise at all. That's the only explanation I can find of this generous offer. Really, I should make a good advertising agent if I were not so lazy and did not get my daily bread without doing much for it!"

He laid the object on the table and yawned. As he moved his elbow in the process of settling himself more comfortably in his chair, he knocked a letter from the table to the floor; by an effort, he stooped and picked it up.

"Let me see! What am I to do in order to become the proud possessor of this unique—and all the rest of it—fountain pen? New and improved system," he read. "Oh, of course! They are all better than anything else. And just being placed on the market.

"Oh, here it is! Easy enough to remember, if I had the energy to remember. Now that opens up an idea! Why doesn't it demand energy to forget instead of to recollect? Then we should remember everything, which would be simply grand! Except when a man borrows money and wants to forget the transaction. H'm, didn't think of that! Perhaps the present arrangement is the best, all things considered! Now, for this gift!"

He read the circular letter. It came from an address in London, and he was some sixty miles from the metropolis. He did not recognise the locality, but he had a vague idea that it was a crowded business district. The fountain pen was offered free on the condition that he wrote with it for two hours, and afterwards sent a letter to the patentees affirming that he had done so.

"I don't quite see what that will prove," he murmured. "Oh, without refilling! And then they will publish my testimonial and send me a large bottle of their special ink. Well, some fountain pens will write for longer than that without refilling, but this is much cheaper, and I suppose that's a good testimonial in this case. Lucky they don't ask me to write all that time at a stretch!"

He dropped the letter on the table, reflected a while, and resolved to do what was required. That settled, he dismissed the subject for the time, totally unconscious of what lay behind that offer!

His further meditations were interrupted soon afterwards by the entrance of a child, a girl of about five years. Her intelligent face, her brown eyes, with their quickly-changing expressions, her curly hair and engaging ways, had made this child dear to Fred Poynter.

He took her in his arms and kissed her; then smothered a sigh and placed her against the table, seating her on his knee so that she could reach things without trouble.

"What's this, Uncle Fred?" she asked, her face assuming a puzzled look, as she picked up the fountain pen.

"Oh, that's a pen, Lil! See, I take the top off, you hold it like this and it writes as easily as a lead pencil!"

He placed it in her fingers, and she began to make marks on the back of the letter containing the offer.

"Can I come in and do this—sometimes?" asked Lil, looking up at him.

"Certainly! You can help me to earn it. Capital!"

He watched her idly, and then his thoughts wandered over the history of the previous few years. This child was the daughter of his second cousin, a man of his own age, who had disgraced himself and left his wife and child in want.

Clifford Merton had wooed and won Elsie Prescott, and Fred Poynter, who had loved Elsie but had never urged his love because his position was too mediocre, had carried a wounded heart for more than six years.

He was one of those good-natured, easy-going men who are never likely to rise by their own exertions, and he might still have been living practically from hand to mouth had not circumstances favoured him unexpectedly.

Clifford Merton was nephew to old Charles Gorham, being the son of the latter's sister, who had been a great favourite of Gorham. Consequently, Clifford was selected as Gorham's heir after the old man had made his fortune in Australia.

Clifford Merton had a liberal allowance from his uncle, he appeared happy in his married life, and all went well till about two years before the opening of this story. Then a thunderbolt dropped from somewhere, and the aspect of things changed entirely.

Clifford Merton had been actively engaged in sowing wild oats; he had been betting, gambling, and living extravagantly. He had kept this from his wife, who loved him with a devotion which he did not merit and did not adequately reciprocate.

Finding himself in difficulties, he forged his uncle's name at the corner of one of Gorham's own cheques, and passed it through his own account in order to meet some heavy payments due to clamorous creditors.

The forgery was detected, but old Gorham instructed the bank to honour it, and then sent a cheque for £50 more to his nephew, with the curt remark that if he did not utilise that amount for the purpose of getting out of the country, he (Gorham) would have the forger arrested.

Clifford Merton's real character showed itself. He had expected a different result, and that Uncle Charles would relent and pay other large sums that were nearly due for settlement; so, as his expectations were not realised, and

Digitized by Google

things looked awkward, he left the country suddenly, abandoning his wife and child.

The first intelligence which Elsie received of the whole affair was a brief letter from Clifford, telling her what had happened, and suggesting that Uncle Charles would take care of her and the child. Uncle Charles flatly refused to do this; he was a cantankerous old man when put out, and Elsie was compelled to earn a livelihood for herself and child.

Then Fred Poynter was sent for and was told that he must come to live with Gorham, with the idea of ultimately becoming his heir.

Poynter had no objection to being provided with bread already buttered, and he accepted the proposal. He insisted that Elsie should be supported, but the old man was obdurate and Poynter had to drop the discussion.

"I won't leave a penny to that scamp or his family!" raved old Gorham. "And if you send any money to him, or her, I'll send you off!"

Poynter saw that he could do no good by getting out of favour with the old man, so he resolved to accept the position and help Elsie in some other way. He did so, unknown to anybody, even Elsie herself, by having copying work and other forms of light labour sent to her through an agent and paying her liberally for it all.

A year later, old Gorham was found dead in his bed from apoplexy and the will produced by the solicitor was entirely in Poynter's favour.

The will, made at the time Poynter entered the old man's house as prospective heir and manager of his estate, contained the provision that he was to forfeit the whole if he made a bequest of any part of it to Clifford Merton or his family.

"I felt considerable affection for the old fellow," said Poynter to the solicitor, "but the fact that he died and left that provision robs him of some of that affection—robs his memory, I suppose I ought to say. It's simply hard-hearted, and I prefer to think that he didn't mean it.

"Still, I must keep to the terms of the will. I can't give her any of the money, but I cannot be prevented from engaging her as housekeeper and paying her a good salary for it! And that's what I'll do!"

He induced Elsie to take up the position, and he was doing his best to make life happy for her.

"Shall I write to my papa?" asked the child suddenly, as she toyed with the pen.

Drawn from his reverie with a start, Poynter said:

"Er—yes! But he's a long way off!"

Poynter imagined that Merton was still in Central America, whither he had stated that he was going in that heartlessly brief letter to his wife—the last she had heard of him, and he would have been surprised to know that the good-for-nothing was once again in the old country, and journeying towards him with a heart full of hatred and fiendish glee.

There was a knock at the door, and a voice said:

"Is Lily in there, Mr. Poynter?"

"That is your mother, little one!" whispered Fred Poynter to the child. Aloud, he said: "Yes, Mrs. Merton. Come in, if you want her!"

Elsie Merton entered, holding up a finger deprecatingly at Lily as she did so. She was just under thirty; her face had not lost much of its charm, notwithstanding the trouble through which she had passed—the sorrow of two years had rather added a nobler charm to it, and there came a wistful look into Fred Poynter's eyes as they rested upon her.

"Oh, she is not worrying me!" declared Fred. "She likes to come here, Mrs. Merton, and I like to have her." He spoke in his usual deferential manner.

"I think she must come with me now, Mr. Poynter," responded Elsie. "Come along, dear! You can come some other time."

"And write with that pen?" inquired Lily, gazing at Fred's face in some anxiety lest he should say "No."

"Of course!" he said decisively.

The child went off contentedly with her mother.

Poynter had never conveyed to Elsie, by word or act, the fact that he loved her; there were times when he felt that he would like to break the silence, but this otherwise lethargic man could summon enough energy to prevent himself from acting in the remotest manner dishonourably.

Elsie appeared not to suspect the secret that lay in his heart; she did not forget that he had been an admirer in the old days, but he was one of several and the old days were far off!

She understood that he was helping her because he considered it only fair to do so. She was entitled to a share of the money, and this was the one way in which he could enable her to enjoy her rights.

During that same evening there arrived in Motham a rough-looking man who had been exiled from his native land for two years. He had a little money, and he hired a bed for the night at the "Brown Bull." He had shifty eyes, appeared to be always on the alert for danger, and said his name was Robert Brice.

"I'm going for a walk; are there any places of interest about here?" he inquired of the landlord. "You see, my people propose to establish a factory down here; land is cheaper than in a town and labour is cheaper, too.

"I have lived in places where you may be attacked by wild beasts or wild men any moment, so I am always on the watch!" he added nervously, as he noted the suspicious expression of the man's countenance.

"The Manor is about a mile from here," replied the landlord. "That's Mr. Poynter's place; used to belong to old Gorham. It's in that direction," pointing with his forefinger.

"Oh, yes, I know it!" said Brice, with a snarl. Then, remembering, he added quickly, "I mean, I know the circumstances. Who doesn't? Is he married?"

"No. He has Mrs. Merton there as housekeeper! That Merton was a bad lot, you know, but his wife is all right, and Poynter——" Here the landlord entered into details, concluding with, "I wouldn't be surprised if he married her, if the rascal who deserted her should turn out to be dead!"

Brice had turned away in order to prevent his agitation being noticed. When mine host had concluded, Brice uttered a curt word of thanks and left the premises.

"I knew he had supplanted me!" he hissed between his tight-shut teeth. "I guessed it! That's why I got details long ago, and that's why I intend to kill him with that fountain pen!

"I waited to see if the old man relented, but I heard nothing, and I used the knowledge I obtained in Costa Rica from the anarchists. It's worth the cost and risk of coming home!

"I guessed that he would poison the old man against me still more! But I never thought he would try to get Elsie!" An awful expression came from his lips; it seemed to burn the air. "He shan't have her! he won't live long enough for one thing!"

He began to revile the man who had "cheated him out of his inheritance," and the wife whom he had so basely deserted.

His was a warped nature; he was a man who would stoop to crime to hide a fault, and then regarded himself as a badly-used creature because society would not permit him to have his own sweet way.

He was one of those who do not trouble to keep in the right path, or to make a fight against ordinary difficulties, but who consider

Digitized by Google

that they are the sport of Fate, and try to take a sullen revenge by doing wrong, and sinking more and more deeply into the mire of evil.

"He is to write with it for two hours," he muttered, as he walked along the dusty road in the gathering darkness. "Perhaps he may do it to-day; he must have had it this morning, and it flatters a man to think that his name will be in print in the middle of a big newspaper advertisement as the writer of a testimonial!

"I shall gloat over the destruction of the man, and the wreck of——. No, it won't do much damage to the house, but it will spoil the look of him, and the room he writes in!"

He came within easy distance of the Manor, but he saw no signs of the accomplishment of his fell purpose. He remained near the Manor till ten o'clock, then he felt compelled to return to the inn and retire to his room in order not to arouse suspicion.

"Perhaps I shall find that it has taken place when I get up!" he reflected. He sat at the window for a long time, but finally retired, and fell asleep.

In the morning he waited eagerly for news of the terrible affair; he pictured, with joy, the excitement of the inhabitants and the awe with which they would tell what had happened. He was disappointed; everything was dull and quiet.

"Perhaps it will go off to-day!" he thought, prefacing that reflection by a few choice words that would not look well in print.

That day passed without incident; he hung about the Manor in the vain hope of hearing the report that would tell of the consummation of his plot, but he was doomed to disappointment once more.

The following day gave no better news, and, towards evening, tired of waiting, he resolved to creep quite close to the study, where Poynter spent his leisure, and try to ascertain if he really had the pen.

"It couldn't have gone wrong!" he thought. "The ink flowed well, and as soon as the fluid was half-way down, it would start the tiny mechanism, and the explosive would go off. Just strong enough to kill him, and do mischief to the immediate surroundings. Perhaps he didn't like the feel of it. It was a bit more bulky than the ordinary pens, but not too bulky."

He skirted the place, and selected a spot where it would not be difficult to get into the private grounds and so approach the study. If the pen were not being used, he would do something to cause the ink to leak out, and thus bring about the desired explosion. It might occur when Poynter was near it.

He found it tolerably easy to accomplish his object, and was soon ensconced in the shrubbery at a point that afforded a good view of the private room. It was empty, apparently, for he could see no one.

He had not waited long before he saw his so-called supplanter appear and seat himself at the table. He took up something and gazed at it curiously; then he bent over the table and began to write.

Clifford Merton's heart bounded with exultation. He gloated over the spectacle of what might happen at any moment, but to his disgust he saw Fred Poynter rise and leave the room. Two minutes later, Poynter re-appeared, leading a little girl by the hand.

"Lily!" gasped the watcher.

The sight of his child touched him as nothing had ever done before. It struck a chord that had not been touched for a long time, and he felt changed. Then his wife came in, the woman whom he had basely abandoned.

His better feeling, already agitated by the sight of his little daughter, was still further acted on by this scene. They seemed happy; he heard the child's laughter, and he could see the amused expression of his wife's face; they did not want him, he had deserted them, and they were happy without him.

For a few seconds he was half inclined to slink away and let them think that he was dead. He began to edge himself out of the shrubbery, away from the pleasant scene, but another thought came to him and hardened him once more.

It was Poynter who was making them happy, and he was doing it with money that should have been his, Merton's. If they thought him dead they would marry!

Poynter could easily exert influence over Elsie to induce her to consent, even if she were unwilling; for, as he provided her and her child with their living, he could urge with force any proposal of marriage which he might feel disposed to advance.

"No! I'll kill him!" he muttered savagely, going back to his first position. "I don't care what happens!"

He strained his eyes to see what they were doing; Lily was doing something on the table. She was seated on Poynter's knee. Through the open French window there came to the watcher the sound of Poynter's voice, and the words he caught were—

"The ink—running out! I—won—offer!"

Mercy! The ink was running out, and the innocent child was writing with the fatal pen! A shudder passed through his frame; he uttered a low cry of agony and broke through the shrubs.

Across the small grass plot he ran, and through the open window. The occupants of the study looked up in surprise, his altered appearance and his beard preventing them from recognising him for the time.

"Take it away from her! It will go off!" he shrieked.

He had caught the sound which he knew the pen would give forth when the mechanism began to work. He reached over the table from the back and dragged the dreadful thing roughly from the astonished child's grasp.

He sprang through the open window, and out on the grass plot he essayed to throw it from him. As it left his hand there was an explosion, the windows were shattered by the concussion, and a thick smoke obscured him from the view of the startled persons in the study.

Clifford Merton was badly injured. He was conveyed to a bedroom in the Manor, where he was recognised, confessing his misdeed, and begging that his identity should remain a secret.

"It will soon be all over with me," he moaned, "and I deserved it. I have brought enough misery on my family already, and I wish to spare them from the further scorn of the public."

As a matter of fact, Clifford Merton was recognised by the doctor, but he was regarded as a man who had retrieved his past rather than as a miscreant, and it came about thus—

An explanation of the affair had to be given, so Poynter said that the pen had been sent to him, and he had been saved from destruction by Merton, who had evidently learnt what had been done. Merton was too badly hurt himself to be able to give details. It was a mysterious affair altogether.

Merton was never able to give details. Poynter's conscience pricked him, and he allowed this version to remain for Elsie's sake.

It was three years before Fred Poynter asked Elsie to marry him, and she accepted. The money obstacle was overcome in a peculiar manner. Old Gorham's will decided that Poynter was not to part with any of the money to Merton or his family.

By his marriage Poynter did not actually part with any money in the sense of the will, he had no trouble in that respect, but his anxiety was for her maintenance in the event of his death. The birth of a son settled this difficulty also, for he could make a will and leave all to his own children, appointing Elsie trustee.

"The interest on the money will keep our son, and you, and Lil," he explained, "and you can, as trustee, use it as you like. When he grows up our boy will provide for you, if I am gone."

And in that way he evaded the injustice of the dead hand.

"I don't feel any compunction about it," said Poynter. "Gorham wanted to make me happy, therefore, he would want to make my wife happy! So I am certain he would not object if he were still alive!"

G. Merriam.

Digitized by Google

Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A seventh list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

<---------- CUT THROUGH HERE ----------->

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

SIXTH LIST.

31. She wore sequins on her dress, and a belt of blue stones; their brilliant effect was praised by everyone.

32. What is your saddle worth? It looks expensive, the leather being embossed on both sides.

33. Of all the visitors at the Grange, Conrad Clifworth was most liked. His manners were so refined on every occasion.

34. It was a bigger legacy than Lydia expected as she had lived in more or less seclusion for so long.

35. Up to a certain point pleasant thoughts held sway, then disturbing ones rose, effectually driving them away.

36. The day the baby was born ended with a hailstorm, the worst Edward Housecroft ever remembered, and he was an old man.

NAME ..... ADDRESS .....

Digitized by Google

Miss Smith, of Melbourne.

How an Heiress Found Her True Lover.

A pretty girl struggling with the refractory handle of the door of a railway carriage—who could fail to come to her assistance? A charming blush and a smile accompanying the words of thanks, the train about to start and who could resist the temptation to jump into the carriage after her?

Certainly Sydney Paget was not stoic enough to pass on to the next carriage when he could sit opposite such a dainty little lady as his eyes rested on when, with a shriek and a start, the train slowly dragged its long length out of the London terminus.

Given youth, good looks, and the stimulus of a glorious day in late Spring and the bridge need be but slight which passes from silence to the ordinary small talk of every-day conversation.

From the label on her handbag, Sydney gathered that the lady's name was Miss Smith, and that she was passenger to Crawley, the small village which was also his destination, therefore it was with a feeling of pleasure that he assured himself he would see more of Miss Smith in the future.

Her rose-leaf complexion, her brilliant hazel eyes and crisp, wavy brown hair, with ever such a slight tinge of red in it, and her bright, impulsive manner made such a charming personality that the young man never noticed that her clothes were not of the newest fashion and her gloves of a cheap make; details that a woman would have seen with half an eye.

Having intimated to her that he was also going to Crawley, and, in fact, had lived there the better part of his life, they embarked on the subject of the beauties of the village, and she showed herself particularly anxious to hear about the inhabitants of the houses round the neighbourhood.

He gave her a lively description of the various oddities of the country magnates in those parts, and at length she said somewhat timidly:

"Do you know any people called Paget there?"

"Living at a place called the Hurst? Why certainly, there is the Hon. Mrs. Paget, her daughter Edith, and two sons. Do you know them?"

"Well, not exactly," she replied in an embarrassed manner. "I—er—know of them; they are, I may say, sort of connections of mine."

Sydney started, and then exclaimed:

"Why, of course, how stupid I am—you are the Miss Smith we have been expecting. How is it I did not guess at once? But you must have come by an earlier steamer than we thought, for we did not think you would be here for another fortnight. How glad I am that I met you."

"But—but," she stammered, "if you expected me may I ask who *you* are?"

"Why, of course—I am Sydney Paget; John must have told you about me—I am his eldest brother. What a pity he is not at home just now. Never mind, you need not feel strange with us. You will find the mater an awfully good sort, and so is sister Edith if she takes to you. And she must do that," he added, *sotto voce*.

Seeing that Miss Smith appeared somewhat ill at ease, Sydney rattled on at some length, asking about her voyage and Australia and quoting largely from his brother John's accounts of the country.

In a short time the young lady's embarrassment passed, and she was soon chatting away, her eyes dancing with suppressed fun; and Sydney was so taken up with watching those said eyes that he never noticed how much he was telling her of himself and his family.

The journey, all too short as it appeared to one at least of the passengers, drew to an end, and soon Sydney had the pleasure of handing his charming fellow-passenger into his own dog-cart and driving off with her at a good pace, pointing out the places of beauty and interest to her as they proceeded.

Arriving at the Hurst he helped her down and conducted her to the drawing-room, where they met a dignified-looking old lady and a daughter, evidently the eldest of the family, pleasant but not good-looking, and dressed with a style that was evidently something beyond the "Modes" of the Crawley dressmaker.

"Mother, just fancy!" cried Sydney, as he ushered Miss Smith into the room. "I came down in the same carriage with Miss Smith and did not guess who she was until she opened my eyes by inquiring about us all."

A look of surprise and pleasure came into the Hon. Mrs. Paget's face as she gazed on the sweet, embarrassed face before her, and kissing her in a warm-hearted manner, she exclaimed:

"I am glad to meet you. I hope you will grow fond of us. Edith, dear," turning to her daughter, "here is Miss Smith."

Edith came forward and shook hands, murmuring expressions of pleasure.

"Of course, my dear," said Mrs. Paget, "you are prepared to stay some time with us before you go off to your friends in Liverpool. A room shall be prepared for you at once. If we had known the exact date of your arrival everything would have been ready."

"Dear Mrs. Paget," replied Miss Smith, with one of her charming blushes, "you are too kind. I am sure I shall be most happy here."

Digitized by Google

Having had tea, Edith escorted the visitor to the room prepared for her, and then with suppressed excitement she sought her mother.

"Oh, mother, I am so glad, aren't you? I was so afraid she would be hardly presentable, and really there is no doubt she is quite a lady; and though her dress is out of date, it will pass muster down here."

"Indeed, yes, my dear. I feel we are fortunate, for I never knew who John might have got hold of out in Australia. What fault can he find with her? I wonder why he is so anxious we should not think there is any engagement between them?"

"The whole thing is a mystery to me. Of course we may find out that on further acquaintance she is not what she appears to be at first, but we shall have excellent opportunities for judging while she is here. What a good thing it is that Nellie Seymour has asked to have her visit postponed. Supposing things should not turn out all right it would be so much more disagreeable to have a stranger in the house, and it might set her against us, and then Sydney——"

"What are you saying about Sydney?" said that same person, entering the room.

"Only that you should save some of the little attentions you paid Miss Smith for Nellie Seymour when she comes next month."

"Bother Nellie Seymour! You talk of her morning, noon, and night till I am sick of her name," he burst out, striding about the room in an irate manner.

"My dear boy," broke in Mrs. Paget, "you should not speak in that way of a young lady."

"Especially one with the whole of Samuel Grubham's fortune," he interpolated bitterly. "Mother, I like this business less and less. I know quite well why you have asked her here, and everyone knows it. You want me to marry her, and you would never have thought of it had not old Grubham left her all that money."

"Now, Sydney, you should not speak like that. Of course I should not urge you to marry anyone who was not nice, but I have been assured that Nellie is a most estimable girl, and really worked hard at her profession as a nurse until she suddenly found herself rich.

"As to asking her here, she is a third cousin on your father's side, and we are quite justified in inviting her to spend a few weeks with us. Of course as the eldest son with this place to keep up you cannot marry someone with no money at all, like Miss Smith, for instance," fixing him severely with her double eyeglass.

"'You need not marry for money, but go where money is,'" quoted Edith, seeing a frown gathering on her brother's forehead.

"The man who marries Miss Smith will be a jolly lucky fellow!" he retorted, and left the room wrathfully.

Mother and sister gazed at one another ruefully.

"How very unfortunate that John should be away and Sydney at home just at this juncture," sighed the mother.

"Yes, it is almost a pity she is so pretty," agreed the sister. "But surely she must be engaged to John or she would never have come to pay us a visit, and in that case there would be no fear for Sydney. He is not a cad and she does not look like an adventuress."

The conversation was cut short by the appearance of the young lady in question, and very charming she looked in a pretty black evening dress which had evidently done duty for a long time, but which nevertheless set off the radiant freshness of her bright young face.

"You deny that you are Bessie Smith?"
"I do. I am *not* Bessie Smith."

Mrs. Paget looked at her critically, and decided that though she was all that could be desired as a bride for John yet Sydney must be mated with more money.

John had always been the black sheep of the family, and they had rather dreaded lest he should present them some day with an altogether undesirable Mrs. John.

The voyage to Australia which they hoped would steady him seemed only to have resulted in a sort of semi-engagement with a certain "Miss Smith of Melbourne," an engagement which he strenuously denied at first, but had lately been obliged to partly confess, by owning to some sort of flirtation, when he announced that Miss Smith was coming over to stay with friends in Liverpool, and had proclaimed her wish to pay them a visit.

Seeing that she was far prettier and more ladylike than they had expected, Mrs. Paget determined to have the engagement formally acknowledged, and so make John "settle down." A consummation devoutly wished by his worried mother and sister.

Accordingly they set themselves to be as pleasant as only two thoroughly well-bred English ladies, with a sufficiency of means, can make themselves, and plainly showed by their manner that they were quite ready to accept her as one of the family as soon as she and John chose to declare themselves.

At the end of a week the intimacy had proceeded so far that it was "Bessie" and "Edith" between the two girls, and yet never a word had been let fall to clear up the vexed question as to "engagement" or "no engagement."

Unfortunately, in spite of repeated letters to John, that worthy still found excuses for delaying his home-coming, and even a judicious epistle from Edith hinting that if he post-

Digitized by Google

poned his return much longer he might find others not so blind to Miss Smith's charms, and he might lose her altogether, only drew from him a frown as he read it, and the remark:

"So much the better. Anyone is welcome to her who likes to take her."

Sydney thought the week the shortest he had ever passed. In the absence of his brother he found it his duty to devote himself to Miss Smith, and the prospect of her being one day his sister put them at once on the most charming terms of intimacy which at the same time were perfectly safe, as he repeatedly assured himself.

Nevertheless, when at last, in reply to a long letter from his mother concerning Miss Smith, John suddenly announced his return home, Sydney felt an unaccountable dislike to the idea. This dislike, in fact, amounted to a decided repugnance and plunged him into low spirits, and, it must be confessed, a bad temper.

In troubled surprise Mrs. and Miss Paget had watched the development of this unforeseen complication, and feeling that it was no good saying anything to the chief persons concerned, contented themselves with comments to one another.

"Who would have thought that a girl who liked a man well enough to come from the other side of the globe to him (on very slight encouragement) would have shown herself so easily consoled for his absence?"

There was no denying that bright and happy as Bessie Smith generally appeared to be, there were times when a look of anxiety came over her charming countenance and her manner was sometimes embarrassed and unhappy.

"Thank goodness," sighed the Hon. Mrs. Paget to her daughter. "John comes to-morrow, and that will put everything in its proper place. It is most unfortunate that anything should happen to put absurd ideas into Sydney's head just before Nellie Seymour comes."

"I never should have thought," answered Edith, "that she would have flirted so outrageously with one brother while engaged to another."

"But are they engaged?" queried the mother anxiously.

"When John comes we shall know," replied Edith with conviction.

But when John came they found they knew no more than before. The two greeted each other quietly without undue pleasure apparent in their faces.

Disappointed in an immediate solution of their difficulties, the two ladies still found satisfaction in the fact that John had shown himself during the evening more attentive than they would have hoped, and that though Bessie received his attentions timidly, yet she certainly kept Sydney more at a distance than hitherto.

Two days passed, and on the second evening Edith discovered John and Bessie in earnest conversation in the conservatory, and discreetly vanished, not before, however, she heard John say,

"Of course, since you know you are engaged to me——"

Perhaps, however, she would have been less elated had she heard the rest of the conversation.

"Engaged! And to you" repeated Miss Smith hotly. "That is not true; how dare you say such a thing?"

John flushed at the indignant contempt in her voice, and therefore determined to force her to a humiliating confession by pretending to really take her for Bessie Smith.

"Have you forgotten that we met only last year at Melbourne? Do you remember that picnic?"

"Melbourne! I have never been out of England in my life."

"You deny that you are Bessie Smith? You deny that we were engaged shortly before I sailed for home? You deny that you have written to me by every packet since then? That you have come over now to be introduced to my people prior to our marriage?"

"I deny that I ever was, or ever will be engaged to you," replied Bessie, with flashing eyes and a little stamp of her foot. "Not if you were the only man in the world."

John winced, and then said with emphasis,

"You deny that you are Bessie Smith?"

For an instant the bright eyes sank daunted, and then with a proud raising of her head which defied him to think his worst of her, she replied:

"I am not Bessie Smith."

With a sarcastic smile John said, pursuing his advantage to the utmost—

"Then whom have I the honour of addressing? Who is it that is masquerading here under an assumed name, tricking my relations and deceiving the neighbourhood?"

The young girl's anger had faded, and she stood a picture of embarrassment and shame. Even John's insolent words would now draw no flush from her.

Hanging her head, she said in a small voice:

"I am Nellie Seymour."

John could not prevent a start of glad surprise, but he would not give up the advantage her position gave him.

"And why do I find the heiress, Miss Seymour, pretending to be Bessie Smith, and my *fiancée?*"

This gave her the necessary fillip, and her old spirit broke out, and with a proud toss of her head, she replied:

"Miss Smith is a common enough name; could I help it that your family took me for someone else? Had I known that it entailed any connection with you, it is the last name I would have chosen."

John was very wrath, but she looked so pretty and desirable in her anger, especially since he learnt her real identity, that he controlled himself with a great effort, and sought to turn it all to his advantage.

"Miss Seymour," he said gravely, "I fear you will find yourself in a very awkward position unless you let me help you. Can you not explain to me what caused you to act in this extraordinary manner?"

Nellie blushed, and then said—

"Well, I suppose I may as well tell you all about it. Two months ago I was Nellie Seymour, now I am Miss Seymour, the heiress. I cannot say the change was unwelcome, it certainly was unexpected.

"I had nursed Mr. Grubham because I was paid to do so, and had no idea he would leave me his money. The surprising thing to me was to find then what a lot of unexpected friends and relations I possessed, and how fond they all were of me.

"Amongst other invitations, I received one from the Hon. Mrs. Paget, urging our kinship most kindly, and begging me to come and stay for a month.

"A kind friend to whom I spoke of this said it was the talk of the village that I was being asked down for the——" here she stammered, and a charming blush covered her face—"for the eldest son to marry. In some indignation I decided to come here as a stranger and judge of the family for myself.

"Accordingly I took the name of Miss Smith and came. On my way I met your brother, and he mistook me for the Miss Smith your people were expecting. This was too good a chance of making the acquaintance of the family, so acting on a momentary impulse, I fell in with his idea, and was introduced to his mother and sister.

"By degrees I learnt more about the person I was representing, but though I was somewhat troubled at their frequent allusion to 'John,' I give you my word I had no idea until now

Digitized by Google

that I was personating someone so near and dear to you. I fear that you must have been bitterly disappointed when you saw me," she said, with a mischievous glance, which fired John's blood.

He took a step towards her.

"By Heavens! The disappointment is now! Remain my *fiancée*, and I ask nothing more of Fate."

"And what would you do with two?" she said.

He recovered himself with a frown.

"Oh, I am not really engaged to Bessie Smith. She is only coming over to see her friends in Liverpool."

"And the picnic? And her letters?" Nellie was triumphant now.

"That was nothing," he stammered. "Miss Seymour—Nellie, if you will only listen to me, if you will only let tell me you how I love you."

"Enough, Mr. Paget," she said with dignity. "I wish to hear no more. After what you have said, I am sure you are not free to speak so to anyone but Miss Smith."

"And if I were?" he added eagerly.

"If you were, it would make no difference," she answered firmly.

John strode about for a few minutes with a black cloud on his face, and then said:

"What do you propose doing now?"

"I do not know," she announced. "I suppose I had better confess the whole thing to your mother, and beg her forgiveness."

"I think it would be better," he replied slowly, "if you let things remain as they are for a time, and then you can terminate your visit here and return to town. When you come again as Miss Seymour, you will find it easier to confess and be forgiven."

Nellie needed some persuasion to agree to this plan of further deception, but she was naturally averse to proclaiming her mistake and eating humble pie, and John had strong reasons for postponing the explanation, and so in the end he prevailed.

Sydney noticed with a pang that there seemed to be some private understanding between his brother and Miss Smith that evening, but at the same time he saw that she was evidently unhappy and ill at ease, and the timid, supplicating look he saw once in her eyes aroused in him a mad desire to punch John's head and carry her off.

For some few days things remained in the same strained condition, and then John received a letter which seemed greatly to perturb him.

"By-the-bye," he read, "the *Orinoco* came in yesterday, and my friend Tomson was on board. He tells me there was a Miss Smith there who has been most particular in her inquiries about Crawley, and especially about you, and spoke of running down on Friday."

"Hang her!" he ejaculated. "I wish she had gone to the bottom. If I only had time I am sure I could get Nellie. I am sure she likes me better than she did. But, by Heaven! that dreadful girl will be here to-morrow, and what can I do?"

"I cannot face her, that is true. If only I had time to get Nellie to promise herself to me! I could have got her to buy off Bessie to avoid a scandal. Now there is nothing for it but to run. I shall have one try for her, however. Faint heart never won fair lady." And he went to meet Nellie in the garden.

It was a glorious day, and Nellie, in her white frock, as she stood among the clumps of gorgeous rhododendrons, for which the Hurst was famed, looked a winsome enough little lady without the golden halo that surrounded her in John's eyes since he knew she was the rich heiress.

"Proofs! Here they are," and she banged down a packet of letters in John's handwriting.

With an assumption of authority which made Sydney's blood boil, John sent him about his business and took Nellie for a stroll.

Seeing she was ill-at-ease and likely to defy him if he strained the cord too tightly, John plunged at once into the subject.

"Miss Seymour"—suddenly taking her hand—"I love you. Do you not care a little for me? Will you not let this pretended engagement become a reality?"

Nellie withdrew her hand.

"I am sorry to cause you pain, Mr. Paget, but I have already told you this thing can never be, I do not love you and never shall. Will you please leave me?"

John grew white. He was very much in earnest, to win her meant so much to him, a pretty wife, plenty of money, a freedom from the fear that Bessie Smith would get him after all.

"You are breaking my heart; do you not care that you have spoilt my life?"

"It is not right of you to speak like this," she replied. "If your life is spoilt it is your own fault. I told you from the first that I could never love you and *never shall*."

There was no mistaking her sincerity, but he tried his last cast.

"If you will not accept the love I offer you, will you accept my name, will you marry me to save your good name?"

Here Nellie turned on him, her slight form drawn to its utmost, and in her eyes an expression of offended purity, of outraged womanhood, which effectually quelled him.

"Nothing can be said against my good name. I do not

Digitized by Google

need to shelter it behind a dishonoured shield of a breaker of vows, and a bully."

Without another word she turned and left him.

In a fury he cried as she went:

"You will be sorry for this to-morrow."

That evening important business took John to town, and Edith and Mrs. Paget were once more in dire perplexity as to the course their curious case of "true love" was running.

Nellie's spirits rose high, she felt the relief of John's absence, and she gave herself up to the pleasure of being alone with Sydney once more.

At times John's threat returned to her mind, but she paid little heed to it. To-night she would enjoy herself, to-morrow she would announce the termination of her visit, and then either write and explain, or come back in her true character and beg forgiveness.

Poor Sydney was divided between rapture and a horrible feeling that, after all, the girl, whom he now found he had grown to love so dearly, was not quite acting as she should. Surely if it had been anyone else he would have said she was flirting with him, and encouraging him to love her, and that such conduct in one who was pledged to another was most reprehensible. He paced his room for many hours that night, and his conclusion was:

"Mother may have been mistaken and so may Edith; John may be telling lies, but I will stake my life that she is a noble-minded and pure girl, whose white soul has never been sullied by an unworthy thought or wish." Which shows that he had done more than stake his life on his belief, he had put all his chance of happiness on one throw.

The morrow came and even as Nellie was turning over in her mind the exact words in which to take leave of her hostess, a thunder-bolt fell in their midst. The man-servant announced in a loud tone:

"A young lady wishes to see the Hon. Mrs. Paget on urgent business. She says her name is Miss Bessie Smith of Melbourne, and that she is expected."

Mrs. Paget and Edith literally gasped and glanced at Nellie, who stood looking the picture of guilt.

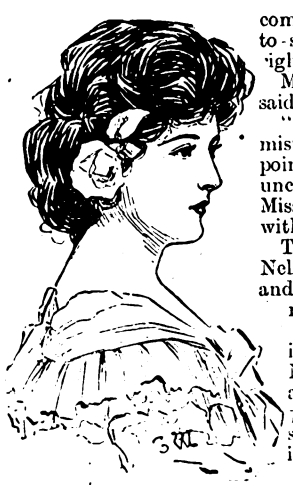
Mrs. Paget was the first to recover herself.

"There must be some mistake, I think. Please show the lady up, James."

"An interval of silence, in which the three ladies avoided one another's eyes, and then entered Miss Smith of Melbourne. A rather over-dressed female, no longer very young, of a tawdry kind of good looks, and with an Australian twang, that might be recognised at any distance.

"I suppose you are Mrs. Paget and you Edith Paget?" she remarked.

The ladies bowed and wondered what would fellow.



"Well, I'm Bessie Smith. I've come all the way from Australia to see that your son John does right by me."

Mrs. Paget came forward and said in an icy tone:

"I fear there must be some mistake. This young lady"—pointing to Nellie, who stood uncertain what to do or say—"is Miss Smith, and has been staying with us for some time."

The real Miss Smith stared at Nellie in undisguised astonishment and then with blunt coarseness remarked:

"Well, all I can say is, that if she has been staying here as Miss Bessie Smith of Melbourne and engaged to Mr. John Paget, you had better count your spoons, for she is a rank impostor."

Mrs. Paget trembled and cast a glance at Nellie, who, however, had guilt written on her countenance, and she murmured—

"We have only your word for it. Where are your proofs?"

"Proofs! Plenty of them. There!" And she banged down a packet of letters in John's handwriting. "There!" And she produced a ring which Mrs. Paget knew well as one she had given John when he came of age.

Edith went forward to Nellie.

"Bessie! Deny all this. Say you are really Bessie Smith, and this woman the impostor."

But poor Nellie could only say:

"She says truly, I am not Bessie Smith."

"Then who are you? Why have you deceived us? Are you engaged to John?" And a hundred other questions were showered on Nellie as she stood bewildered, and this was the scene to which Sydney entered and stood gazing at speechless.

"Sydney!" said his mother, "in dignified wrath, "we have been grossly deceived. This person is not Miss Smith. She is some impostor."

Only one idea, however, occurred to Sydney.

"Not Miss Smith?" he exclaimed, turning a radiant face to Nellie. "Then you are not engaged to John?"

"No," she replied, and then the room was empty, and held only the two, as for a long moment they gazed in one another's eyes and read the truth.

Then Sydney drew her hand through his arm, and, turning to his mother, said:

"Whoever she may be, I love her, and if she will accept me I shall deem myself the most fortunate man on earth."

"Sydney!" exclaimed Edith. "Are you mad?"

"This is preposterous," cried Mrs. Paget, "I insist on an explanation."

"Yes," said Miss Smith, whose triumphant smile at the confession of the impostor had changed to a look of consternation at the foregoing scene.

"You had better prove yourself respectable or the police must be called in."

Nellie ignored this remark, and turning to Mrs. Paget said:

"Forgive me—I am Nellie Seymour."

"Nellie Seymour!" the two ladies gasped in unison.

"Why? Why? Whatever made you call yourself Bessie Smith?"

And then Nellie explained the whole history of how she found she was being taken for some unknown person, and how, thinking no harm, she continued the deception until it grew more and more difficult to get herself out of the tangle, and then turning to Sydney, the sparkle of her dancing eyes veiled in tender tears, she said:

"At any rate, I have learnt the worth of one noble heart, and have no fear but that I am loved for myself. Ah, Mrs Paget!" Impulsively throwing her arms round her. "Do forgive me. I shall be your daughter-in-law after all, if you will have me."

And what could Mrs. Paget do (realising that after all her wish was fulfilled), than kiss her and forgive her.

Meanwhile, Miss Smith was clamouring to be told of John's whereabouts. No one could enlighten her. After some trouble she was persuaded to depart, and the family was left to make their mutual explanations. In time they grew to look on it as a joke, and almost to believe that they had seen through it all the time.

The village was somewhat puzzled to find that it was the eldest and not the youngest Mr. Paget who was to marry the lady from Australia, and that the lady was not from Australia after all, but was the wealthy Miss Seymour. However, the wonder was soon talked out and ceased to interest.

Nellie made private arrangements with her lawyers by which Miss Smith was bought off and persuaded to return to Australia. She said it was to make up to John for disappointing him.

L. Hughes.

Digitized by Google

THE OLD ROOM.

Telling of the Winning Back of a Husband's Love.

"My dearest Alice! In two years I will come back to the old town and claim you! The change of fortune has come at last, and I feel that this is but the first step towards success. In two years I shall be in a position to give you a home, I am sure of it! I shall not wait for the great success which I feel now is bound to come; I will have you with me, to share the increasing good fortune, for you have helped me immeasurably in the winning of it!"

He clasped her to his breast and she nestled against his stronger frame with a happy smile on her face.

"I knew it would come, Will, if you only kept on trying!" she replied simply. "I knew that if you held out till you got the first opening, you would rise rapidly!"

His face clouded for a moment at the recollection of the disappointments of the past.

He had always been fond of drawing and sketching. Someone had told him that he ought to cultivate the gift and he would become a great artist; he was of a very impressionable nature, one of those who are either deeply despondent or exceedingly hopeful and pass from one condition to the other in rapid succession, and his ambition was fired.

He had set to work to study, so far as his means would permit, but, as his parents were dead and he had to support himself, a mere lad, by his own earnings, his means did not give him the scope he wanted.

He had pursued his studies with more or less assiduity, according to circumstances, till he had attained his twentieth year and had acquired skill with the pencil and the brush; then he had endeavoured to obtain work in the metropolis as a black-and-white artist by sending sketches to editors.

His idea was to obtain employment in that way and devote his spare time and all the money he could scrape together to the pursuit of his studies at some school or under some artist.

Ill-luck seems to dog the steps of some people at the outset of their careers—very often for their ultimate benefit, although it may not appear so—and Will Darrell was one of those. His was not the nature to be strong in adversity and to be roused by it to greater effort; he wanted help in this direction.

His sketches were returned on all sides, and at the end of two months—having worked with great ardour and not having taken into account the possibility of rebuffs—he was disheartened and ready to give up the attempt and develop into that unpleasant specimen of humanity—a disappointed man.

It was at that moment that the needed help came to him in the form of a sympathetic soul, a woman of inherent goodness and a firm believer in the final triumph of those who do their utmost.

It was not exactly a common-place meeting, yet it was not an extraordinary one.

As Will was walking along the somewhat crowded pavement, one wet evening, he saw a drunken fellow trip over a paving stone that had not been properly laid; the man stumbled heavily against a girl, Alice Holmes, and sent her staggering into the road in front of a trap that was coming along at a rattling pace.

Will was nearest and he luckily had sufficient presence of mind to act promptly. In a trice he had the girl on the pavement just in time.

It was natural, after that, for the two to strike up an acquaintance, which deepened into friendship, and then into love. Alice learnt of Will's hopes and discouragements, and she consoled him and inspired him with courage to persevere.

Will Darrell's brow cleared and he pressed this girl closer to his heart as he remembered how she had encouraged him. Some fatality appeared to attend all his efforts.

Perhaps he did not try in the right direction for success; whatever the explanation, he failed every time and he would have discontinued his attempts, and his studies also, and probably have drifted into a good-for-nothing had it not been for the patience and the confidence of Alice Holmes.

She would tell him that he must succeed in the end, and that his failures should have the effect of making him more assiduous in his studies.

"Once get an opening, and you will go on!" she declared. "If you try and fail, you will feel better than if you do nothing, and you will certainly not be worse off!" That was commonsense, but it was not easy for Darrell to follow the advice.

So Alice helped him; she insisted on his taking some of the money which she contrived to save from her own small wage, so that he might have enough to carry out his object. She urged that he ought not to refuse; they were to be partners in the future, and this was capital invested for their mutual benefit.

And at last the chance did come, as Alice prophesied it would, and in a short time it led to the offer of a subordinate position on the staff of a large publishing firm, and Will Darrell was leaving his native place to take up his new duties.

Will Darrell did not feel the parting so keenly as did Alice; he was so full of the future that he had small space left in heart or mind for grief at what was actually taking place.

With Alice it was different; she was to be left alone, to lose the presence of the man she had learnt to love with all the fervour of which so true a nature was capable.

The old place would be dark and dull without him, but she assumed a cheerful expression and prepared to submit to the inevitable for a time. Perhaps it would not be tw

Digitized by Google

years; she hoped that it would not be so long, for Will's sake as well as her own.

The next two years were very happy ones for Will Darrell; he was well-nigh intoxicated with success. Dame Fortune tried to atone for her former somewhat shabby treatment by lavishing her favours upon him.

There was no need for words of encouragement from Alice; her letters, on the contrary, contained gently-worded admonitions not to allow his triumphs to overwhelm him. Her letters reached him with unfailing regularity on the same day every week, but his weekly epistles to her were not sent so regularly after a time. He was always very penitent, but he had so much to do!

It was nearly three years before he asked her to come to him; he had waited till he had set up a studio of his own and was gaining some celebrity as an artist in oils. His progress had been phenomenal; his every desire appeared to be gratified almost immediately.

Both Will and Alice were overjoyed, and neither—not even Alice with all her insight—suspected that fortune might be more disastrous to happiness than failure.

The wedding was a quiet one; this was the wish of Alice whose modesty shrank from a fashionable display, such as might reasonably have been expected if all Will's new friends and admirers had been informed, and the ceremony had taken place in London.

They were married from the old home and spent a brief honeymoon in the south, returning to the studio in the realm of artists in the metropolis, St. John's Wood.

The happiness to which Alice Darrell had looked forward for so long was now hers. She had a husband of whom she was passionately fond, although her affection was not so demonstrative as that of Will for her; her husband was making a name for himself, realising her prediction and her ardent wish.

Will was in the seventh heaven of delight; life was a pleasure, a thing to hold on to with all one's strength—however could he have said, at one time, that it was not worth living? Life is always worth living if you honestly try to get the best out of it! And, thanks to his dear wife, he had been able to do this!

The joy of living remained with them unimpaired for another year, and then a change came over Will Darrell; much success, with his consequent celebrity, was turning his head. He was the lion of Society; he was invited here and there, and——

Ah! Alice had not been brought up to this kind of thing, and she was not fitted for it by education or training! She was awkward in certain circumstances, *gauche*, the ladies termed her. She was not quick at repartee; she was not a brilliant conversationalist or pianist.

Will Darrell heaved a sigh as he opened a letter in his studio and found that it contained an invitation from Lady Manville Retton.

"I really ought to accept this," he muttered, frowning in his perplexity, "but I don't see how I am to go without Alice—I can't invent any plausible excuse for keeping her at home—yet she is *not* quite—er—what one would expect to see there as"—he blushed involuntarily—"as my wife! Oh, confound it! Why wasn't she—why isn't she more up-to-date in her education and style?"

He frowned again. It was very provoking! Unless he could devise some way out of the difficulty, he would lose a great deal; for he really couldn't take Alice with him to these Society functions, and yet how was he to go without her?

"She would be awfully hurt, the dear girl!" he continued with a trace of compunction, "but it's a fact that she doesn't shine. She is a good wife, and all that sort of thing, but—I am afraid that what I overheard Fraser say (the beggar) is right; she is in my light now!"

He did very little work that afternoon; he was worrying about Alice and how he was to act. His wife always left him to himself in his studio in the afternoon, entering about five o'clock to take tea with him in his den, and staying with him till he ceased work.

If he did not work after tea, they spent a pleasant hour or so together in conversation or in arranging and re-arranging things in this or that room. Pleasant? Well, they had been very agreeable, but Will was changing his ideas.

"I *must* accept it!" he decided. "And Alice must stay at home!"

He didn't mean to be cruel; he persuaded himself that Alice did not care for these functions, and that they were absolutely necessary for his further progress. Therefore, it would, or should, suit both of them for him to go alone.

"I don't think you are looking very well, Alice," he said that evening with some solicitude. "I don't suppose these parties suit you, and you would rather stay at home. So would I, dear, but, you see, it's part of the business! Now, here is an invitation from Lady Manville Retton—sure to meet a lot of good people there. For Thursday. Would you prefer to stay at home? I *must* go."

He puffed a wreath of smoke from a good cigar so that it partly hid his face. Alice did not say anything for a few seconds, but she finally answered cheerfully:

"I should prefer it, Will; but I'll go if you——"

"Oh, not at all!" declared Will, with just a little too much eagerness. "It will not matter in the least if you are not with me! I have had an idea for a week or two that you would rather be at home! We will call it settled at that!"

He felt rather sheepish over it, but he congratulated himself that he had managed the matter cleverly. He went to Lady Manville Retton's reception, alone; and that was the beginning of the disaster.

Led away by flattery and the desire to mount the ladder of Fame in the shortest possible time, Will Darrell's thoughts became more and more absorbed in all that touched his art in any way whatever, and Alice was pushed farther and farther into the background.

He regretted that he could not give parties, but he dreaded the ordeal. Alice became, in his eyes, less and less fitted for the exalted position to which he was raising her.

It never occurred to him that it was she who had enabled him to assume this position—that she had laid the foundation-stone, as it were, by her sympathy, encouragement, and practical help in the dark days of failure. And he belittled her by supposing that Alice was incapable of taking her place by his side.

She was one of Nature's noblewomen, and her small shortcomings, even supposing that she could not smooth them away, would have failed to attract attention when her real character became known and understood.

It did not occur to him that it was his bounden duty to stand up for her. Fame had intoxicated him, it had made him selfish and deprived him of the power of correct reasoning. He drifted apart from his wife and the happy home of her dreams was as unsubstantial as the visions of sleep.

Will Darrell did not work so much now; he could command a price for his pictures which rendered it unnecessary to peg away regularly and for many hours a day. He was quicker at the work, too.

Digitized by Google

It therefore became the rule for him to work by fits and starts, painting all night in order to get a picture finished, because he had not commenced it in time.

The old times were gone ; there were no more happy hours in the studio together and Alice rarely entered it. There was usually an air of neglect about it ; she tried once or twice to clear it up and make it appear as was its wont, but the blinding tears came to her eyes and she had to beat a hasty retreat.

What was to happen ? Will Darrell was away from home for a longer time than he was in it. He seemed to have lost affection for her and paid her but scant attention.

It was heart-breaking for Alice. Her hidden grief was wearing her away. She sometimes blamed herself, saying that she had not done enough to keep him by her side ; then she would remember how she had tried to comfort him, taking an interest in all he was doing, honestly praising his work and devoting herself to him. What more could she have done ?

"I know I was backward," she would sob, "but I was learning, and he did not give me a chance."

One night she heard him mutter something in his sleep ; it was to the effect that he had made a mistake in marrying. It nearly broke her heart, but in the end it roused her to make one grand attempt to bring him back to his old love.

No, she would not organise a reception and act the grand lady ! Will was blinded ; she would restore sight, and hope, hope and pray, that he would become his old self once more.

Will Darrell had sent in three pictures for the Royal Academy. Alice dreaded the result, for she was convinced that Will had not done his best ; he had "rushed" them, confident in his power to produce good pictures with a minimum of labour—a fatal mistake for anyone, in any vocation.

He had gone off on a tour to Italy with some of his newly-found friends, and Alice was left behind to grieve and scheme for the restoration of the happiness which success had shattered.

The rejection of all three pictures followed within a fortnight of Will Darrell's departure—a terrible blow to his reputation and pride. Alice did not send the news to him ; she knew that he would learn of this disaster from others. She wrote to him to urge him to come home, as she wanted him, and she prepared for his homecoming.

There was a room next to the studio, a small room which had often reminded them both of the little parlour in her aunt's house in the old town ; they had spent some happy hours in that parlour during Will's struggle for recognition, and the room next the studio often recalled those days to her. Often did she press her hand to her heart now as the recollection came to her on entering this off-room.

She was busy with that room. A cart had come to the house with some old furniture, a second-rate lot that would have made the artistic neighbours stare had they seen it ; but it was packed and they saw cases of something delivered by a Great Northern Railway van. Alice and her servant worked with feverish haste in order to conclude the preparations by the time Will returned. He had written a brief note to Alice, telling her that he would be home on Saturday, and he arrived punctually at the stated time.

He looked dejected and forlorn, and it aggravated his feeling of irritation and annoyance that his wife was not in the hall to meet him and extend to him the sympathy which she had ever given him. Yet, did he deserve it ?

In the midst of his vexation and his silent raving against Fate and luck, he remembered that he had forsaken her and lost all claim to her sympathy.

"She does not care now !" he muttered, mechanically hanging up his hat and light overcoat.

His heart sank as he realised that he had to rebuild a reputation without Alice's help ; he little thought with what anxiety she had waited for his return, for she had half-feared that his dejection might cause him to take some desperate step before she could have the opportunity of bringing him to her side again.

He made straight for the studio and uttered an impatient exclamation on finding it locked. He turned to the next room ; the door yielded to his touch and he entered.

Another exclamation, this time of bewilderment, left his lips and he stepped back in amazement. Where was he ? This room—it was not a room in his house ! He passed his hand over his heated brow, wondering if he had gone mad and had wandered to—to the little town in the north ! What did it mean ?

He stared about him. He was at the door of the old parlour, in which Alice and he had often met in the struggling days. It was the self-same furniture and curtains, the same cheap chiming clock on the mantelpiece. And there, in the old chair and dressed in the old clothes, sat Alice !

"I am glad you have come, Will !" said Alice in the old cheery voice and with that sweet smile on her face. "Sit down and tell me all your worries, dear, while tea is being got ready, and I'll see if I can drive away the imps of mischief that worry and dishearten you !"

Alice uttered the words as nearly as possible in the old strain, but her heart was full of dread lest the hoped-for effect should not be produced.

She had thought that this transportation into old times would arouse Will's better feelings, that it would tear the scales from his eyes and make him see what he had lost—what both had lost—in the abundance of outward good-fortune.

She knew that a strange vision of past scenes, a sudden return to old surroundings and old affections had often worked a marvellous effect in showing people where their happiness really lay, and this was her plan to bring Will to her and to restore to him the happiness that was eluding him.

He stared at her in surprise. She rose and came towards him with outstretched hands. He cast a swift glance round the room and at her, and he realised in a flash the plot of his devoted wife. With a cry of joy, which contained a tinge of remorse, he opened his arms and she willingly—oh, so willingly !—allowed him to fold her in a strong embrace.

"I see it all now, dearest !" he declared, when he could master his emotion. "I have been wrong, very wrong ! Success has spoilt me. This little stage play of yours has done more than anything else could have done to show me where my real good fortune lies, and I shall never again forget that a good wife is better than all else !

"Kiss me, dear, and forgive me ! We are beginning again, but the path will be different and it will have more sunshine upon it, even although the world may not see it !"

F. Brewster.

HOW TO TAKE & FAKE PHOTOGRAPHS.

By CLIVE HOLLAND.

Author of "Practical Hints on Photography," "The Artistic in Photography," etc., etc.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Price 1s., or post free 1s. 2d.

Some of the chapters are :

CHAP. I.—THE DARK ROOM. Its size—Fittings—Stock of Chemicals—Various uses.

CHAP. II.—CAMERAS, PLATES, AND FILMS. The choice of a camera—Shutters—Plates and their varieties—The various merits of plates and films, etc.

CHAP. IV.—Exposure. Testing speeds of plates—Tables, exposures—Plate speed table—Exposure hints—Don'ts, etc.

CHAP. V.—DEVELOPMENT OF NEGATIVES. Developers—Normal Development—Development of over-exposed and under-exposed plates—Local development—Intensification and reduction of negatives—Re-touching—Varnishing, etc., etc.

At all Railway Bookstalls and Booksellers.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To the BOOK PUBLISHER,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "How to Take and Fake Photographs," for which I inclose the sum of 1s. 2d.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister, maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

"What are you Going to Do?"

Mr. Ussher rubbed the dimple in his chin with the point of a bent knuckle.

"I—I thought perhaps, sir," he said dubiously, "that you yourself might make a few casual inquiries of her ladyship. Any questions on my part, sir, might so easily impress her ladyship with a sense of—of cross-examination. I should regret that, sir, extremely."

Edward Stormont inclined his head as if to acknowledge the detective's point of view.

"You are exceptionally considerate, Mr. Ussher," he replied, "but really I must decline to act as a deputy in the matter. My sister-in-law can have nothing to conceal. If she went out on the night in question she had adequate reason, if she did not she will tell us so and there's an end of it."

The door had opened as he spoke and the footman stepped through.

"Take my compliments to Lady Tarleton," he desired, "and say that I shall be glad if she can come down for a moment to the library. Add that Mr. Ussher is here."

The servant withdrew. Paul Jerome rose and approached his host.

"I have some letters to write, Stormont," he observed, tactfully; "I believe I will not intrude upon your consultation with Lady Tarleton and Mr. Ussher."

Edward Stormont laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "don't desert me. If you only knew how heartily I detest the law and all that appertains to it, you would not leave me alone to wrestle with Mr. Ussher's official curiosity. However, he is but doing his duty, and we must humour him. I hope my sister-in-law will see his interrogations in the same light."

Mr. Ussher coughed. "I am most wishful, sir," he remarked, "not to appear officious or to exceed in any way the strict letter of my obligations. But, as I say, sir, I am bound to trace, and, if possible, to account for, every action of Hannah Davenal for some while before her murder. Not that I attach any importance to this story."

"Do not disquiet yourself, Mr. Ussher," interrupted the other, "I said 'official curiosity' not 'officious.' You must not do less, and we will even pardon your doing a trifle more than your duty."

He went to the door of the room. It had swung wide again, and Lady Tarleton was entering; he met her and placed a chair for her. She looked at the three men with an air of haughty expectation.

"My dear Adeline," began her brother-in-law, "you must forgive my sending for you instead of asking you to receive me. But Mr. Ussher here is in a more than ordinarily inquisitive mood, and his curiosity can only be satisfied at your hands. He has, it seems, dropped across some person, a gamekeeper, in fact, who is under the impression that a night or two prior to Davenal's death he—the gamekeeper—saw you and her in the park, at the traditionally mysterious hour of twelve o'clock p.m., if not, indeed, later."

Lady Tarleton raised to the detective a countenance on which surprise was stamped. The slightly-parted lips, the widely-opened eyes, the blank expression of the features—all counterfeited amazement to the life.

"My good man," she ejaculated, "you don't mean to say that you have come up to the Tower seriously to investigate

Digitized by Google

an absurd story that I—that we—oh!" she broke off, with a harsh little laugh, "how ridiculous you police people can be. What, in Heaven's name, would take me out with Davenal in this wilderness—on foot and at midnight?"

Mr. Ussher cleared his throat.

"I told Mr. Stormont, my lady," he said, "that I attached no importance to the story—in—in one way. But the gamekeeper, my lady, was most precise with regard to the place (the neighbourhood of the mausoleum in the park), the time, and resemblance between Davenal's companion and yourself. And my object in consulting Mr. Stormont was to ascertain how far I should be well advised in treating the suggested resemblance as a clue."

"A clue!" Lady Tarleton was staring at him incredulously; "a clue to what?"

"It—it occurred to me, your ladyship," responded the detective, abashed, "that possibly some confidential mission—having no bearing upon the case, but still of a peculiarly private nature, some errand of mercy, or such-like—might have taken you, my lady, out of doors, even at so late an hour."

He cleared his throat once more—Lady Tarleton's scornful quiet was disconcerting.

"In which event," he pursued, "I should abandon my idea of tracking down this person who might be said to resemble you and who conceivably had held secret communications with Davenal. In addition, my lady, I might be called upon to observe a certain amount of tact in suppressing further and unnecessary references to the cause of your ladyship's excursion."

Lady Tarleton smiled disdainfully. "Really, Mr. Ussher," she said, "you are chivalry and discretion themselves. But your caution in this instance is wasted. Neither an errand of mercy nor any other errand took me out on the night immediately preceding Davenal's death or on the night preceding that. My servants can tell you at what hours I retired if you choose to question them."

Edward Stormont intervened. "I should imagine, Adeline," he commented, "that nothing could be more distant from Mr. Ussher's intentions. It is clear that he has got upon a point in connection with Davenal whose elucidation might throw a light upon her unfortunate death."

His sister-in-law shrugged her shoulders, but Edward Stormont persisted gently.

"Twenty-four hours or so before it," he continued, "she was seen in the park with a companion of about your height and appearance. What happened once may have happened again—she may have met the same person and been stealthily followed back to the Tower by her or by another. This mysterious woman may be, for all we know, the actual murderer. In any case, the clue is not to be neglected."

The detective made a solemn memorandum. "I am much obliged to you, sir," he said, "that is exactly my view of the affair, and I must thank her ladyship for dealing so frankly with the matter. I shall be glad if I may, for the present, consider that the subject of our conversation—the reported midnight meeting of Davenal with some woman—might be kept strictly to ourselves. Reference to it would very probably increase my difficulty in following up the clue which it undoubtedly suggests."

"Quite so," assented Edward Stormont, returning to his desk. "I presume there is nothing else, Mr. Ussher, upon which you wish to consult us?"

Mr. Ussher shook his head. "No, sir, thank you," he replied, yet lingered. "I trust your ladyship," he added, "will acquit me of any thought of discourtesy to herself."

"Certainly," said Lady Tarleton, negligently. "I am glad you feel there is a chance of the clue leading to something. I hope it may."

"I will do my best with it, my lady," answered the detective. He crossed the library to hold wide the door to which she was sweeping, and, with a low bow to Edward Stormont and a less profound inclination to Paul Jerome, stepped out after her, to leave the Tower by the rear entrance as Lady Tarleton ascended the great staircase.

When she had reached the upper landing she paused—to draw breath; she was disposed to corpulency, as the plumpness of her throat and wrists betrayed.

"That man," she said, "is a born blunderer. Yet, for a moment I fancied he was going to blunder into a——" She interrupted herself. "Bah!" she muttered, "he is too big a fool to be dangerous under any circumstances." And, having regained her breath, she pursued her way to the boudoir.

TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

"Do Not Cross my Path Again."

"It is very, very strange."

Moira murmured the words to herself as she stood by the window of the little sleeping chamber which she shared with the blind girl. Near her was a highly-polished "tallboy" chest that occupied almost the whole of one wall of the apartment. An upper drawer of the set was open, she had taken from it the triangular fragment of metal that John Davenal had given to her on what might so easily have been his deathbed.

"If only one of the dates had been left!" she exclaimed abstractedly. "It would have been something. 'Born'—well, I do know my birthday, June the fifth, and I am nineteen when it comes round again. That would make me have been born in 'eighty-four.' But 'Died'—I haven't died—oh, dear, it is puzzling."

She examined the fragment of metal minutely. It had been a square, or possibly an oblong. The longest edge of the triangle was jagged and twisted, as though the plate had been severed by bending. Where the "n" in "Born" approached the torn margin there were portions of other engraved characters—they might have been the top sections of a "J" and a "u." But the "d" in "Died" was itself scarcely complete, and no guess could be hazarded at any detail of the date that presumably followed.

Moira relapsed into thought. Kit's childish experience on the breakwater suggested so much, and yet did not pass beyond suggestion by a hair's breadth. Something had been thrown from the granite pier as the blind girl sat unseen upon the landing-steps below; was it—could it have been something of which the mangled metal had formed part?

But the plate was palpably either a coffin or a memorial plate—was it, then, the former that had been consigned, seventeen years before, to the depths of Groudle Bay?

Moira passed a hand across her forehead, the riddle was as grim as it was profound. And the key to it, if key there were, did not seemingly lie in the possession of John Davenal, for he had spoken of one who "claimed" to be her father, and had added that he would be glad to learn that the claim was false.

Who, then, was the man who made the claim? And how had she been transferred from his care to that of the diver—how and why? Was it possible that the plate did not relate to her but to some kinswoman—whose name she bore—her mother, after whom she might well have been called; the name Moira was not a common one.

She shuddered as Kit's words came back to her—the words that the blind girl had heard. "This is out far enough—in with it." Was the incident a link in some dark and deadly chain, or was it the merest coincidence, singular but misleading?

Commonsense favoured the theory of coincidence. Yet she could not rid herself of the feeling that the broken plate, with its incomplete inscription, was in some fashion connected with her past, her present, her future.

After all, John Davenal had not told her the whole of the secret, even in so far as it was known to him. And to the diver such a connection had not seemed improbable, else why had he preserved the fragment?

Folding the metal in its indorsed white paper wrapping, Moira laid it in the drawer, locked the latter, and turned to the glass. She had been setting in order the upper rooms of the cottage, and her active movements had brought certain loose, fair tresses tumbling over her forehead

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

These restored to their proper position, she set the casement window wide and descended the narrow stairs. Half-way down she halted, checked by a call from the landing. The day-nurse—now the diver's sole professional attendant—was summoning her.

"Miss Davenal," she said, "will you lend me a hand for a moment?"

"Certainly, nurse," answered Moira, and ran back. "What—what is it?" she asked, a trifle anxiously. The nurse laughed at her.

"Nothing serious, dear," she said in a whisper, "only your father insists on having the bureau lifted to his bedside. He wants to read some old letters, he says, and really it is so difficult to keep him contented that he must have his way, seeing that he won't let me get them out for him. But the bureau is rather heavy for me to move alone."

She held up her finger as Moira stepped towards the door of the diver's room.

"Don't talk or stay," she observed, "he is doing famously, but I don't know how it is, the sight of you appears to excite him more than anything else. I did ask him about it, and he said you were all he had in the world, and the thought of being spared to be with you a while longer seemed too wonderful to be true."

Moira's lips trembled.

"He—he loves me very much," she faltered, "more than I deserve."

"Oh, I don't say 'Yes' to that," retorted the nurse, pushing wide the door of her patient's room. "Here is somebody who will help me, Mr. Davenal," she remarked cheerily; "since wilful man must have his way." And she went to an end of the heavy mahogany bureau. Moira, with a gentle glance at the diver, took the other.

John Davenal, propped up among his pillows, smiled wanly.

"I'm giving you a deal of trouble," he said, "and I'm afraid it's an awkward job for womenfolk. Yon old piece was old when I was a boy, and it's fine and solid. But it'll be a convenience to have it near, it'll do for a kind of table. And then I'm—I'm very restless, Moira, and I think I'd like to play at business for a little."

"It must only be play, then," the nurse warned him, as she brought his keys from the mantel. The diver pointed out the right one, and she unlocked the stout flap and drew it down. It projected over the bed. John Davenal regarded its proximity with a sort of contentment.

"That'll do nicely, thank you," he decided, and added wistfully, "won't you let Moira sit with me a bit?"

The nurse shook her head.

"No," she responded, "you will only talk whether she answers back or not. And, besides, you are to have another visitor this morning, Mr. Hartigan."

The diver's brows contracted.

"Aye," he said; "well, you've given me my way in one thing, nurse, so you shall have yours, though I can ill do to be without the sight of my lass. But I'm getting round fast now, Moira, and we'll have a long talk together one of these days."

"Yes, father, dear," assented Moira, and she slipped out.

From the stair-head she saw, to her surprise, that the entrance-door of the cottage stood wide. And in the hall-way at the foot was Dennis Hartigan. She descended to him, and he saluted her gruffly.

"Well," he asked, "and how's your dad to-day?"

"Going on very well," she told him, wondering vaguely why she was conscious of so instinctive a dislike of the ex-steward.

"That's good," he commented. "I'm to be allowed to see him this morning, I believe—by special request, so to speak."

"Yes," said Moira curtly. "I will ask if you can go up." She sought the landing again. The nurse had already stepped out on to it.

"Mr. Hartigan can come up," your father says, she intimated, and added explanatorily, "he heard his voice."

She glanced back into the room.

"Let Mr. Hartigan do the talking, now," she added. The diver nodded.

"I'll try and remember, nurse," he replied, and the door closed, leaving him momentarily alone. He guessed that the nurse had gone to supplement her warning with some words of advice to the visitor.

Swiftly the diver put out an arm to the bureau near him, whipped open a small hinged panel, lifted something out, and thrust it under the counterpane. A footfall sounded on the threshold of the room, the door swung in, and the ex-steward entered.

John Davenal, lying among his pillows, contemplated his visitor with a strange calm, quite unlike the usual weak passivity of the invalid. Dennis Hartigan stepped towards him with nervous strides and an air of awkward sympathy.

"I'm glad to see you again, John," he said; "we were afraid you were going to give us the slip. But, thank goodness, you seem in a fair way to cheat the undertaker."

"Aye," added John Davenal, "and the black-hearted scoundrel who tried to put an end to me."

He drew the bed-clothes up about his throat with his left hand—the right lay beneath the counterpane, hidden from the shoulder down.

"Yes," said the ex-steward, "but, to be candid, John, I am inclined on reflection to think that Moira and Kit are right and that you must have been attacked in mistake for someone else. You yourself can have no enemy who would be likely to do such a thing."

The diver seemed to be gazing into vacancy; a dark smile flickered upon his lips for a moment.

"A man," he answered, "may think he has no enemies, and yet may narrowly escape death at the hands of one. And that enemy, who struck an unsuspecting man at night and in the back, may live to stand, in his turn, face to face with death, and never dream of it."

"Sort of poetic justice, eh?" commented Dennis Hartigan, with a forced laugh, as he sat down by the bed-head. "Well, perhaps you're right. At all events, you are very sensible in making up your mind to leave the beggar to his fate. The police are apparently at their wits' end to find a clue to your assailant, and I gather from that worthy officer, Mr. Ussher, that they are beginning to adopt the theory of mistaken identity as the only means of explaining the attack on you."

John Davenal had changed his position when the ex-steward sat down; the diver, lying on his left side, still confronted his visitor with an odd, vigilant expression.

"I wanted to see you, Dennis," he said, "about—about Moira. We had been talking about her that night; we parted rather abruptly, I fear."

Dennis Hartigan snapped his fingers.

"Don't you worry about that," he replied. "I was a bit hot, myself. However, I've been thinking the matter over, and, at the moment, I won't press my claims to Moira. For the present, she may remain with you."

"For more than the present," said the diver resolutely; "for now and for always, Dennis Hartigan. Let there be no mistake about that. I have told Moira something of the truth; I mean to tell her the whole. Queer things have been passing through my mind as I have lain here, and I am as good as sure that Moira isn't your child, nor Hannah's. And whose child she is I intend to find out, for the lass' own sake, and at any cost."

The ex-steward rose slowly from his chair, his teeth showing between his parted lips.

"So that's your game, is it?" he snarled. "Well, as it happens, I was forewarned—how, it matters not. A wink is as good as a nod sometimes, and—and——"

He checked himself—a sudden cast of thought had shadowed his face; the passion died out of it, mastered by an evil shrewdness.

Digitized by Google

"You've a rare maggot in your brain now, John Davenal," he exclaimed, leaving his interrupted sentence unfinished to begin a new one, "and I suppose the best thing to do is to let you find out your mistake for yourself?"

The diver studied him.

"Aye," he said, "I expected you'd refuse to fight me, Dennis. But don't think I can't read you. You're laying a plan to play me some dog's trick or another; I can see it in your face. Mark me, Dennis Hartigan, I know you for what you are; seek to injure me or mine and I will put you where by rights you should be now, within the four walls of an English gaol."

Dennis Hartigan's jaw set and he extended a hand whose thick fingers shook with rage and hate.

"You fool!" he cried, in a hoarse whisper, "what do you mean—do you realise that I could throttle you as you lie there?"

His arms hovered over the diver's prostrate form, his nostrils were dilated, and his eyes glowed with a spasm of extravagant ferocity. John Davenal did not flinch.

"Stand away, Dennis Hartigan," he said coolly. "I did not escape your knife to fall a victim to your naked hands."

A low cry, like the suppressed threatening bark of a bull-terrier crouching for a spring, broke from the ex-steward, and catching up a spare pillow from the bed-foot, he swept it towards the diver's head.

Quick as was the motion, it was checked. The pillow remained suspended in the air. A steel-blue ring—the muzzle of a revolver-barrel protruded from the bed-clothes about John Davenal's chest, and the diver's finger nursed the trigger. His keen grey pupils had in them the quiet light of conscious power.

"Put yon pillow down," he said, "and listen to me."

Dennis Hartigan ground his teeth, and obeyed.

"Have your own way," he growled. "I only wanted to frighten you. You've an ill conscience, I'll be bound, or you wouldn't have that thing so handy."

The diver paid no heed to this clumsy attempt at a diversion.

"I don't doubt that you think me a fool, Dennis," he said, "but I should have been a bigger fool than you think me if I couldn't have argued out that the man whose schemes—whatever they were—I was thwarting, was the one most likely to have attempted my life. Especially, Dennis, when that man is such a man as you."

The ex-steward sneered.

"Stow gassing," he exclaimed. "What's your next move?"

John Davenal was silent for a while.

"I would ask you for the whole truth about Moira," he said, "but you would only tell me a skein of lies and laugh in your sleeve at my folly in believing them. There is no one who saw you lurking at my own gate to give me that coward's blow, nor can I swear I saw or heard you myself. You may go, Dennis Hartigan, and if you are wise, you will get out of Groudle. As for Moira, she is mine, and shall remain mine until someone with a better right than you offers to take her from me. Go, and do not cross my path again."

Dennis Hartigan stood irresolute. The diver still covered him with the revolver.

"Be warned, Dennis," the ex-steward was told, "raise a finger to meddle with Moira and, no matter what price I pay for it, I will take away for ever the evil shadow that you have flung across her happiness."

The other laughed. "That means," he added, "that you will swing for me. By Jove, I am almost inclined to let you."

John Davenal lifted the revolver clear of the bedclothes.

"There is more than a single bullet in this," he rejoined significantly, "and Moira has a sweetheart who will take care of her. But whether I died on the scaffold or by my own hand, Dennis Hartigan, Moira would be out of your power. Yet I am loth to stain my soul with blood, and if you will go away I will be content."

His brother-in-law lingered, with clenched fingers and

(Continued overleaf.)

WESLEY'S THEORY OF EARTHQUAKES.

"*The cause of earthquakes*," said John Wesley, "*is sin.*" How he reasoned it out is not easy for the average sinner to see. The idea of such a tremendous physical convulsion as an earthquake resulting from the violation of moral law is nonsense in the eyes of modern science. The reverse is more often true. "The cause of a deal of sin," said Hannah Moore, "is bile." *That* we can see through. Bile poisons the brain, and the brain is the organ of the mind. It is certain that all the earthquakes that ever shook this wicked world never did half the damage that is done every year by sleepy stomachs and lazy livers. Generals have lost battles, statesmen have been beaten in diplomacy, workmen have been thrown out of jobs, clergymen have preached poor sermons, and husbands and wives have quarrelled for no reason under the sun but "a touch of liver complaint." The crust of society can never lie quiet with such a force as biliousness under it.

Writing of a time five years ago, a lady asserts that she had not strength to work. She suffered acutely with a sharp stabbing pain down the right side and between the shoulder-blades. Her appetite failed, of course, for Nature never calls for food when she is not in a condition to use it. Still a trifle of sustenance must be taken. The lady took it, digested a bit of it, and suffered great distress from the presence of the rest in the torpid stomach, when, indeed, it was not vomited, as was often the case. We need scarcely add that her sleep was disturbed and failed to refresh her. To quote her own words, "I arose in the morning with a splitting headache and a feeling of utter weakness and prostration. My tongue was furred, I was tired, lacked energy, became irritable and bad tempered, and could have quarrelled with my best friend."

Now what sort of a life is this to lead? What is anybody good for while in such a state as that? What would you wager on your own success in business if you had to pit yourself against other people's sharpness, while you had to fight with a poison-soaked head and a stomach that refused its breakfast? Not a crooked sixpence.

Our correspondent continues: "The doctor told me I was suffering from an enlarged liver, but his medicines gave me no relief, and I began to give up all hope of ever getting better, when I was advised by a friend to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. Before I had finished the first bottle my health improved. As I continued taking the Syrup my health was gradually restored, and I have had no recurrence of my complaint since. If ever I feel run down I take a dose or two of the Syrup and it seems to put new life into me. Signed, Agnes Gatley, 3 Boundary Terrace, Moss Nook, Nr. Cheadle, Ches."

The success of Seigel's Syrup in curing this malady is due to the fact that it goes straight as an arrow to the very root and source of it, the paralysed digestion.

Whatever may be the true theory of Earthquakes we may be sure of one thing anyway—namely that bile in the blood, arising from an arrest of the digestive function, is the hot-bed of more sorrow, pain and death than all the powers at the interior of the earth ever scattered over its surface.

Digitized by Google

twitching nostrils, gazing at the prostrate man on the disordered couch. Then, reluctantly, he moved towards the door. The diver's aim followed him indomitably. At length, with a shrug and a muttered volley of profanity, the ex-steward opened the door, slid through, and closed it behind him.

Stealthily he descended the stairs, and, unlatching the hall door at their foot, stepped out unobserved.

TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

"Known as Moira Davenal."

THE afternoon had grown late and the westering sun stared dazzlingly at the ex-steward as he went down the garden, let himself out at the wicket, and stalked along the edge of the little harbour.

He was muttering viciously in a kind of savage soliloquy—the completeness with which the diver had read him and the suddenness of his discomfiture had entered deep into Dennis Hartigan's mean soul.

The on-coming evening had chilled the warmth of the Spring afternoon and he went in to the Half Brick to drink a glass of spirits and order some food. There was a cheerful fire in the bar-parlour, he ate his meal near it and then sat over the hearth, smoking.

The darkness settled down over Groudle, the bar-parlour filled with its coterie of privileged gossips, and talk and the clink of glass and pewter waxed general. At last Dennis Hartigan awakened sulkily to the invasion of his solitude, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and rising, sauntered out of the Half Brick.

As he passed through the bar of the inn, he checked his watch against the clock over the mantel. The time was half-past nine.

Once outside, the ex-steward struck into the open country, found a stack-yard at the rear of an outlying farm, and mounted beneath the corrugated iron roof that covered the loaf-shaped piles of hay. Here, on a soft and fragrant couch, Dennis Hartigan composed himself for a species of cat-nap. So lightly did he sleep that each of the chimed quarters floating from the distant parish church disturbed him.

One by one he marked them attentively. At the second quarter after eleven, he shook off his slumbers, descended, and made for the ring-fence that shut in the park of Groudle Tower. Climbing it, he entered the demesnes beyond, and in due course, gained the grim, domed edifice where, in their last cold slumber, lay the former holders of the great estate.

The ex-steward sat down on a low-growing bough in the shadow of a plantation; he fidgeted uneasily on his extempore seat and swung his legs in frequent spasms of restlessness. Finally he got up and walked out upon the turf that described a circle about the grassy hollow which contained the windowless stone building.

His eyes, ranging this way and that through the dusk, perceived at length an indistinct, moving figure that shunned the moonlight and darted from shadow to shadow on the fringe of the plantation.

Dennis Hartigan took refuge behind a breast-high clump of evergreens and waited. Crossing the glade in front of him, the figure paused, and, to see the better, lifted from her face a corner of a dark and heavy shawl. The wearer was Lady Tarleton.

The ex-steward stayed where he was, enjoying her perplexity awhile. As she passed on, with a gesture of impatience, he stepped out and halted in her path. She looked up and saw him.

"Oh," she said; "so you are here?"

"And what is equally to the purpose," retorted Dennis Hartigan impudently; "you are. Have you brought the money?"

"I have," he was told; "three thousand pounds in bank-notes."

"Good!" exclaimed the ex-steward; "let me have a squint at them."

Lady Tarleton hesitated.

"Might we—might we not be observed here?" she asked, almost nervously. "I have come as cautiously as I could, of course, yet there are the game-keepers to think of. The park is a haunt of ground-game poachers and the keepers are always on the alert."

"Humph!" said Dennis Hartigan; "well, we'll be on the safe side and get back into the plantation. But I'll want a glimpse of those notes and there's not much light except in the open."

Lady Tarleton unfolded a package and held it out, retaining it by a corner. Dennis Hartigan fluttered the flimsy sheets, straining his eyes over them in the moonbeams.

"One, two, three, four, five, six," he counted; "and for five hundred a piece. Very well, I'll tell you what I promised to before I ask for 'em."

He strode into the group of young trees behind them and Lady Tarleton followed him.

"Well," she said, and her voice quivered with eagerness; "where is the child?"

"In Groudle," answered the ex-steward.

"In Groudle!" gasped Lady Tarleton; "how—how imprudent!"

"It pays sometimes to do imprudent things, my lady," retorted Dennis Hartigan; "it stood to reason we wouldn't be expected to plant the kid down so near home. Consequently she was safest there if anything was ever suspected. But that wasn't our chief reason, we wanted the child carefully nursed up; if she was badly-managed and died, where were we?"

"Y—yes," stammered the other; "but there are—there were plenty of good foster-mothers out of Groudle."

"Maybe," admitted the ex-steward; "however, we did better than find a foster-mother. We put her with Hannah's own people and there she is to this day. We told them her right Christian name, Moira, and she is known as Moira Davenal. She is supposed to be John Davenal's daughter."

Lady Tarleton tottered.

"A bit startling, isn't it?" Dennis said; "and now you know the truth and I've earned my three thou."

He took the notes audaciously from her grasp. The action served to recall Lady Tarleton from her stupor.

"Oh," she murmured, "it is impossible—it can't be!"

The ex-steward laughed.

"It's true," he said; "go and look at the girl. Look at her red hair—that's her mother's; look at her blue eyes—those are her father's."

Lady Tarleton clutched his arm.

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed; "I believe you. I see it all now. And you will do as you said? You—you will get her out of the way? She must be got out of the way—for more reasons than you can guess. She must, I say!"

Dennis Hartigan flung off the eager, desperate grasp. "I'll do my part of the bargain," he answered; "not but what I could make a better, if I went to Sir Guy Vanbrugh, who's sweet on the girl. He wouldn't mind being brought, through his wife, to the ownership of Groudle Tower."

Lady Tarleton snatched at him again. "You won't," she said; "you sha'n't. I will pay anything, anything. It would be ruin for me—ruin! Guy Vanbrugh is to marry my daughter—it has always been understood!"

The ex-steward released himself. "Make your mind easy," he rejoined; "I've a bone of my own to pick with John Davenal. No man shall ever say he bested me and didn't live to regret it. Good-night to you, my lady, and—wait."

He turned abruptly from her and vanished into the depths of the plantation. Lady Tarleton remained standing, lost in thought. The sound of a voice aroused her—a voice not that of Dennis Hartigan. She retreated more closely into her place of concealment.

"Mind how you go, Mr. Ussher, sir," said the voice, and the tread of cautious feet went by. Lady Tarleton peered out and saw, by the light of a fitful moonbeam, that struggled into the grove, the tall form of the detective himself. With him was a man in the rough garments and the hard cloth gaiters of a gamekeeper.

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

COMPLEXION AND HAIR.

We receive, from day to day, many letters from readers asking us how to clear the complexion of Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, etc. The most marvellous preparation that we know of is "PERALIA," manufactured by the "Peralia" Perfumery Co. of North Shields. This wonderful liquid, while it instantly beautifies the complexion, and removes all obnoxious excrescences, such as pimples and blotches, is perfectly harmless, and its purity is guaranteed by a well-known medical man, whose certificate accompanies each bottle. Besides acting on the above, "PERALIA," by frequent application, will remove wrinkles, crow's feet, and, in fact, entirely rejuvenate the features. This is due to its penetrating action, as it makes its way through the pores of the skin, exerting its beneficial effect on each and every one, and cleansing it effectually from dirt, callous growth, and decayed tissue. "PERALIA" is, in our opinion, the only beauty specific that does its work in such a thorough and scientific manner. It is the most successful remedy we have to aid us in the fight against the ravages of either Time or Disease. If you feel that your beauty is waning, or that fine complexion being marred by disfiguring humours, you should at once have recourse to "PERALIA."

We cannot speak too highly of this preparation. Readers can obtain it of all chemists, in bottles, at 1s., 1s. 6d., and 2s. 6d., but the proprietors offer to send a sample bottle, under cover, on receipt of the price, and 3d. postage.

In conclusion we must say a word for their unique preparation "CRIMPOLINE" for curling the hair. Most women, and all young girls are extremely anxious about their hair being trim, and yet having that graceful curly appearance that is so attractive. Unlike other curling fluids, "CRIMPOLINE" is not sticky, nor greasy, and curls the hair so much that once the hair becomes curly you need not continue using it. The rain does not take the curl out of the hair either after using "CRIMPOLINE," so you need not fear that washed-out, bedraggled look again.

It is used and recommended by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc. Prices, 1s. 9d. and 2s. 6d. per bottle. When sending for, or ordering, "PERALIA," we advise you also to send for "CRIMPOLINE." Don't forget the address, "PERALIA" PERFUMERY CO., Dept. 14, Camden Street, North Shields.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. 2½%

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

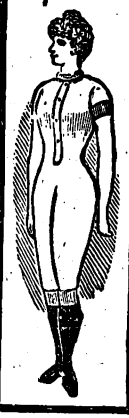
REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM (CLOTTED)

absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1s. 4d.; 1lb. 2s. 4d.; 2lbs. 4s. 4d., free, supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by

MRS. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.

Unprecedented Offer

FOR LADIES ONLY.



2/- Per Pair

We have secured a consignment of exceptionally good wearing, nicely finished, unshrinkable, woven,

NATURAL COMBINATIONS

that we are offering at the remarkably low price of 2/- per pair, only so long as our present stock remains unsold. Beautifully shaped, perfect fitting, trimmed self-coloured torchon edging.

2 pairs for 3/10; 4 pairs for 7/6

Postage 4d. extra.

High Neck, Short Sleeves. Colors: Natural and Pink. With Smocked Knees, 6d. extra.

In three sizes—Small, Women's, Medium. Extra large size, 6d. extra.

Special Purchase White Spencers

1/3 each. Postage 2d. extra.

CHILDREN'S COMBINATIONS,

Same quality, in six sizes, from 1/3 per pair.

Better take advantage of this offer to-day—it may not appear again. State size and color.

MONEY REFUNDED IF NOT APPROVED.

Illustrated Catalogue of General Drapery Costumes, Skirts, and many useful lines at bargain prices; post free everywhere.

T. & J. ROBERTS, Dept. 16, Moorhead, SHEFFIELD.

10,000 RUGS GIVEN AWAY

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

This Phenomenal Offer is made to the readers of *Short Stories* (2/5/1903) only. On receipt of Postal Order for 5/-, or 62 stamps, we will forward, DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS,** suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an Advertisement for our goods, *below the Actual Cost of production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our Looms, thus saving the purchasers all middle profits.

With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very Handsome Rug to match, or we will send Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9/6.

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED. THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

GALAXY ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, ETC., POST FREE,

if mentioning *Short Stories* (2/5/1903) while writing.

Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SONS (Dept. S.T.S.) Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,

WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Digitized by Google

Rupture Free Cure.

Wonderful Home Treatment that Cures Without Pain or Loss of Time.

Dr. W. S. Rice (Dept. 953), 8 & 9, Stonecutter Street, London, E.C., has invented a method that cures rupture without pain, danger, operation, or an hour's loss of time from the day's work. To avoid all questions of doubt, he sends free to every sufferer a free trial of his method, and there can be no earthly reason why anyone, rich or poor, should not avail themselves of this generous offer. As an instance of this remarkable method, the cure of Mr. John Foulkes, 317, Beaufort Street, Toxteth Park, Liverpool, is well worth noticing. Mr. Foulkes is 74 years of age, and had suffered from a scrotal rupture for nine years. He used Dr. Rice's home method of treatment, and in a short time was cured sound as a bell. A full description and sample of this remarkable method of cure will be gladly sent upon application. It has cured thousands. Do not hesitate to give it a trial. Write at once—to day.

Mr. J. FOULKES.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

THE REMEDY FOR THE PEOPLE.

RECOMMENDED BY FRIENDS TO FRIENDS.

are

NOT PUSHED BY DOUBTFUL METHODS.

DESERVING OF THEIR POPULARITY.

NOW ENJOYING A GREATER SUCCESS THAN EVER.

STILL WORTH A GUINEA A BOX.

Patronised by Royalty.

TRIUMPH Cycles

10 Guineas AND 15 Guineas } Or from a Guinea per month.

The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce.

TRIUMPH CYCLE Co., Ltd., COVENTRY.

4 & 5, Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 30, Deansgate Arcade, Manchester

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London. N.

Ten Days Free Trial

is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way.

1903 Models, fully warranted,

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample cycle at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 6D.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

GIVEN AWAY

With next week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 486)

A PAPER PATTERN of this

GIRL'S SMOCKED BLOUSE.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d. and 4s. 6d. per box.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Cunham, 67 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watmall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

Digitized by Google

An Impossible Task.

"Arthur says he wants to get out of debt before he marries me." "I didn't suppose he'd trifle with any girl's affections in that way."

A Deep-Laid Plot.

George: "Who is that beautiful girl over there?" Amelia: "Why, George, that's a mirror—it's me!" George: "————?" Amelia (blushing): "Yes, George."

How the Colour Came.

She (poetical): "Do you notice, darling, what beautiful azure tints the sun lends to the bosom of the ocean?" He (practical): "That, my dear, is the dye out of some of those cheap bathing suits."

Why She Loved.

"And do you love me for what I am, or for what I was?" cooingly asked the millionaire with one foot in the grave. "For what you will be, dearest!" ambiguously replied the poor girl with a living to make.

He'd Overdone It.

She: "You remember what you promised before we were married? You said you would make every effort to make yourself worthy of me." He: "Yes, and the result was that I overdid it, and made myself better than you deserve."

A Doubtful Compliment.

Miss Pretty: "I don't see how you whistle through your fingers that way. I'm sure I could never do it." Mr. Goodheart (wishing to compliment her delicate little hands): "No, Miss Pretty, if you should try it, your whole hand would slip into your mouth."

What She Wouldn't Do.

"Oh," she suddenly explained, "I wish I were a man!" "What would you do?" he asked. "I'll not say what I would do, but there is one thing I will confess that I wouldn't do." "And that is——?" "I wouldn't sit as if I had handcuffs on when I happened to be alone with a girl."

Foiled Again!

"I know I am poor," he protested, "while you are the heiress to at least half a million!" "Barely £150," she faltered. "Foiled again!" hissed Antonio McFogarty, the income-tax assessor, tearing off his false whiskers and plunging away into the night, while mocking laughter rang in his ears.

Her Valuable Present.

"I asked for a lock of your hair," he said reproachfully, "and now I find that, instead of giving me a lock from your own head, you gave me a lock of false hair." "And you doubt me because of that?" she asked. "Naturally," he replied. "But you do not realise that the false hair is the more costly?" Thus were his suspicions put at rest.

We're Made of Dust, You Know.

He: "I could kiss the dust you walk on." She: "What's the matter with the dust that does the walking?"

What He'd Like to Get Her.

She: "We must get the cook something for the summer." He: "Yes. I'd like to get her another situation."

Must Be Kissed.

He: "Your sweet face is my book of life. I swear it." She: "But your oath is not valid until you have kissed the book."

Thought She was First.

Millie: "What does this motto on the ring mean?" Willie: "Faithful to the last." "The idea! I thought I was the first!"

Fine Place to Get Butter.

She: "I understand that matter weighing one pound on the moon's surface, if transferred to the earth, would weigh six pounds." He: "Can't you manage to buy your butter up there, dear?"

No Fear On That Account.

"When you play that sonata," said a teacher to his pupil, "you must show off your fingering as much as possible." "Don't you fear about that," she responded; "I'll have a finger-ring on every finger."

Her Gentle Hint.

"You sketch with a free hand," remarked the professor, who had been critically examining her portfolio. "Entirely free," said the lady, as she cast down her eyes in soft confusion, and waited for the professor to follow up the opening.

It was Not a Flower!

Just she and I, all all alone beneath the stars so calm and bright; I told her that to me her cheeks were like twin lilies pure and white, but in the morning, as I brushed my powdered vest for half an hour, I realised the lilies must have been some other kind of *flour*.

A Difficult Point.

Chappie: "What is troubling you, deah boy?" Chollie: "Maud says I must awsk her fathaw's consent, and I don't know how to manage it this time of year. If I leave the door open when I go into his office I'll let in a dwaght and make him angwy; but if I close it I cut off my wetweat."

His Part of the Bargain.

New Son-in-law: "Ahem! You remember, Mr. Oldchap, you said that after we were married you would assist me in the matter of furnishing a house." Mr. Oldchap: "Certainly, my boy, certainly. Come round the corner with me and I'll introduce you to a friend of mine who is in the instalment business."

Feminine Jealousy.

Miss Jellus: "Your bedroom must be a very healthy place, dear?" Miss Prettiface: "What makes you think so?" "Because I have noticed that when you are downstairs sometimes you are dreadfully pale; but if you go up into your bedroom for a short time, you come down with a beautiful colour!"

Proper Sort of Work.

He was an unkempt-looking fellow, and he stopped at the suburban residence and asked for employment. The lady of the house was superintending the transplanting of the plants. The door of the greenhouse was open. "Are you a gardener?" asked the woman. "Ain't had much experience." "Can't you plant these flowers?" "I hate to risk spoilin' 'em, ma'am." "Then what can you do?" "Well, ma'am, if you'll give me one o' your husband's cigars," he replied meditatively, "I'll sit in the greenhouse an' smoke out the insects that's eatin' up the leaves of them rose-bushes."

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Should He Give Presents?

"JOHN R." wishes to know if it is necessary for him to give his sweetheart presents. He has been engaged for a year, but so far has never given her anything. She has never hinted anything on the subject. "JOHN R." has not a very large income, and is saving as much as he can against their approaching wedding.

* * * * *

I do not think it is necessary to give your sweetheart presents solely for the sake of doing so. Love should not require to be proved in such a material way. If you remember her birthday, and perhaps Christmas, under the circumstances you might regard your duty as done in that respect. When a man once starts giving a girl presents, he more or less pledges himself to continue doing so, which often means a great waste of money. You are better advised in saving up for the future.

❦❦❦

Testing a Lover.

"RENE" is in love with a young fellow, but cannot decide whether or not he returns the feeling. He is very loving, she says, but has not said whether or not he likes being with her. She has been with him for about three years, and though he has often asked her to go with him to the theatre, she has always refused. Would it be correct to accept such invitations?

* * * * *

You can scarcely expect the fellow to prove whether he loves you if you do not give him an opportunity of declaring himself. If you are so fond of him, I should accept as many invitations from him as he offers. He may be as doubtful as to your love for him as you are of his for you. Go to the theatre with him, and see how things develop.

❦❦❦

A Faint Heart.

"FAINTHEARTED" knows a young lady whom he greatly admires. He often passes her on his way home, but has never had the courage to address her. He cannot obtain an introduction to her, and knows nobody who is acquainted with her, but is aware that she has not got a lover. What would I advise him to do?

* * * * *

In the first instance get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* for April 2nd, in which you will find an article entitled "Strategy for Sweethearts." It will give you some instances similar to your own, in which fainthearted men have ultimately succeeded in winning fair ladies. If you lack courage you should try to devise some means like those sketched out for getting to know the young lady you refer to.

A Tale of Two Girls.

"DONALD" is engaged, but early this winter went away from home for a long tour. While away he met a girl with whom he fell violently in love. She did not appear to object to his advances, and even allowed him to kiss her. After some weeks of flirtation, she incidentally told him she was engaged herself. It was a great shock to him. When he returned home he again saw his own *fiancée*, and after a day or two in her society felt he loved her as much as ever. A week or so later, he again met the other girl, and was as violently enamoured of her as before. Which of the two girls is in my opinion the one "DONALD" really loves at heart?

* * * * *

Before even considering your own feelings, "DONALD," there is the question of honour. You are engaged to a girl who evidently possesses your affection. No matter what infatuation you might develop, can you, as an honourable man, wish to act in a shabby way towards her?

* * * * *

Further, the other girl is, you say, herself engaged. She appears to me to be a flirt. I don't imagine she really cares for you. Probably the thought that she was gradually drawing your affections from your own *fiancée* inspired her with a mischievous feeling. I should see as little of her as possible. Stick to the girl who has proved her love for you, and with whom you say you are quite happy. You will soon get over an infatuation.

❦❦❦

Feeding the Husband's Friend.

"FRANCES" is a married woman whose husband brings home friends to dinner or supper. She likes to treat them as well as possible, as they are very often business friends, yet it generally happens that she has nothing in the house for more than two. How should I advise her to arrange on such occasions?

* * * * *

Your husband ought not to bring home people without giving you a hint first. It is very inconsiderate to a housewife. But if it happens that he cannot help himself, it would be a good plan for you to have things in the house ready for such occasions.

* * * * *

Say you stored a tin or so of soup, some curry powders, and some savouries, such as anchovies, sardines, and so on you might be able at very short notice to put on quite a nice little spread for your husband's guests. For advice on the preparations of them I advise you to write to ISOBEL in *Pearson's Weekly*, who is expert at those things.

❦❦❦

An Estrangement.

"ELLA" used constantly to meet a young man, and thought that he was in love with her. He used to seek her out, and to take her to places of amusement. They lost sight of each other for some months, and now he scarcely even speaks to her. Do I think he can no longer care for her, or what would explain such conduct?

* * * * *

Evidently your relations are not the same as before. I suppose he has met another girl, or more probably is worried about something, and is, therefore, not socially disposed. But speculate as one may, it is very difficult for a woman to get the real reason for a man's seeming estrangement.

* * * * *

Men's interests in life are so varied, and if we went into the matter, we should probably find that we women occupy very much less of their thoughts than we imagine. I should avoid worrying the young man. Treat him as distantly as he treats you. If he cares for you he will sooner or later seek you out again.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Constipation

AND LIVER COMPLAINT COMPLETELY CURED.

MRS. S. NICHOLLS, Edge Hill Lane, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, suffered for two years from liver troubles, constipation, and but recently was completely cured of both complaints. Interviewed by a *Birmingham Telegram* reporter with regard to this cure, Mrs. Nicholls said:

"I used to have dizzy sounds."

"For two years I have been a dreadful sufferer from pains arising from liver complaint. They were the worst in my head, but I also had them across my sides, back, and shoulders. I used to have dizzy rounds, which made me feel very bad; indeed, I never felt well. In consequence of acute constipation my sufferings were severe, and I had painful sensations across the region of my kidneys. I obtained some medicine from a doctor, but this did not give me any permanent relief. A short time back I saw a testimonial in a local paper from someone who had suffered worse than I did for years with liver complaint, and had been cured by Bile Beans for Biliousness. I determined to try Bile Beans, and sent for a Box. The effect they had upon me was highly beneficial. The pains gradually ceased, and the attacks of giddiness became less frequent. By persevering with the Beans the constipation has now entirely left me. I am also cured of the liver complaint, and am glad to say I now enjoy good health." "Would you recommend Bile Beans to other sufferers?" queried the reporter. "Indeed I would. Bile Beans have done me such a great deal of good that I can recommend them to anyone suffering as I did. You can make what use you like of these few facts, for I should like others besides myself to benefit by the use of Bile Beans."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are the product of modern scientific research, and, therefore thoroughly up-to-date. They do not merely purge, giving temporary relief only, and leaving the patient weakened, like the out-of-date, so called remedies of forty or fifty years ago, which contain probably aloes, mercury, and other harmful drugs. Bile Beans, without the slightest discomfort, prompt the liver and digestive organs to act in Nature's normal way, leaving those organs strengthened and stimulated to continue the performance of their duties without further assistance. They produces a gentle action on the bowels, curing or preventing constipation, cleansing the stomach, and ridding the system of all impurities. Do not be misled by claims of half a hundred pills in the box where probably four to six constitute a dose, and the doses cannot be discontinued. One Bile Bean is one dose. They can be discontinued after the cure is effected; they are purely vegetable; they do not contain any harmful drugs, and they are the safest family medicine.

Bile Beans for Biliousness are a permanent and speedy cure for Headache, Influenza, Constipation, Piles, Liver Troubles, Bad Breath, Liver Chill, Indigestion, Flatulence, Dizziness, Pimples, Blood Impurities, Buzzing in the Head, Debility, Spring Ailments, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Medicine Vendors, Price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per box (large box contains three times quantity small size).

Bile Beans FOR Biliousness

, ASK YOUR BUTCHER FOR

Swift's

AMERICAN

BEEF

Choice and Tender.

Patent

Dry Cleaning

What is it? A novel system of cleaning by means of scientifically distilled Spirit, without in any way affecting the material, altering the colour, or affecting the shape of it.

What will it clean? Dresses, Jackets, Blouses, Dressing Gowns, Overcoats, Suits & Trousers, Tapestry, Cloth, and Chenile Curtains, Table Covers, Carpets & Rugs.

Where is it done? at JOHNSON B OS., BOOTLE DYE WORKS, LIVERPOOL.

SEND POST-CARD, and address of nearest branch will be sent you. 150 *Branches in London and Provinces.*

SOLD BY ALL UP-TO-DATE DEALERS

THE "OCEANIC"

THE UP-TO-DATE

HALF-GUINEA

BRITISH BOOT.

STYLISH—DAINTY
DURABLE—COMFORTABLE

ASK FOR AND SEE THE STAMP 'OCEANIC' INSIDE EVERY BOOT.

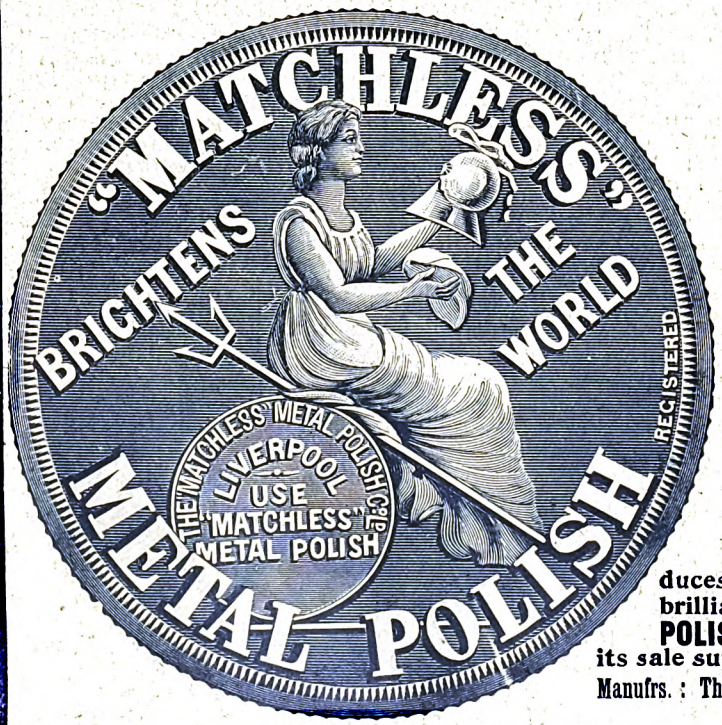
MACKINTOSH'S

Is DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!

PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.

A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE



EVERY BRITISH HOUSE-WIFE

should polish all metals with it too. Most foreign polishes set up acid and are *sticky* in use, and require hard work. "MATCHLESS" Metal Polish spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is made wholly in England, and its sale supports British Labour.

Manufrs.: The "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH CO., LTD., LIVERPOOL.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 749.] Week ending May 9th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

HE STOPPED IN AMAZEMENT. IRENE WAS ABOUT TO ADMINISTER A HYPODERMIC INJECTION OF MORPHINE.

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "Saving the Situation." See inside.)

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ Inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 BROWNIE is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3½ by 2½ Inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

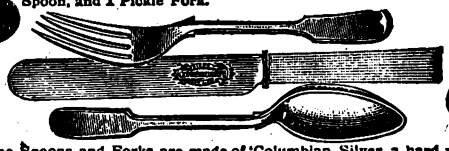
GRAVES' CUTLERY

.. THE ..

'ENTERPRISE' PARCEL, 25/-

OF HOUSEHOLD CUTLERY AND PLATE

CONTAINS: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white 'Ivorette' Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon, and 1 Pickle Fork.



The Spoons and Forks are made of 'Columbian Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.

J. G. Graves is the only manufacturer who supplies the Public Direct.

HOW TO PAY. Send 5/- with order and complete the purchase in five more monthly payments of 4/-; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment. If not satisfied, return the Parcel, and your deposit will be refunded in full.

Send for our Illustrated Booklet "CUTLERY THAT WEARS," *post free.*

J. G. GRAVES,
69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. No Risk. Good Pay.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Free Wheels. New Departure Hub, Bowden Brakes. All Improvements—Lamp, Bell, &c. Carriage paid.

For Cash or 12 Monthly Payments of

Carr. Paid. £3 3s. 15/10 | £9 10s 17/8
£9 16/8 | £10 5s. 19/3

Juno Motor Cycle is the King of Motor Cycles, £32 or 60/- mo. Accessories at lowest prices; Acetylene Lamp, 2/11; Cycle Stand, 1/6; Motor Horn, 5/6.

Write for New Season List, 132 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS Co., Ltd. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

HOME NOTES

1D. WEEKLY.

CHICKEN HATCHING EXTRAORDINARY FOR 2/6

The Texas Egg-Hatcher and Rearer combined supersedes all incubators. Hatches above and rears little ones below simultaneously all the year round. A money-making home industry requiring neither capital nor labour. Turns 1d. eggs into valuable Chickens or Ducklings. Millions selling in America. 15-egg size 2/6; 30-egg, 5/-; complete for use. Address, AMERICAN POULTRY SYNDICATE (Room 101), 7 Albion Grove, Stoke Newington, London, N.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well.

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 24, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

Women, men, girls and boys in all vocations are riding Symonds' Cycles. Greatest value ever known. Prices £4 to £8. Easy payments. No guarantors required. Catalogue free.

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, City Rd., London, E.C.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the Best Coventry made Cycles, and by contracting for thousands annually, I BUY CHEAPLY and SELL CHEAPLY.

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenges, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc.

From 8/- MONTHLY

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade COVENTRY CYCLE for £6-0-0.

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. EDWARD O'BRIEN, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, COVENTRY.

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.

TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with

"KEATING'S POWDER,"

unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietor,

66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 22lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 749.] [ONE PENNY.

Week Ending May 9th, 1903.

This Story Contains the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

SAVING THE SITUATION.

Telling of How a Girl Saved her Father from Ruin.

"RENE!"

"Yes, dad!"

Irene Woodhouse raised her eyes somewhat languidly from the book she was reading, and glanced at her father in response to his utterance of her name; she was roused from her lethargy to something like alertness by the anxious look on his striking countenance.

"Did you want me? Is anything troubling you?" she inquired tenderly, leaving her seat on the couch and standing before him.

"Nothing particular, my dear!" he replied evasively. "I was thinking. You see, you are old enough now to be turning your thoughts to marriage, to finding a protector for the time when I shall not be here! Oh, I shall not live for ever!" he added with a forced smile, as Irene shook her head. "I fancied—well, I had an idea—Don't you think that young Rawson rather likes you? That would be a good match; old Major Rawson has money, and it will all go to Cuthbert, and——"

"I don't want money! I must marry a man whom I can love, and I cannot conceive that I shall ever love Cuthbert Rawson. You know, dad—at least, I thought you knew—that he and I are at daggers drawn, in a friendly way, so to say. No, it wouldn't be Cuthbert Rawson, at any rate!"

"Oh, well. Let that rest, my dear! We will dismiss the subject."

So saying, Mr. Woodhouse rose, kissed his pretty and affectionate daughter, and left the room. Irene seated herself again, and took up her book, but she did not read; there was something on her father's mind, and she was uneasy.

"If I were reading a novel," mused Rene, "I should at once jump to the conclusion that the heroine's father was bankrupt, and was just struggling to keep up appearances and get his daughter married, so that she should not be left penniless. But it cannot be so in the present case.

"Firstly, I have an annuity settled on myself; not a large one, but sufficient to keep me from seeking a situation as companion or a similar post.

"Secondly, father has a pension as a retired Civil Servant who held a good position, besides money of his own. So if he had squandered all his own money, his pension would keep us going in our present fairly modest style. Now what is it?"

Irene could not rid herself of her feeling of vague anxiety. All through that day it beset her, she passed a restless night, and during the next day the uneasiness increased. That is the natural result of brooding over any trouble, real or imaginary.

"I feel there was something in that remark about my marrying Cuthbert Rawson!" she said decidedly, during the afternoon. "It was a strange thing to say, in the circumstances. I cannot endure this any longer. I must know what is wrong!"

Irene Woodhouse was pretty, as already mentioned; she was a girl of determination, which often induces an expression of countenance calculated to decrease good looks in a woman; and she was possessed of intelligence rather above the average, but not sufficiently above the ordinary level to entitle her to be described as brilliant. She might shine in a quiet way, but she would not dazzle.

She went straight to her father, whom she found in a small room gazing vacantly out of the window, and addressed him with a directness that took him completely off his guard.

"Father, there is something wrong, and you must tell me all about it at once. I have a right to know!"

Mr. Woodhouse sprang to his feet in alarm, and in doing so he tacitly confessed that Irene was right in her assumption.

"Sit down, father," she said, quietly and decisively, "and tell me all. I can bear trouble."

"You cannot bear this, my child!" said the old man, breaking down entirely and covering his face with his hands. "It's the disgrace! I would sooner be penniless, but—I will tell you all!"

He dried his eyes, which had filled with the bitter tears of mortification and remorse, and told her briefly.

"Mrs. Warren, my cousin, left a sum of money invested in Consols. I was to have the benefit of the interest till you were twenty-one, after which the Consols were to be handed over to a soldiers' benevolent fund, of which Major Rawson is treasurer. The Consols were handed over to me in trust.

"I suppose I was stupid, but it occurred to me three years ago that I could do better with the money than let it remain in Consols, and, as there was nothing in the will to the contrary, I sold out and invested in other securities. I made more interest, but I did not want it for myself; it was my fixed intention to make money for the fund, so that I could hand over more than was given to me. So I set aside the additional interest and was glad. Oh, what a dolt I was! The new investment went wrong and most of the trust money was gone!

"I tried speculation with the remainder and with my own money, but I was unsuccessful! I now stand in this position: I have to hand over that money in two months or be branded as a defaulter!"

"But we can raise money!" cried Irene, pale as death. "My annuity can be commuted, for the office will buy me out for a lump sum. We can sell the furniture and all we have. We——"

Her father interrupted her.

"That is not enough! And if it were, the very fact that we

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

are selling would betray us, and the disgrace would be as great. They could not prosecute me, but they would brand me as a criminal all the same. I should most probably lose my pension too. I did it innocently, but they will not believe that. Major Rawson would seize the opportunity, for he has never forgiven me for siding with his opponent at the last General Election."

Irene stood like a marble statue; her cheeks were white, her eyelids were closed. All her nerves were strained.

"Why did you make that remark about Cuthbert Rawson?" she asked suddenly. "Considering all things, it is strange that you should hint at marriage with him."

"Because had it been possible it would have saved the situation!" was the reply. "If you were engaged or married to Cuthbert the Major would place things in the best light, instead of the worst. He would help us out of the trouble. It is not as if I were a thief, Irene. But the marriage is out of the question, and we must prepare to sell and bear the consequences of my foolishness!"

"Perhaps all will be well," said Irene, after a long pause, during which she had kept her eyes closed. The lids were raised now, and revealed a peculiar glitter, a kind of wintry gleam, in the usually bright eyes. "Leave it to me, and do as I wish; we may weather this storm, father."

Irene had formulated a plan, which she set herself to carry out with the utmost deliberateness. The love which she bore her father, a love that almost amounted to worship, overwhelmed all other considerations, and changed temporarily the character of her being.

She felt no kind of love for Cuthbert Rawson; they had often met and conversed, but it was like flint striking against steel, it produced sparks. They might have admired each other in a way, but the idea of love was not likely to enter the head of either Cuthbert or Irene.

Moreover Irene had noticed quite lately that Cuthbert appeared to be falling a victim to the charms of a new member of their circle, an accomplished daughter of an Anglo-Indian official, Miss Maude Page.

"She has more chance than I should ever have had," said Irene in a tone that sounded harsh. "She is decidedly brilliant, and he likes a brilliant woman! Well, all's fair in love and war!" she added with a reckless laugh. "I must win Cuthbert Rawson! I don't love him, but I can become as good a wife as any other woman, so I shall be doing him no injustice, and—I shall save father! I'll do it!"

Anyone who could have gazed upon Irene Woodhouse at that moment and peered into the inmost depths of her being would have pitied rather than have blamed her. She was changed completely, and she was about to make the attempt to immolate herself on the altar of filial devotion.

It was a season of festivities, and the Woodhouses were not behind in the giving of parties. The select circle wondered somewhat at this, for the Woodhouses had lived rather quietly; but they did not worry themselves much about it. They were satisfied with the fact that it was another source of amusement and pleasure, and they gladly accepted the invitations. Thus it came about that, by means of her own functions and those of her friends, Irene secured many opportunities of meeting Cuthbert Rawson.

In spite of all her efforts she felt that she had made no progress with him on the first two occasions. Miss Maude Page was decidedly attractive; she was a grand conversationalist, not very deep, but witty and entertaining, and Irene saw that she was behind the woman whom she intended to oust. There was a steely glitter as she went home after the second meeting.

The next occasion on which the two met Cuthbert Rawson was involuntarily attracted to his "dear enemy," as he secretly and smilingly called her.

"May I have the pleasure of the next waltz, Miss Woodhouse?" he asked, bending over her. "That is, if it is not taken?"

"It is at your disposal, Mr. Rawson," she said, with a mocking smile. "That is, if we can hold together for as many minutes as the waltz lasts; I always think that you and I are like positive and negative electricity! There seems to be attraction mixed with repelling force!"

She laughed merrily, and her eyes flashed at him with unusual fire. She seemed to be quivering with life and energy; he was fascinated.

"I don't understand about electricity, and I am not sure that you are right in your comparison, Miss Woodhouse. I believe, candidly, that your knowledge of the subject is as shaky as mine. I believe in personal magnetism, though. Hallo, I must be off for this dance! We'll discuss it during the waltz."

Irene was also claimed for the dance, and her partner was charmed by her sparkling talk.

"Never knew her to be like that before!" he observed to his friend Rawson, after the dance. "She sparkles; that's the best way to describe it."

Rawson's curiosity was aroused; some other feeling also made itself manifest in him, although he did not understand it. He kept his eyes constantly seeking Irene, and he waited with some impatience for the waltz. Even Miss Maude Page failed to prove so attractive as hitherto.

"This is our dance, Miss Woodhouse," he said, bowing low as he stood before her. "Now we can discuss the question of——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the band struck up the first bars of a particularly dreamy waltz, and they placed themselves in position. Fortune favoured Irene, for, by some awkwardness, he did not hold her correctly.

"I am positive that my simile was correct!" she said with a bewitching little laugh. "The music serves as a force of attraction, but something within you repels, or you would not be so awkward!"

"I believe you are right!" he retorted, catching the infection of her animation. "However, it is possible to overcome the force of repulsion—that is the correct term, I believe—but it's an ugly word! I wonder why you and I always strike fire when we meet, Miss Woodhouse?"

"Because we are kindred spirits, Mr. Rawson!" she flashed back. "If we were not we should not produce a flame!"

"Good, there is something in that!" he laughed. "This is a grand waltz, and you dance it perfectly. I wonder why we have not waltzed together before? Oh, I give in!" he added quickly, as her lips parted. "I have never asked you, you will say! I suppose I have not, which is my fault and my misfortune combined!"

"Am I not to be counted as sharing in the misfortune?" she queried, with assumed demureness.

"If you wish it, yes!" he rejoined gallantly. "I will take care that we are not companions in misfortune again, Miss Woodhouse!"

The waltz ended, he led her to a secluded seat; he was in no hurry to surrender possession of his enchanting partner, and he secured two other dances before he relinquished her. Those dances were looked forward to with such eagerness that Miss Page secretly voted him "flat."

That was the beginning of the drama. Rene's game of conquest had begun in real earnest, and she never let her hold loosen. Her brilliancy became the talk of Society; she charmed everybody; even old Major Rawson, despite his bitterness towards Mr. Woodhouse, spoke of her as "a really charming girl," and looked not unfavourably upon his son's attentions to her.

"I'd sooner the boy married someone else," he said to himself, "but if that's his choice, why, let him go ahead, and I'll put up with Woodhouse as a relation by marriage!"

The servants, who saw how absent their young mistress was on the occasion of a function at home, and heard of her from other servants, said that she exhausted herself during those special hours, for she was always dull, and often lying down when there was nothing going on.

For the space of five weeks this went on. Mr. Woodhouse became more and more depressed as the fatal time drew near. He saw but little of his daughter's actions, for he usually retired to a quiet room with some of his old friends when he had escorted his daughter to a social function

Digitized by Google

He saw that Irene was becoming pale and worn, and he marvelled at the change between this condition and her appearance when she was going out.

"We must give it up, Irene," he said sorrowfully one morning. "I do not know what plan or idea you had in your head five weeks ago, when I told you all, but the time is nearly up, and I—we—must prepare for the blow to fall!"

"Wait!" said Irene enigmatically. Her dull eye lighted up with animation for an instant. "Wait till to-morrow!'

In her own room she paced up and down feverishly.

"I feel that the proposal will come to-night during the ball which I am giving. I cannot go on much longer. I will marry him, and then——"

She caught sight of herself in a mirror and the shock made the words die away. She seemed almost to have become an old woman.

"I must discontinue it as soon as my object is accomplished," she breathed with intense emotion. "Will he soon tire of his bride? And I? What will it be for me? I do not love him! Love him?" she added strangely. "Do I love him?"

She passed her hand over her forehead, which was burning, then pressed both hands to her heart. She shuddered at nothing tangible, and hurried about her duties.

It was a splendid scene that evening, and some of the guests whispered that they didn't quite see how the Woodhouses could run to it; they comforted themselves with the reflection that it was a special effort, of course, for which the host would have to pay by retrenchment of a severe character during the following few months.

Irene did the duties magnificently; she was the belle of the evening, and she excelled every woman there by her piquant, vivacious manner, and her conversational powers. Rawson was enchanted, he claimed so many dances that Irene had to cry "Hold!" and cut his claims down to a minimum.

During the interval, while the guests were taking refreshments, Rene stole away, leaving her father and a widowed lady of the vicinity—a great friend—to do the honours. Her brain seemed on fire, all her nerves were aching under the extreme tension, she felt that she was on the verge of a paroxysm of hysteria.

"I feared it!" she murmured. "It would be a repetition of what occurred ten days ago, but I have prepared for it! I must not fail now! I must win to-night, or I may lose for ever! Oh, my head, my whole body is throbbing, throbbing, throbbing!"

She hurried to a small room at the back of the house. From a corner cupboard she took something and placed it on the table. She shuddered as she did so.

The secret of her wit and meteoric brilliancy lay revealed there. She had learnt much about drugs from her father, who always kept a stock of them.

She knew that a certain decoction, in which arsenic figured, was a powerful exhilarator, she knew that the fearfully dangerous potion was able to draw out all the latent talent, all the hidden mental faculties, and transform for the time a person of apparently ordinary capacity into a genius, or something very near it.

In a minor degree such drugs are used in France and America, but the decoction taken by Irene Woodhouse to effect her purpose was more potent in its results, for the reason that it had an Indian drug mixed with it.

Naturally, such artificial stimulants have their after effects, leaving the victim dull and heavy, and this fact explains the lassitude shown by Irene on the days following the social gatherings in which she shone so brightly.

But there was another danger, that of over-excitation of the nerves, and a collapse in the very midst of triumph. To prevent this, Irene had retired to the little room to prepare a hypodermic injection of morphine. She knew that the combined effects of the two drugs would kill her if she continued their use, but the game was nearly finished, that night would see victory or defeat!

She was so intent on her preparations that she did not hear a knock at the door or her name softly uttered—"Irene!" It was Cuthbert Rawson, who had seen her steal away, and had tried to follow her, so that he might lead her away to a secluded nook and tell her that he loved her to distraction. He had seen her disappear in that room which, he knew, she used as a reading and work-room on other occasions.

He waited in the corridor for her, but as she did not reappear he ventured to the door, and called her by name. Ah, she would understand that he loved her if she heard him call her "Irene!" No answer. He gently pushed open the door and looked in; perhaps he had been mistaken after all, and the room was empty.

What he saw stupefied him with amazement. Irene was about to administer a hypodermic injection of morphine, and she was talking audibly to herself, unconsciously telling Cuthbert Rawson all the miserable secret.

He stepped up to her, causing her to drop the syringe with a cry of fear.

"Why have you done this, Irene?" he asked, his voice indicating great sorrow.

She gazed at him blankly for a moment, then fell on her knees before him with a convulsive sob, hiding her face for shame.

"Why did you do it?" he asked again, gently. He raised her to her feet, drew her hands from her face, and waited for her reply.

With flaming cheeks she told him the whole story. She narrated her father's foolishness, and how she determined to save him in the way he had unintentionally suggested—by winning Cuthbert Rawson.

"I knew that I must be brilliant, charming, enchanting if I wished to accomplish my object!" she confessed. "And that I was not to be compared with others. So I adopted this device to aid me. Now leave me to despise myself as you despise me. No, stay, while I tell all, in justice to myself!

"I did it to save my father! Yes, but afterwards I did it because—because I had learnt to love you, and I wanted you for yourself, and for my own happiness. I have lost all, and my father is ruined, my happiness gone!"

She threw herself on the ground and sobbed in an agony of grief. She was oblivious of everything. The paroxysm lasted for five or six minutes, and all this time the guests were making merry, unconscious of the tragic scene that was being enacted so close to them. Irene's sobs moderated, and she essayed to rise; she felt a strong arm pass round her waist, and the next moment she was in Cuthbert Rawson's embrace.

"No, no!" she pleaded. "Leave me!"

"Poor child!" he said tenderly. "Your devotion to your father covers a multitude of foolishness on your own part. No one will know, dear, except myself, and why should I complain of something that has brought us together? If you have sinned, you did it against me, and if I forgive, what remains?"

"Will you ever be able to forgive me?" she asked humbly.

"Of course! Especially if you promise to be as devoted in your love to me as you have shown yourself in your love to your father! And you may rest easy about the other matter. I can arrange that, and will gladly do so in order to secure a wife whom I can love and admire for her goodness!"

Irene did not return to her guests, and her absence was explained as due to a sudden but slight indisposition.

When the guests had departed Rawson took Mr. Woodhouse aside and asked for Irene. When she came, Cuthbert said significantly—

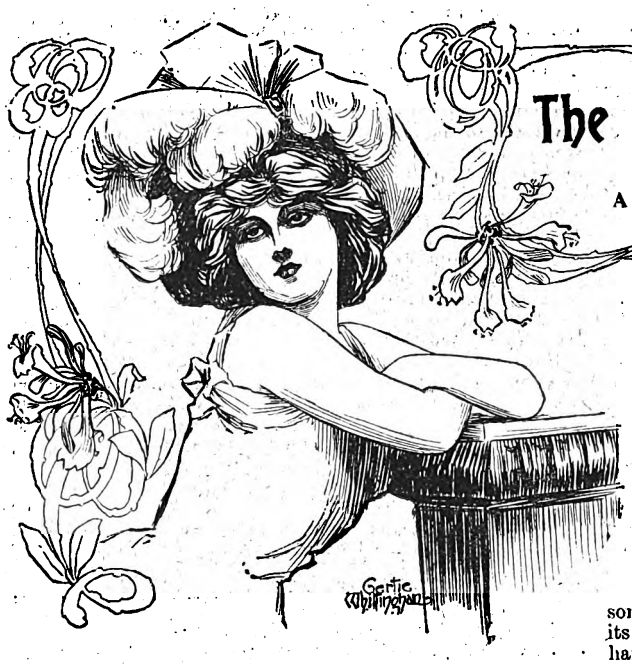
"I have asked your daughter to marry me, sir, and I hope for your consent. Irene will tell you all when I am gone. I know all, and it increases my love for her. The past is dead; the future is bright!"

F. Brewster.

Tupman: "I hear that you are building a new house?" Snodgrass: "Yes, I couldn't very well build an old one, you know."

He: "What is the name of your machine?" She: "Do you mean the name the maker gives it, or the names papa called it when he fell over it in the hall the night before last?"

Digitized by Google



The Romance of Ina.

A Very Pathetic Love Story.

"I THINK that's all, nurse, I'll take you up now. You understand that it is a very trying case. That is the chief reason why"—the doctor's face broadened into a kindly smile—"I wish you to undertake it."

"I am very flattered that you choose me; you know the harder the work the better it suits me."

"Exactly, but don't overdo yourself. We can't have you a patient on our hands."

Nurse Ina only shook her head in reply. She was, as she herself expressed it, "hatefully strong"; in all her years of nursing she had not had a day's illness.

An excellent nurse was the general opinion, but—not a pleasant woman. The face beneath the dainty cap was worn and stern, not through physical suffering, and the steel grey eyes were hard as flint. It is not often that one sees an elderly nurse; the neat and dainty uniform is almost always associated with that youth and freshness to which it is so becoming.

Nurse Ina was some way past forty, and betrayed the fact in every line of her haggard face, that was wrinkled beyond her years. No trace of the beauty that had once been hers remained, save the masses of wavy hair, whose reddish hue Time had scarcely begun to change to grey.

The unthinking called her cold and cynical; she was respected by all, however, liked by a few, loved by none.

Not that she seemed to yearn for affection in any form; she went on her way doing her duty with a kind of fierce ardour that made her a favourite with doctors, who found no task was too hard, too unpalatable or onerous for the untiring zeal of Nurse Ina.

The patient she was called upon to attend was a man suffering from a fever, and whose ravings had frightened his first nurse almost into hysterics, rendering her absolutely useless. The doctor had sent her back with a sharp reprimand, and having a grateful recollection of Nurse Ina's capabilities, had sought her out, and been fortunate enough to find her disengaged.

"You won't be frightened like Sister Mary," he said to her, half humorously, as he led her through the silent, carpeted passages to the sick room. "You won't fail me?"

"I don't think so," said Nurse Ina calmly; "I am to undertake the case alone?"

"Yes, if you can. Here we are. Poor fellow, he is quiet enough now."

The large room was dimly lit by a couple of shaded candles; it looked vast and lonely with the bed in the middle, on which the sharp outline of a motionless figure was just distinguishable. Another doctor stood beside it, he came forward to speak to his colleague, bestowing a glance of keen scrutiny on the nurse.

"No change," he murmured, in the subdued key of a voice trained to sick rooms, "and for some time there will be none. This is the new nurse?"

"Yes. One on whom we can have perfect reliance."

Ina stepped softly to the bedside, and looked down upon her patient with perfect calmness. His was a handsome and delicately moulded face that illness could not rob of its beauty. The nurse frowned as she stooped and laid her hand upon the low, broad forehead. The eyes were shut; she wished uneasily that he would open them, and show her that she was mistaken in the sudden thought that had passed through her brain, but the heavy lids remained closed.

"You will have no one to interfere with you in any way," said the doctor who knew her. "He is a bachelor, and his relations seem to trouble but little about him."

Nurse Ina looked again at the blank face on the pillow; that haunting likeness was still more apparent.

"What is his name?" she asked slowly.

"Lindsay, Edgar Lindsay. Anything else you want to know?"

"Nothing else, thank you."

"Then we'll leave you. I shall be in later. Good-bye for the present."

"An invaluable woman," he said to his colleague, as they made their way downstairs, out into the street, where the straw was laid to deaden the steady roar of the traffic. "I have absolute confidence in her."

At the instant when he spoke the "invaluable woman" was lying prone upon the floor, weeping as she had not wept for twenty long years, since that day when she and Edgar Lindsay had parted, as each declared, "for ever."

And as her sobs echoed through the silent room the sick man began to talk, to laugh, to sing in a feeble, raucous voice that was horrible to hear. Nurse Ina, dashing away her tears, went to him.

As she looked at the face that during so many weary years had been ever present with her, she was conscious of a curious pang that *he* should have altered so little, whilst she——!

"He would never have recognised *me*," she thought sadly, "he never will."

The patient opened wide, unseeing eyes upon her, bright with the fever that was consuming him.

"It's all my fault—and yet—you didn't love me, or you wouldn't let these awful little beasts get hold of me, they're pulling me into the sea, and you won't hold me. Help me—or I shall be gone down, down, and it's all slimy, and I can see snakes and snakes—and nothing but snakes, and they'll stifle me, they will! One's coiling across my mouth, another's crushing my arm—oh—oh—hold me, hold me; put out your hand—just touch mine, only touch mine, only touch me! That's all—I'm slipping—sliding——"

He threw out his hands with a scream, and Nurse Ina took

Digitized by Google

them in her strong grasp and supported him in her arms, resting the poor weary head against her shoulder.

For a few seconds her soothing personality quieted him, he lay quiescent, even seemed to rest, but suddenly he tore himself away, and began once more to chatter, to rave of the horrible visions that tortured him, breaking into scraps of song, quoting poetry, and all without rest or intermission, till Ina grew dizzy and confused as she listened.

The doctor paid his promised visit and looked very serious, the nurse knew that look upon his face, and her heart sickened within her.

"He is worse," she forced herself to say quietly, though her life seemed to depend on the answer.

"He is," said the doctor gravely, "I fear, I very much fear. I think his people ought to be notified as to the serious state he is in."

"Why, he has no people," spoke Ina passionately, and without thinking. "At least none who care for him. Leave him to me, I——"

She stopped, conscious that the doctor was regarding her curiously.

"I knew him—once, years ago," she said more quietly. "He is very much alone in the world. The relations he has, you yourself said, do not trouble much about him."

"True; but they must know," said the doctor thoughtfully. "He is very rich, you know, nurse, and his money interests them, of that we may be sure."

"I hate money," answered Ina bitterly, turning away. She was thinking how it had parted them over twenty years ago. How the suspicion implanted in Edgar Lindsay's mind by disappointed and poor relations had grown and flourished till it had finally blossomed out into full vigour, in that scene when he had accused her of loving his income, not himself, and she had sworn never to forgive the insult.

"I hate money," she repeated half to herself, "it brings on moral paralysis of the heart, it kills all good feelings."

"Rather sweeping," observed the doctor mildly. "There's nothing more to be done, nurse. We'll pull him through if we can."

"Yes," said Ina in a low voice, "we *will*."

It was even to her, used to many sad nights, a ghastly vigil; had she been attending a stranger it would have been painful; that the patient was the one creature in the whole world whom she loved made her task one of torture to her.

As the hours went by, he seemed to be slipping away from her, the little thread of life was growing so slender; the only consolation was that his poor voice was hushed; he was almost too weak, as it seemed, to draw his breath.

As the grey dawn stole silently into the room, and the sooty sparrows outside on the leads welcomed it with cheerful chirpings, Ina had her reward, so she thought, for the many years of sad unlovedness, the heart-hunger she had endured.

For a feeble ray of light fell upon her weary, tear-worn face, as she bent over him, and there came a gleam of consciousness into Edgar Lindsay's beautiful eyes, he gazed at her steadily; she saw he was surprised or puzzled, then a sudden look of perfect rest and happiness appeared, he moved his lips, and Ina heard a weak whisper:

"Ina, my Ina, have you forgiven me?"

The next instant he was delirious once more, her name mingling with incoherent ravings, but Ina could not for an instant doubt that he had recognised her.

"He loves me still," she told herself, and it seemed to her that her happiness was too wonderful to exist. She never doubted for an instant that he would live now. She was fighting a duel with death, in which her great, overwhelming love was her weapon. Who could resist it?

He would live and learn how Fate had brought them together in the strangest fashion, and the life that both had wasted, for want of a little unselfish power of forgiving, should be lived at last. Dayspring had been denied them, but the afterglow of a sad autumn was, however, to be theirs.

It was even sweet to hear how he reproached himself for their sad quarrel.

"All my fault, Ina," he moaned, "all my fault, and you're letting me die, you won't save me, though I love you. Yes, I love you and yet I hurt you, and I was glad; I liked to; at least—— Oh, Heaven, I didn't *mean* to lose you. You mustn't leave me, Ina—Ina, don't you see I'm sinking down, down into this awful crevasse all for want of you. It's all blackness at the bottom, and above it's light, and I can see you. And if you would, you could save me; oh, don't let me go, hold me tight, tight, tight! I want to live now, for you love me."

His grasp on Ina's hand was agony, but it was a pain she delighted in.

"Dearest, you are safe, I am with you," she said soothingly. "Oh, Edgar, if I hadn't been utterly selfish, I should never have left you, never."

"I love you, I love you, I love you," he muttered hoarsely. "I can't say that often enough; I love—I love——"

His voice drifted away into incoherent mutterings, died away into perfect silence, and to Ina's exquisite joy he fell asleep. She knelt beside him, for he was holding her hands, and she dared not move, watching the haggard look slowly die away from his face, leaving it calm and peaceful, and listening to his breathing as it grew more regular.

"He is asleep," she whispered to the doctor, as he entered. "Oh, there is a chance now?"

And the doctor thought he had never seen a more beautiful face when it wore that smile than that of the faded, elderly nurse.

"Many chances," he said kindly, "but you must be knocked up, though I must confess I never saw you look so well. Night-nursing evidently agrees with you."

Ina actually blushed, and looked almost ten years younger.

The improvement in the patient's condition was maintained all day, and though the nurse's heart was never rejoiced by another sign of recognition, her contentment was absolute. She had conquered, death had retired defeated, and Edgar was hers once more.

It was growing dusk, and Edgar was asleep, when a servant came to Nurse Ina, and asked her if she could go downstairs to speak to a lady who was inquiring after Mr. Lindsay.

The nurse hesitated.

"If she won't keep me long," she said dubiously, "I can just speak two words to her."

In the great drawing-room she was confronted by a very dazzling vision, a creature all golden hair and appealing brown eyes, and wearing a gown that was the acme of ruinous simplicity.

"Oh, nurse, I am so sorry to disturb you"—the voice was as sweet as the face—"but, how is Mr. Lindsay? I never heard till I came to town yesterday that he was ill."

"He is better, I am glad to say," said Ina, wondering who this exquisite little person could be. "In fact, he is out of danger."

"Out of danger! And I—I had not the slightest idea that—that—— Oh, nurse, how dreadful! How thankful I am I came!"

There were tears in the lovely eyes, and Ina looked on, whilst her visitor dried them without the least affectation.

"Perhaps," said the sweet voice—"perhaps I had better tell you who I am, or you must think me very strange. But the fact is—Mr. Lindsay and I are engaged.

"You look surprised," she added a little petulantly, "but I don't know why you should. I am nearly twenty-two, and

Digitized by Google

he is—oh—there isn't a young man to be named in the same day with him."

She looked at the nurse, who had not said a word; she thought she had never seen a living person so absolutely colourless, even the lips were clay-colour, and she decided that nursing must be an unhealthy occupation.

"Perhaps," the gracious vision began, with just a faint touch of hesitation—"perhaps I'd better tell you that—that Mr. Lindsay and I quarrelled just before he was ill. It was all my fault," she said penitently, "I was horrid. I didn't hear from him for some time, till quite casually last night at a party someone mentioned that he was very ill.

"You can imagine how wretched I was. I determined to come and find out for myself, but I could not get away till now. And then you tell me he is 'out of danger.' To think that I nearly lost him; that I never knew!"

Ina regarded her visitor stupidly. She could scarcely grasp the meaning of the latter's flow of words. Engaged—Edgar Lindsay—on whose lips *her* name had ever been during his delirium, who had, she was persuaded, recognised her, and addressed her in terms of the deepest affection, he engaged to this beautiful, dainty being, who was young enough to be his daughter! It was inconceivable! Desperately she clung to the last vestige of the happiness which was drifting away from her.

"*You* are going to marry Mr. Lindsay," she said, "you?"

"Yes, and oh, nurse, I want you to do me a favour"—the appealing brown eyes were brought to bear on the nurse's impassive countenance. "Here is a letter, only a tiny note, containing just two words. When he is well enough, give it to him. He will understand it—it will make it all right."

Ina conquered a wild desire to tear the offered missive into many pieces, as she took it from the little outstretched hand.

"You are making no mistake," she said, "you are sure Mr. Lindsay will understand?"

"Of course." The girl looked a little surprised. "Why, nurse, I hope—I think that my note will do him more good than all the doctor's stuff in the world."

"I don't understand," murmured the nurse wildly. "Oh, what does it mean?"

"And," continued the other happily, "you will come down to me every day, won't you, nurse, and tell me how he is? I shall be *so* anxious till he is out of danger."

The nurse laid her hand heavily on the silken shoulder, her haggard eyes gazed full at the smiling, daintily-beautiful face.

"Tell me your name," she said hoarsely. "Quick, quick!"

For a sudden awful thought had come to her, and she stood motionless as the rock from which her features seemed carved, as the girl answered:

"My name is Ina—Ina Colquhoun."

Sybil Campbell Lethbridge.

The Rose's False Message.

And How the True One was Given.

WITH many wild whoops, and much leaping and tumbling, the children hurried out of the weather-beaten school house and took their several ways towards their homes in various parts of the sparsely settled neighbourhood.

A moment later Millie Forrest, the teacher, came out and, hurrying across the playground, turned into the long lane, bordered with high banks and hedges.

Small, slender, with big brown eyes, an oval face with irregular features, the young "teacher" was not what one would call pretty, but there was a piquant arch to the red lips, and the heavy mass of nut-brown hair that overhung her brows was a glory in itself sufficient to have awakened envy.

She hurried along the lane and turned through a wicket gate into a small copse. Following a winding path, crossed by deep shadows cast from the trees by the declining sun, she was halfway through the wood when Edgar Sommers, a neighbour's son, came from the clump of bushes and with a show of bashfulness, joined her.

"Evening, Millie," he said, after an embarrassing silence. "Had a good day at the school?"

"Much the same as all other days," replied the girl, with a defiant lifting of her head. "I am tired of it all. I wonder if everyone finds life such a dreary round? Sometimes I wish I might fall into the old mill pond yonder with no one near to rescue me."

The young man's eyes grew moist and his lips trembled perceptibly.

"Is it so dull and stupid for you here, Millie?" he said slowly. "I—I wish I might do something to make things brighter and—and sweeter for you."

The girl turned her face away that he might not see the sudden light that came into her eyes and the flush that coloured her brown cheek.

"I'm rough and awkward," he continued, lengthening his stride to keep up with the girl's quickened step, "not worthy of you in any way, Millie, but—I love you, love you more than my life, more than a thousand lives. If you would only give me the right, I would do as much as a man could do to make you happy."

She was going forward rapidly, nervously, her head lifted and a look of gladness in her eyes. Had he seen it he would have taken her in his arms, then and there, and settled the question for ever. But he did not see it and her silence was like death to his hopes.

A wild rose nodding and blushing beside the path caught his eye, and stooping, he plucked it from the bush.

"See, Millie, the last of the season; let the flower plead for me. I won't ask you to decide now, but you are going to the dance over at Major Barlow's to-night. If you think you could trust me and let me love and care for you, wear it in your hair."

He held out the rose to her and she took it demurely from his big, brown fingers.

Digitized by Google

"If you wear the flower to-night, you will make me the happiest man in the world," he said, in a half whisper. "If you don't, you will break my heart."

He stood for a moment gazing with longing eyes upon the slender figure of the girl going on, with the warm sunlight turning her bronze hair to gold. Then he went back heavily along the path, and passed through the meadows lying beyond the copse, and by the old water mill.

As he passed the mill he saw Frisbie, the new miller from the city, standing in the doorway, his curling hair white with flour dust. Edgar could not but acknowledge him a handsome fellow and remembering how often he had been a visitor at the Forrests' since he came to the neighbourhood, he answered the young miller's hearty greeting gruffly and passed on.

Millie went through the woods softly humming to herself:

"*Give me a kiss that, going home,*
My feet may walk on air."

She dressed herself with unusual care for the evening, and when she was ready put the wild rose in her hair. The dance was to be only a friendly party, and she would go over early and be with the Barlow girls when the others came.

As she tripped into the little sitting-room she met her mother going with a jug for water. Millie took the vessel from her mother and ran lightly down the slope. Stooping, she dipped the jug into the spring. In the dusk the clear, undisturbed waters shone like silver.

As she lifted her full jug and turned to retrace her steps, the rose slipped from her hair, and, falling into the spring brook, was carried swiftly out of sight.

The happy girl did not miss the pretty token until well on her way to Major Barlow's. It was too late then to go back to look for it, and she went on framing many pretty excuses for not having the rose in her hair to be seen when Edgar should come.

It was nearly nine o'clock and the full moon was shining when Edgar Sommers, on his way to the dance, reached the narrow footbridge that crossed the spring brook. He was anxious and despondent.

His great love made him timid and cast a halo about the object of his affection. It seemed impossible that she should care for him.

He stood for a moment on the bridge looking down into the moonlit water. A bright object, dancing on the ripples, caught his eye. It whirled over the tiny rapids and lodged against the roots of a willow.

Edgar sprang over the low rail of the bridge and snatched from the water the rose he had given Millie a few hours before.

Here, then, was her answer to his pleading. She had thrown it away, and the spring brook brought it to save him the humiliation of meeting a more direct refusal from her lips.

He was dumb with the sudden overthrow of his hopes, and walked on aimlessly, the rose crushed in his hand.

Suddenly the strain of a violin playing the "Beautiful Blue Danube" fell on his ears. He had come unconsciously to where she was.

He would have turned back, but could not. A desire to look upon her face once more before he went for ever away, drew him on until he stood in the shadow of the creeper that ran over the doorway of the Barlows' house.

The door was open, and he saw the gay couples floating about the big dining-room. Millie was dancing with the new miller, and they glided on to the rise and fall of the music, the handsomest couple in the room.

How Edgar hated the man! He longed to stretch out his hand, take the white throat of his rival between his strong fingers and crush out his life. It was for this unknown, smooth-voiced stranger that she had thrown him over.

But she did not love him, so what matter who claimed her. He turned away and was soon hidden in the shadow of the woods that skirted the stream below the house.

Millie waited impatiently for Edgar's coming. She had determined to go to him as soon as he arrived and tell him of the loss of the rose and acknowledge her intention to have worn it. He would forgive her seeming carelessness when he knew she loved him; she felt sure of that. But as the hours wore on and he did not come, she became restless and frightened. What could have happened to detain him?

At last the people prepared to go home, and the miller offered to escort her across the fields. She would have refused him, but there was no good excuse.

There was no one else to accompany her, and so the two went out across the meadows. He gay and confident, she sad and apprehensive.

As they were going over the rustic bridge where Edgar had found the rose the young man suddenly threw his arm about Millie's waist, and, drawing her close, said:

"Toll, little one, that is the country custom, isn't it? Come, give me a kiss for toll!"

"Let me go!" she cried, and struggled to free herself.

"Not until I have taken toll," he replied, bending over her. "It is my right, you know."

Before the now frightened girl could cry out there was a quick step on the bridge, and a big, brown hand fell on the shoulder of the miller, and he turned to face the tall young farmer. The girl ran to the end of the bridge and stood trembling with fright.

The two men faced each other on the narrow bridge. The moon, far down in the west, cast a mellow light on the scene.

Edgar was the first to speak, and his voice had in it the ring of steel.

"Millie," said he, "has this—fellow the right to offer to kiss you?"

"You know he hasn't." She stood straight now, and her brown eyes flashed, then her manner changed suddenly.

"Don't strike him, Edgar. Let him go. You are to blame. If you had come as you promised this would not have happened."

"And the rose," said he, "I found it here in the brook."

"It was in my hair when I left home. Oh, Edgar, I understand; you — you thought I threw it away!" She was close by his side now.

"And you didn't?"

"I would have sacrificed my life first."

"Thank God!"

And when they looked again they were alone.

Audrey Templeton.

Digitized by Google

Her Wedding Gown.

Telling of a Jealous Woman's Attempted Revenge.

THE modiste called it a ravishing confection. It would, she averred, suit mademoiselle's fair beauty to perfection—the young dressmaker who had designed it would be proud of her work when she saw it on mademoiselle. Yes, she was a good worker, and she had the artistic taste and eye which made the successful designer.

Mademoiselle—otherwise Miss Helena Vernon—nodded haughtily. She had examined with care the lovely reflection in the long pier glass before her, touching with critical fingers the exquisite folds of shimmering white satin which swept the soft, velvety carpet of the room in the establishment of the fashionable modiste to whom the beauty of the season had intrusted the making of her wedding gown. It was perfection, and she permitted herself to smile upon Madame Noelle.

"With the slight alteration which I told you of, it can be sent home without fail to-morrow?" she said, taking a last look at the graceful sweep of the magnificent train veiled in priceless lace.

"But certainly; mademoiselle shall have it without fail to-morrow. If the alteration may be arranged now while mademoiselle has it on?"

She rang a bell, and gave a whispered order to the silk-attired woman who answered the great modiste's summons, and Miss Vernon continued to admire herself in the glass with great satisfaction.

She would certainly be handed down to posterity as the bride of the season; the dress was but the finishing touch to her glorious beauty; and as she was making the match of the year she had, of course, good cause for her self-congratulation.

She turned as a door opened to admit a girl in a soft black dress, who bore the insignia of her trade, scissors and pincushion, in her hand. Miss Vernon's haughty glance swept her for an instant; she noted the beauty of the girl's clear, pale complexion—like a magnolia newly-opened—the warm colour of her bronze hair. And the sight angered her, as the sight of any beauty always angered her—other than her own, that is to say.

There was that indescribable air of good birth about this young creature with the gleaming scissors and well-filled pincushion, to which Helena Vernon could never attain—be she prospective Countess of Endsley a thousand times over—she was but *nouveau riche* after all, and the Earl had well counted her "dollars," as he himself termed it to his confidential friends, before proposing to the beauty of the season.

The scissors snapped and clicked; pins were set in with quick, skilful fingers, and Miss Vernon glanced downwards at the shimmering gown which clothed her in a mantle of loveliness.

The fitter rose from her knees.

"That is all, madam," she said, in soft, sweet accents.

"See that it is sent home to-morrow without fail," said Miss Vernon curtly, as the fitter assisted her to slip out of the wedding gown. "By the way, what is your name? I don't remember having seen you here before."

"My name is Angela Dennys, madam," said the girl, colouring a soft crimson, as she met the haughty woman of fashion's supercilious glance. "I have not been with Madame Noelle very long."

Miss Vernon nodded carelessly. The girl was pretty—too pretty for her station; it was just as well that she had not arranged to meet the Earl here, after all. He had such a ridiculous fancy for a face like that.

Ten minutes later Miss Vernon was driving down Bond Street behind her prancing thorough-breds, while Angela Dennys went to one of the workrooms to give directions about the lovely wedding-gown which was to grace the most fashionable bride of the season in a few days' time.

She had designed the dress with such loving pride and care as if it was to be her own. As the thought flashed upon her she blushed; and one of the girls sewing away industriously remarked that Miss Dennys was prettier than ever.

Ever since she had come to Madame Noelle she had proved herself of the greatest value. Her taste in designing was little short of genius, and madame was generous enough to acknowledge that Miss Dennys was a treasure to her trade.

She was certainly of a superior class to the usual run of workwomen in the establishment, but she was a reticent young woman and said very little to anyone about herself, and the little air of mystery which hung over her served to make her quite an interesting personality in the workrooms when she came in to give her directions.

Madame Noelle herself was interested in the girl, and the more so when the evening on which the wedding-gown was sent home, Miss Dennys came to her before leaving, and said:

"I wish to give you notice, madame—I am going to be married next month."

"Going to be married!" echoed madame, in real dismay. "But must you give up your work altogether, Miss Dennys? I should be glad to keep you on afterwards at an increased salary, you know."

"Thank you, madame—but I cannot," said Miss Dennys with a smile. "I shall have no further occasion to work in my future life."

"Oh! well, in that case, Miss Dennys, I must say no more," said madame with much graciousness, "and I wish you every happiness."

In the house in Grosvenor Square in which Vernon the millionaire lived, Miss Vernon sat and waited with unrestrained impatience for her *fiancé*. They were dining out together and this was to be almost her last dissipation as a maiden.

In three short days she would be transformed into the Countess of Endsley. Her triumph then would be quite complete, but—a shadow darkened her lovely face for an instant. Memory, which was not to be banished for ever, came back to her with terrible force. She thought she had forgotten that moment of madness a year ago, when she had thought the world well lost for—love. A factor which had not been taken into account in her present brilliant prospects.

Of course it would have been merely social suicide to marry the penniless heir-apparent to an earldom when the coronet

Digitized by Google

of the same earldom was laid at her feet. Still—young Gilbert Thelusson had touched her heart as no one else had ever touched it.

She laughed at what she called his folly; he had imagined himself to be in love with her—which was exactly the case—and she had sent him about his business with a pang, but no sign of surrender. And, six months later, her schemes had succeeded beyond her wildest expectations—the broken-down Earl had proposed and was accepted.

He came in now, a fat, bloated-looking man with the signs of dissipation written largely over his heavy face. He might have been taken for anything but what he was—the descendant of one of the noblest and oldest families in the Peerage.

"Ready, Lena?" he said in a thick, hoarse voice. "We'll be late, I'm afraid, but I was delayed when I was just comin' out by a visit from young Gilbert. Used to be rather a pal of yours at one time, wasn't he, eh?"

He chuckled, and Miss Vernon shivered as she slipped into her fur-trimmed cloak, and led the way downstairs to the brougham which was waiting at the door.

"Of course I have met him often," she said coldly, as they were driven away through the lamp-lit square. "What a late call he seems to have paid you."

"Oh, it was business more than anything else. There's not too much love lost between us, you know, my dear—on his side, at least. He's a nice enough boy, but a trifle too strait-laced for these times. He dropped in to tell me he is going to be married. A new departure."

"*Married?*" echoed Miss Vernon faintly. The brougham was dark, and she was thankful for that mercy. Gilbert going to be married! Somehow, she had always considered him her special property although they saw little of each other.

The Earl laughed. "Seems to astonish you, Lena," he said; "yes, it's true enough. Next month, I believe, and to a stunningly pretty girl too. Face like a flower—he showed me her photograph. He's as gone as possible, you see."

"Who is she?" Miss Vernon hardly knew her own voice.

"Name? Angela Dennys—poor and pretty. That's all I could gather; but there were some Dennys used to live near my place—they went smash in those Australian bank failures and the girls had to go out and earn their living. Hard on the poor things, but they had grit, and they got on right well. This is one of them, so she's all right, from that point of view."

Angela Dennys! The girl with the face like a magnolia flower who had designed her wedding-gown! Miss Vernon drew a long breath—and this girl was to be Gilbert Thelusson's wife! The world is a mad and a merry place, my masters!

The evening was spoilt for Miss Vernon, though she was flattered and sought after to her heart's content. She saw always before her the sweet face of the girl whom she considered her rival—the girl who was to be Gilbert's wife.

Late into the night she sat and thought deeply; her maid had gone; and by degrees an idea came to her in the silence of the night. She would not see this thing done without making an effort to put a spoke in that wheel. And she sought her couch with a smile on her lips and evil in her jealous heart.

* * * * *

It was at an unusually early hour the following morning, that Miss Vernon's brougham drew up at the door of Madame Noelle's shop in Bond Street.

"Can I see—Miss Dennys?" inquired Miss Vernon curtly as the server came forward. "I wish to speak to her on a matter of urgent importance. Please tell her to come to me at once."

The softly-carpeted room with its many gilt mirrors was empty, and Miss Vernon turned round sharply as the door opened and Angela Dennys came in.

For a brief instant she examined the girl's face with angry, critical eyes, then she spoke.

"You are engaged to be married to Gilbert Thelusson?" she said shortly.

Angela coloured, and instinctively she raised her head a trifle proudly.

"I am," she said, "but may I ask, madam, what you require this morning?"

Miss Vernon made an impatient movement.

"I have come to see *you*," she said, "on private matters; nothing else. You are aware that I am to be married on Thursday to the Earl of Endsley, to whom Mr. Thelusson is heir?"

"I know, madam," said the girl quietly, "but I fail to see——"

"Wait a moment; what I wish to tell you is this. You think, of course, that Mr. Thelusson—loves *you*. Well—he does not because—he loves me and always loved me and because I refused him, and am to be married to his uncle, he vowed to marry the first girl who would take him. You see that he has lost very little time about it. And, of course, it will ruin his prospects for ever, for neither his uncle nor I will ever consent to receive a—*dressmaker* into the family."

Miss Dennys paled, but her eyes met those angry ones quite serenely.

"I think you must be mad, madam, to speak to me in such a manner," she said with dignity. "Both Lord Endsley and Mr. Thelusson know all my family connections well, and I have nothing to blush for. If it is true that—that——"

Her voice faltered. And Miss Vernon gathered her cloak round her with an air of triumph.

"Oh, ask Gilbert himself," she said airily. "He does not tell lies as a rule, and you will find that what I have told you is the case. Of course, you thought it would be a fine thing to be the wife of the heir to the title, but let me tell you that we shall never acknowledge you—or him!"

And without another word or glance, Miss Vernon swept out of the shop.

"Well, I've dropped the poison at any rate," she said to herself cruelly as the carriage bowled swiftly homewards, "she's one of those sentimental women who will weep and sob, and Gilbert I am sure hates a scene."

She glanced once more at the gorgeous wedding-gown which was lying in its box in her room—designed by the careful Angela.

Her wedding-gown! The sign manual of her coming triumph.

As she replaced the cover of the box, someone knocked at her door. A maid entered bearing a telegram on a silver tray.

Miss Vernon tore it open, and read the few words on the thin pink paper.

It was addressed to her father—but it was brought to her by mistake, she supposed.

"*Endsley died suddenly this morning. Heart disease. Break the news to Miss Vernon.*"

The little pink paper fluttered from her shaking fingers, and dropped on to the box in which lay the wedding-gown.

It was the death warrant of her triumph, and with a groan she fell to the ground.

* * * * *

Three months later Miss Vernon, in the hall of the Schweitzerhof Hotel at Lucerne, picked up an English paper, and read the following short paragraph:

At St. Peter's, Eaton Square, Gilbert, Earl of Endsley, to Angela, elder daughter of the late Colonel Dennys, of Warmingham Manor, Devon.

It was all over.

She had schemed and lied in vain. She had waited thinking that Gilbert would come to her—come to her for consolation which she was only too ready to give him, but—it was not so.

At the next drawing-room, Angela, the young Countess of Endsley, was presented on her marriage, in her wedding-gown of silver tissue, designed by herself and made by Madame Noelle of Bond Street.

And Miss Vernon consoled herself as best she could and married a wealthy, worn-out *roué*, and, though she sometimes came across Lady Endsley in Society, she never managed to get into that select circle of which Angela was the particular star.

E. Burrowes.

Digitized by Google

GREAT NEW SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.

Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

I Discover That I'm in Love.

THE Duke's proposal was so abrupt I could hardly believe he had said it, and yet so like him that I need not have been surprised at all. For some minutes I made no reply, but sat down and buried my face among the cool petals of his bouquet of roses. Then suddenly I looked up.

"What if I don't love you?" I said.

"I will teach you," he answered.

"Do you think that you love me then," I asked, "in spite of your views?"

"I should not offer to share a coronet with you if I did not," he replied.

Something in his words struck me unpleasantly. It sounded like a question of buying and selling after all, and evidently he would consider that the best of the bargain was mine.

"What will the world say?" I asked.

He laughed carelessly. "What does it matter?" he said. "I shall certainly choose a wife according to my inclination, and the world will have to make the best of it. If beauty, brains and refinement are not enough, I don't know what is."

So it was that my goal lay in my grasp.

And yet I faltered.

At last I got up, feeling suddenly, without apparently any reason, on the point of a flood of tears.

"I'm very tired," I said, trying to hide the tremour in my voice. "I don't feel quite myself, somehow. I think I haven't recovered from last week yet. I—I—it is a funny thing to say, but I seem to have lost confidence in myself. I am afraid!"

He got up and came to me quickly.

"That's the nicest thing I have ever heard you say, Maud," he said, in a new tone. "If I have put my request baldly, remember it is only my way. You must know I mean more than the mere words. I know I am a sceptic, but I have a heart, and perhaps it is none the worse for not being too near the surface. But you should understand, for you must have discovered, as I have, the rottenness at the core of the usual, high-flown manner of speech."

I liked him at that moment as I had never liked him before, yet I could not escape an inborn conviction that he felt he was doing me a great favour, and would never cease to feel so. And I was too independent not to resent it even in a duke.

Finally he left me to think it over, and I spent a long, miserable morning of doubt and uncertainty. He had said he would call in a week, and that left me a respite of which I was very glad.

On Saturday, as I was looking very seedy, Di arranged to take me for a drive to Hampton Court the following day, and I was very glad to go. At first we only talked very little; but in the afternoon, when we were strolling through the grounds, he said suddenly:

"You are worrying about something."

I tried to smile naturally, but quickly grew grave again.

"Have you found out that you are not satisfied?" he said presently.

"I don't know," I answered, "I am in two minds about many things."

Then I asked him suddenly, with a cry in my heart that I did not understand at the time:

"Is there love in the world at all? Do you believe in love?"

He was silent for quite a long time.

"I cannot say 'No!'" he said finally, "because I once loved myself, and have no right to presume I am the only one. At the same time it is a thing I have never expected to find again, since I once believed, and was disillusioned."

"And what is the world like without it?" I asked—"without even the hope of it?"

"Oh, it is all very well," he answered, "when you have accustomed yourself to asking and expecting little."

I looked hard into his cold, clear-cut face, trying to see behind the mask.

"I wonder if you are honest?" I said. "I wonder if you mean what you say?"

"If I do not," he replied, "I shall certainly continue to cling to the illusion that I do."

Digitized by Google

And that was all I could get from him to help me in my dilemma. I was disappointed without knowing why; but on Tuesday evening—the day before I was to give my answer—I discovered the reason.

To my surprise, when I went on the stage, I saw Di in the stalls with a lady, and, so far as I was able to judge, he was much engrossed with her. In all the time I had known him he had never, to my knowledge before, taken a lady anywhere, and certainly I had never seen him in the smallest degree engrossed with one.

To my chagrin the incident caused me a sense of disquiet altogether out of proportion, and I took myself to task very strongly over it. At a small supper-party afterwards one of the company suddenly remarked:

"By the way, did anyone see Mr. Northcote in the stalls with Lady Danestone? We shall be hearing some news soon, I expect."

"Who is Lady Danestone?" I asked casually.

"Oh, a very old friend of his, a widow, who has been abroad with her father for some time. Everyone has been expecting them to get engaged for some time."

"I thought it had always been said that Mr. Northcote would never marry?" I remarked.

"I daresay he never would have married anyone else, but since she has come back there is no knowing. Don't you think she has a lovely face? She was the belle of two or three seasons before she married Lord Danestone, but after he died she retired from Society, though it was always known Mr. Northcote saw a great deal of her."

I did not ask anything further, but I became conscious that my gaiety was growing more and more forced, and finally made the first signal of breaking up. I spent a few bad hours that night, driven this way and that by conflicting emotions. One moment I would throw everything to the winds and take my goal, the next I felt an unreasonable dislike for the Duke. But, most of all, I hated this Lady Danestone, and this only made me furious with myself, for what possible reason could I have for hating her?

Well, of course there was but one reason, and at last I was bound to confess it.

I loved Di Northcote.

How did it happen, or when it began, I could not tell, but there was no mistaking the fact. It was there, indisputable, fixed.

This, then, was the end of my triumphs—to fail in the greatest of all!

"What would it all be now?" I asked. "Would not everything crumble to mere vanity and vexation, since I had failed at the crucial point?"

"No!" I declared stoutly. "What I had set out to achieve, I would achieve—I would never allow myself to consider I had failed. I would marry the Duke and start afresh from my high pinnacle and mould my circumstances to my will."

Nevertheless, I cried myself to sleep, and the next morning wrote a little letter to the Duke, saying I could not marry him. In the afternoon he came for an explanation, and he showed far more feeling than I in the least expected. But to all his questions I could only shake my head, and answer:

"I cannot explain. I do not understand myself, but I think my experiences at Grindelwald altered me, somehow. I don't seem to care much about success and position now. I want something better. I feel somehow as if I were starving—starving for the nameless something, whatever it is, that gives one a grip upon life and makes everything worth while."

He watched me closely for a few seconds, and then got up to go.

"It's a funny old world!" he said. "We all seem born to strike across each other's lives and spoil them. If you had married me, I believe—mind you, I don't say I am sure—but I believe I should have taken life seriously and tried to do something. As it is I shall go on playing, and I shall play to the end of the chapter."

"It is much more sensible, really, because it saves a lot of bother. I shall go on with the game you interrupted at Grindelwald first, and when I am tired of it I shall go and hunt elephants again in Central Africa."

"And when you are weary of both?" I asked.

"Oh, then I must find something else. I daresay I shall not have half the difficulty that you will."

I smiled faintly.

"If I were to marry you," I said, "I should want to come after the elephants too, and never set eyes on England again," which was virtually to myself an acknowledgment of failure.

"You may come yet," he answered. "The trackless forests of the Dark Continent are an infinitely finer play-ground than the boards of a London theatre."

"But not so engrossing possibly," I answered. "My play is upon the heart-strings of humanity."

After he had gone I stood still for a long time staring vacantly at the fire, then I fell to my old trick of talking to myself in the glass.

"You will probably go yet, Maud," I said; "go and hunt with him in Central Africa."

June 15th.

It is sometime since the Duke vanished from London Society again as quickly as he had come, but I have heard of him at fashionable resorts abroad, and from all accounts he is having his play with a vengeance.

Meanwhile I have scored another big success, and am giving Di plenty to do as my banker. His engagement has not been announced yet, but Lady Danestone is still in London, and they are seen constantly together.

So the round goes on.

I play my part night after night, receive an ovation that is getting almost monotonous, and am *fêted* to any extent I like. Indeed there does not seem much I cannot have for the wishing, but withal there is a restless ache in my heart that will not be soothed, and I am not happy.

Di still comes to see me upon business matters, and when he is talking things over in that freezing way of his I feel as if I wanted to hate him, and I feign a coldness equal to his own.

And when he is gone I tell myself that he is a hard, cold man, unworthy of any woman's affection, and with only an indulgent tolerance for me, the actress, because it happens to amuse him.

Unless I am tired, and then I think of the cliffs at home, and the sea-gulls, and the wind-swept hills, till the tears blind my eyes. And it seems that after all Success is a poor thing without Love; because if you have everything in your life and have not Love, your heart may yet go hungering for evermore.

It is not too much to say I often feel I would give everything up to-morrow to nestle in the arms of a woman's world that was all my own. But how high a price we pay for this knowledge? How many women, rich in love to-day, would not envy me with all their hearts?

And I?

Well there are moments when I think wistfully enough of the cottage girl at home, tramping happily over the cliffs, with some stalwart lover, while the waves sing a low cadence to his stumbling protestations, drinking in the wonder of it, and the newness—that newness which is forever old.

June 20th.

Di came to see me yesterday afternoon unexpectedly. Some

Digitized by Google

company in which he had invested for me had gone smash, and he was much perturbed about it. I leant back carelessly in a large armchair, and assured him it was of no consequence, and he could forget all about it at once.

"But it is rather a large sum," he said anxiously. "It means that you will be living up to your income for the present and that is never wise."

"It does not signify," I said. "I will retract next year."

He seemed to find a meaning behind my words, and looked at me keenly.

"Why not this?" he asked.

I laughed a little bitterly.

"Oh, I may as well make the most of my last," I said, not knowing what I meant myself, but yielding to some impulse. "I am thinking of taking a long rest."

He got up and walked about the room, as he always does when at all disturbed, and then fired a question at me from the window.

"Are you going to be married?" he asked.

I laughed with that same feeling of bitterness.

"Quite possibly," I answered. "Don't you think it is time I made a choice?"

"I hope you will make a wise one," was all he said.

"You speak like a book of sermons," I retorted. "What do you call a wise one?"

He did not answer, but continued his walk up and down the room.

"Evidently," he said at last, with seeming irrelevance, "you are not satisfied."

"No," I answered. "I confess I am not. I seem to have missed the something that makes it worth while."

"Have you found it out since we went to Hampton Court?"

I made no reply, but looked as callously indifferent as I could. "At least," I thought, "he shall not have the satisfaction of knowing the result of his indulgent tolerance." How I wronged him!

"By the way," I remarked suddenly, "that is a very beautiful woman I have seen you about with lately."

"Yes," he answered simply. "She is very beautiful."

"A widow, I am told," I went on, "who was once the belle of two or three seasons."

"Yes, I knew her at the time."

My goaded heart leapt ahead. Then he had loved her so far back as that? Loved her before she married her first husband, to win an unexpected reward for his faithfulness after all these years.

"I have an appointment with her and her father at the Academy this morning," he said. "I ought to be going." Then he added, "I am glad you are not upset about the money. I should feel I was much to blame had not those who advised me been very hard hit also."

"It is not of the smallest consequence," I reiterated cheerfully, and he went away looking very relieved.

But for me! When he had gone I sat down and buried my face in a sofa cushion, and wondered how I was to live out my life without him. The idea of him married to another woman, one who would probably treat me with the greatest condescension if we met at all—was unendurable. I felt as if I could do myself some injury.

Then Bobbie came.

He never waited to be announced, but always ran upstairs to the drawing-room to look for me, and so it happened that he came in suddenly, while I was still on the sofa with my face buried in the cushion.

"Christopher Columbus!" he exclaimed in genuine astonishment. Then crossing the room quickly, "Are you ill, Queenie?"

I looked up and tried to laugh.

"No, you silly boy! This is the latest phase of the 'rest' cure. It's to prevent wrinkles coming."

"Rest cure be blowed!" said Bobbie; "and what do you want to be thinking of wrinkles for? I dare bet my bottom dollar you're telling fibs."

I made room for him beside me, and he sat down, passing his arm along the back of the sofa.

"Tell you what, Queenie," he said. "You've got the blues."

"Yes, Bobbie," I admitted. "I've got the blues what you'd call 'thundering bad.'"

He laughed, but there was a little tender note in his voice.

"You've just jolly well got to tell me all about it," he said, drawing nearer, "and if there's a man at the bottom of it, I'll just go out now and break his head. Or if it's a woman I'll do the same."

"It is a woman," I told him.

"Then who is it?" he demanded. "By Jove! I'll make her hair curl!"

"Don't be hard on her, Bobbie," I pleaded. "Her name's Maud Cardew."

"Phew!" he whistled softly, then added, "Beastly nasty feeling to quarrel with yourself. Can't lash out hard and get it over."

"No, that's just it," I agreed, "and however sarcastic, or angry, or resolute you get, 'myself' only grows more miserable and takes no notice."

"I expect it's liver," he remarked so comically, that I couldn't help laughing.

"I'll tell you what," he added. "Marry me, and I'll guarantee you never have any more blues at all."

I smiled, and ran my fingers through his hair, feeling almost like his mother.

"What? Aren't you tired of it yet?" I asked. "I thought the May proposal was to be the last?"

"This is an extra one for luck," he asserted, dauntless as ever.

"It won't bring you the luck you imagine, Bobbie," I said; "but something better, the luck of my still remaining firm."

He got up without replying.

"Let's go out," he said. "I'll telephone for my dog-cart, and we'll go to Richmond."

We did, and his cheery nonsense had revived me wonderfully, when he suddenly launched upon a theme that undid everything in a moment.

"Won't it be the rummiest thing out," he exclaimed, "to see old Di spliced?"

I asked him what he meant, and he ran on—

"Oh, you know! Lady Danestone—old friend—cold broth—soon hotted—question popped—wedding bells!"

I could not help laughing at his original mode of explaining the situation, but at the same time I felt my newly-revived spirits sink to zero.

"Do you think there is anything in it?" I asked casually.

"Why not?" he replied, with unconsciously cruel candour. "There they are. She's beautiful and charming, he's highly eligible and unattached, and seems very hard hit. It looks to me as simple as one and one makes two."

I could not deny it, and it seemed as if the cold arms of the inevitable wrapped me closely round. I went in feeling as if every man's hand was against me.

August 25th.

Strange things have happened since I last wrote, and the Wheel of Fortune has turned for me this time, a most unexpected development. I am writing this in Scotland, whither I came with Colonel and Mrs. Mateson when they journeyed north for the grouse shooting.

I knew there would be a small house-party, but I do not

Digitized by Google

think even my hostess knew at the time she invited me, that the Duke, who is some connection of theirs, was to be among them. He crossed over from Carlsbad quite unexpectedly, and came into dinner one evening, just as if he had come in casually from the shoot with the other men.

We were all very much astonished, though no one perhaps so much as I, and I was considerably less at ease than he, when, all unknowing, Mrs. Mateson assigned him to me for a dinner partner.

"This is a bit of luck," he said, and proceeded to converse in his usual cool, careless style, as if nothing had ever passed between us at all.

"What made you come here?" I asked presently. "I thought you were on the Continent?"

"I was until yesterday; how did you know?" and he looked into my face with so straight and deliberate a gaze that I felt myself flushing scarlet.

"Oh, I heard it somewhere," I replied carelessly.

"What made me come here?" he remarked presently. "Well, to tell you the honest truth I heard you were among the guests. I'm going off to the elephants shortly, and I thought I'd like to say 'Good-bye' once more. I also thought I'd like to see if by any chance you would change your mind and come with me?

"Somewhat ignominious to ask twice I know, but since you are one of the very few women I have met in my life who does not bore me to distraction in a few hours, I decided it was worth it," after which long speech he proceeded with his dinner much as if he had been discoursing on the weather.

"You still put it like a business transaction," I said, trying to take him lightly.

"You know why," he answered quietly. "I do not wish to insult you with inane flattery and sickening sentimentality, all of which in nine cases out of ten mean nothing at all."

He let the subject drop after that, but later on he inveigled me into taking a stroll with him to see Loch Katrine in the moonlight.

It was one of the most beautiful scenes I ever remember, and I have often felt since that a sort of intoxication of loveliness crept over my senses, lulling me into a state of forgetfulness of all but the present.

I had come to Scotland feeling somewhat world-weary, and asking myself often, "What is the good of it all? What does anything matter? Is it not far wiser, like the Duke, to seize all the fun, and care nothing about anything else?"

And to-night upon my restlessness the loveliness of the northern night had a strangely soothing effect, which yet, in the background, so to speak, greatly increased my dread of returning to the old life, with its perpetual ache.

And there was the Duke beside me—tall, subtle, graceful, beautiful as a woman, yet with the strength of a man, to wrap one round.

I remembered that his reputation was none of the best, that his past would not bear probing; but was there any man's except Di's that would? Even Bobbie had sown a plentiful crop of wild oats.

So I let myself drift, and more and more alluring grew the thought of those strong arms. I was so tired—so sick of it all.

Yes, I—Maud Cardew—the successful actress of the day, with all her life before her—had to confess that night to a nausea that seemed to embrace everything.

So the danger grew—so the hour tempted—so the dreaming night lulled my better self to sleep.

When at last the Duke stepped near I did not move, but let him fold me in his arms.

(Next Tuesday I will tell you of an accident that befell me.)

A Woman Now.

A Story Proving that Love is the Key to all Happiness.

"You won't marry me, Ida?"

"No, I think not. I'm quite sure not," added Ida Morny, after a second or two of hesitation. Guy Hardwick looked earnestly at her.

"But why not?"

"I don't love you," returned the sixteen-year-old damsel, with extreme frankness.

"Ida, you are cruel."

"No, I am not. At least I don't mean to be cruel. Oh, Guy! what made you fall in love with me? We were having such a nice time out there playing champion croquet games and getting up tableaux and charades and going on picnics. And now it's all spoilt."

"Ida," said Guy passionately, setting his teeth together, "you are a mere child. You haven't an idea what love means—apart from chocolate creams and new ball dresses," he added bitterly. "What made me fall in love with you? Because I couldn't help it. And now you refuse to give me back so much as a heart-throb in return."

"And I can't help that," retorted Ida, naively. "Don't look so cross, Guy. You frighten me."

"Because I am in earnest, Ida. Try to think of this as a woman should. Try for once to lift yourself out of the trivial world that surrounds you, and tell me from the very depths of your heart if you do not think you can love me."

Little Ida Morny began to cry.

"I don't want to love you," she sobbed. "I don't know why I should get married. I'm very happy as I am. Mamma says it is time enough for a girl to think of matrimony when she is twenty-five years old. And I am only sixteen."

"There," interrupted Guy, bitterly, "that will do. I looked for an ocean of deep, solemn sweetness in your heart, I find but a shallow pool, reflecting back the shadow of transient events—and that is all. Good-bye, Ida. Forget that I have made a fool of myself—if you can!"

And he strode away, biting his lips, and tearing at his long, black moustache as he went.

Ida looked after him with quivering dimples and tearful, velvet-blue eyes.

"I don't know what he means," said this little, half-blossomed bud of womanhood to herself. "I am sorry I have offended him, but I couldn't help it!"

And she went back to the hotel for her hour of guitar practising, feeling a little bewildered and a little regretful,

Digitized by Google

just as she did when her pet greyhound ran away from her!

Just at the entrance to the laurel walk—a wild, sylvan spot that overlooked the blue gleam of the sea—Hortensia Carey met Mr. Hardwick. A tall, Juno-like woman of thirty, with soft, swimming, Oriental eyes and a face that was a dream of beauty in itself.

Hortensia Carey had come to Shackleton-on-Sea to get a rich husband. Hortensia liked Mr. Hardwick and she didn't like "that insignificant little mite of an Ida Morny," and Hortensia, snugly shielded behind the trees and bushes, had heard every word of the declaration of love and its refusal.

"Strike while the iron is hot!" said Hortensia to herself "There's many a heart caught in the rebound, and why not Guy Hardwick's?"

So she glided forward with upturned eyes shining softly beneath their long lashes.

"Mr. Hardwick, you are sad! You look troubled!" she murmured sympathetically.

"Troubled!" he echoed, moodily. "There's not much in the world but trouble."

"And you say that!" cried Hortensia. "You! Now I, who am only a woman, might utter it with reason!"

Guy looked into her Cleopatra-like face. Strange that he never before knew how beautiful it was.

"Will you take my arm down this steep hill?" said he. "And tell me what you mean by those last words?"

Hortensia knew how to avail herself of the golden tide of opportunity. Guy Hardwick was just in the mood when a man wants relief from himself. And the upshot of it was that he invited her to go out for a row after sunset.

"Don't ask me if there is anyone else you prefer," sighed Hortensia. "I am accustomed to place myself in a secondary position."

"There's no one I should prefer to you," said Guy slowly. "No one, at least now."

* * * * *

"Engaged!" cried Ida Morny, dropping her croquet mallet. "Guy Hardwick engaged! I don't believe it!"

"I saw the ring myself on Hortensia Carey's finger," said Mrs. Openwell. "She told me. She's proud of it, and well she may be, for Mr. Hardwick is by all odds the finest young fellow here this season. I don't quite like Hortensia, but she is very handsome. They will make a splendid couple. Quick, Ida; they are waiting for you to play—it is your turn!"

And Ida gave her ball a thump with the mallet, vitally damaging her partner's play, and not in the least knowing what she was about.

She went home and looked into her mirror.

"Yes," she said to herself, "I thought so! I'm only a little, insignificant creature, with pale cheeks, senseless blue eyes and hair like flax! Miss Hortensia Carey has eyes like black stars and the height of a queen. She's worth loving—but I didn't think Guy would have forgotten me so soon!"

And then Ida began to cry, she didn't quite know why.

"I think I'm tired of Shackleton-on-Sea," she said to herself. "I mean to write to Uncle Theodore to come and take me home. I suppose they'll be married at once, and Miss Carey won't return to Wortham at all. I won't go to the wedding!"

Of course the contemplated nuptials of wealthy Mr. Hardwick and the beauty of the season made plenty of gossip and considerable sensation. It found its way into the newspapers, no one knew how (except, perhaps, Miss Hortensia herself). Reporters jotted down the number of Miss Carey's dresses and jewels, the probable number of thousands per annum which constituted the bridegroom's income—and Hortensia's superb face actually appeared on the front page of the illustrated papers of the day as the bride of the season.

Guy was indignant enough—but Hortensia only laughed.

"Never mind, dear Guy," said she. "People will talk—and, after all, they don't mean any harm."

But one beautiful summer morning Miss Carey's seat at the breakfast table was vacant—and scarcely had the fact been observed when someone cried out:

"Why, General Vincent is gone, too!"

Undeniably it was awkward for the bridegroom-elect. Still more so when a note, sent from the nearest post-office, gave him to understand that the lovely Hortensia had given back her heart to the General, an ancient suitor of hers, who had recently fallen heir to a large fortune.

The note was prettily worded; it contained sentimental regrets to Mr. Hardwick that the future they had contemplated so sanguinely could never be realised and prayers for pardon in the name of love!

Guy set his teeth together, but he made no comment. He took his fate as it was dealt out to him! Nay, perhaps, in his inmost heart he felt some thrills of relief that he was for ever separated from Hortensia Carey. For he had some time since made the discovery that he did not love her as a man should love the woman whom he means to marry.

He sat thinking of these things, his head resting on his hands, his eyes fixed with infinite mournfulness on the blue sea.

"Oh, Guy! I am so sorry! So sorry!"

And Ida Morny burst out crying.

"Sorry, Ida? Nay, keep your kindly sympathy for those that need it more," he answered, somewhat bitterly. "Am I not better off, by far, than if she had married me? She did not love me, you see. Nobody loves me."

"Guy, that is not true!"

"It is pretty well proven!"

She came nearer to him, with burning cheeks and glittering eyes. "I love you, Guy."

"Love, little one? Love? You do not know the meaning of the word."

She drew back, trembling and sobbing.

"You give me my heart back then, Guy? You do not care for me?" she uttered.

"God knows, darling, that you are the only person in the world for whom I really ever cared."

"Then won't you let me comfort you now? Won't you let me take her place?"

And looking into Ida's eyes Guy read the truth.

"When I wooed you before, darling, you said 'no,'" he whispered and his gaze grew more intense.

"But I have grown into a woman since then, dearest."

So they were married. And, I suppose, I might add that they "lived happy ever afterwards." For Love is the key to all happiness—and Love folded his silver wings above their nuptial altar. As for Hortensia, she was rich—and that was all she cared for.

Queenie Robins.

Digitized by Google

Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The eighth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

SEVENTH LIST.

37. The March gales this year brought on great distress, blowing over houses and doing other damage.

38. Before denying that Charlie Grafton was his accomplice, Harold Wood had strenuously maintained that they were in league.

39. He duns me for that money lent on March the twentieth, but I cannot risk a payment till Consols reach par.

40. Clara Haworth was a very idle child. She attended St. Mary's School, Hilford, for a year, but was then dismissed.

41. The Giant's Causeway is celebrated the world over. If by a goddess or god stone had been laid upon stone it could not be more wonderful.

42. "Is it true that George Robey hides in a pear-tree at the Tivoli?" "Yes, that is his latest eccentricity."

NAME ..... ADDRESS .....

Digitized by Google

Aunt Aster's Party.

A Story Introducing Picture Puzzles.

Nor for worlds would I say anything against the Picture Puzzle Competitions which at present are flooding our magazines. I am too greatly indebted to the idea. I am merely going to tell a story which shows that in amateur and inexperienced hands it could lead to trouble. Sherpin's hands were amateur to rawness and very inexperienced indeed.

It befell this Spring that he and I were spending a few days in a hotel at Cliffgate, a south coast watering-place. He was there by invitation of a certain Miss Aster who was husband-hunting for her pretty niece, Margaret Staines.

They always wintered at this hotel. I had run down from town because the three of them were there, and because I wanted to keep an eye on Sherpin when I wasn't using it for the purpose of looking at Miss Staines.

Aunt Aster didn't care for me because, though I was not a poor man, I was only a fledgling of a barrister; while Sherpin had twice my income and a suspicion of a peerage somewhere tucked away in *his* family, for all the world like a tendency to consumption. The situation was a hackneyed one enough, but that didn't mend matters for me.

The Mitre wasn't the kind of hotel that I should otherwise have patronised. It was rather the family kind, where you fraternised in an evening, and played games in happy domesticity.

That is as a rule. But at this particular epoch its visitors sat apart in small, preoccupied heaps, with pencils, and pages of little pictures, while the silence was only broken by a request for advice or an occasional triumph-shout as solutions of puzzles suddenly dawned.

Aunt Aster complained bitterly.

"It's perfectly absurd!" she said.

She is tall and angular, with rather mud-coloured hair, and a particularly ample nose and ears.

"Last year we had round games or music or recitations every evening! I brought down my Halma-board last night in desperation, but Major Ricketts was sitting looking at a picture-book and wouldn't stir! Could I tell him what town a horrid drawing of a sheep's liver and a sheet of water represented? I said I could *not*—nor did I."

"Why, those towns are as easy as anything!" broke in Margaret Staines, tossing a bewitching little fair head. "What's bothering me is a bottle of champagne and a sort of hotel, and——"

"Aylesbury!" said Sherpin, staring absently at his cigarette—we were sitting on the hotel verandah—"I found it last night for Mrs. Butcher. It's a beer-bottle."

"Yes, but unfortunately it happens to be a composer's name, Mr. Sherpin. Besides, how *could* you make a house into——"

"They—haven't a single one left!"

It reached us—a panting, disappointed cry from a stout lady, who was hurrying along the garden path. Up the verandah steps she struggled, and dropped breathlessly into the chair which I vacated.

Aunt Aster surveyed her with sympathy.

"Have you asked Mrs. Nettleship?" she said. "She told me last night that she'd still three half-crown ones to sell."

"*Sell?*" gasped the newcomer. "*Sell?* It's not *tickets!* How can I spare time to go to theatricals when I've not found two of the railway stations? The competition closes on Tuesday! It's a copy of Bradshaw I wanted! The man simply laughed at me—said he was sold out in a couple of hours!

"That old cat of a Miss Entwistle won't let me so much as glance at hers because we're trying for the same one, you know! A pound a week for life! There's a man in a halo and a pot and some roots and things! Oh, there's Mr. Salmon! I wonder if he could——"

She was up and puffing down the steps before we had time to comment. Aunt Aster gazed at her retreating figure.

"Last year," she said severely, "that was as nice, sensible a woman as you could wish to see! We were here for a month together. It's all these abominable picture-books! I never saw a set of people more completely unhinged!

"So far as any evening entertainment goes one might as well stay in a convent! I wanted to take the small drawing-room for one of my usual evenings next week, but I don't suppose anybody would come unless I drew them pictures of what they were going to eat and offered them a few thousand pounds for solving them. What's the matter, Mr Sherpin?"

Sherpin—he is round-faced and small-eyed, and always earnest as any deacon—had sprung suddenly from his seat.

"A notion!" he cried excitedly. "Ripping idea! Why don't you give a picture puzzle party? Names of people you ask, you know—someone draw pictures to represent 'em, and each person have a bit of paper and put 'em down, and there'd be prizes for those who got most right!" His eyes gleamed like stars behind a pair of gold-rimmed *pince-nez*.

"Oh, what a perfectly *lovely* idea!" said Margaret, clapping her little white hands.

Aunt Aster hesitated.

"I haven't the least doubt of its 'taking,'" she said grimly, "but I have no wish to be even remotely connected with those nursery amusements."

"But, auntie, you *must* move with the times! You know cards or music would fall awfully flat just now." Margaret's blue eyes were shining too. "Only who'd do the drawing, Mr. Sherpin?"

Digitized by Google

"Oh, er, I'd easily manage that if Miss Aster will allow me. Pin up some sheets of white paper, you know, and do it with black chalk, and give 'em two minutes to guess each picture. Take 'Entwistle,' for instance—just 'ENT' and a whistle—why there's hardly a name going you can't picturise in some way! It would be the event of the month!"

It occurred to me as I sat in moody isolation while they planned and suggested, and Miss Aster gradually thawed under Sherpin's enthusiasm, that he was probably right.

"I knew Sherpin and I had seen him draw in his college days, moreover, and I realised something of the enormity of his proposals. I ventured, in a moment or two, to raise the hesitating objection that with only twenty or thirty names from which to choose, his subject area would be somewhat limited. He said "Nonsense."

"Everybody hasn't an Oxford man's brains!" chimed in Margaret.

Aunt Aster added, with an inconsistency that took my breath away, that in getting up any sort of entertainment you invariably found that people seemed to raise difficulties for the sheer pleasure of doing so.

So I kept silence from good words or bad, and she sent out invitations that evening for the following Thursday. She was proud, I fancy, of the fact that her parties were considered "features," more or less, of life at the Mitre.

She informed me a day or two later that on finding that she hadn't a single refusal, she had given the entire arrangements into Sherpin's hands.

"He's so resourceful," she said. "And, between ourselves, Mr. Fenton, he's so keenly interested in anything connected with dear Margaret, that I have no fear of the evening not being a complete success!"

"In spite of the pictures?" I said unwisely.

She gave me one withering glance.

"I have always understood, Mr. Fenton, that the art of being a good hostess consisted in providing the kind of entertainment most appreciated, without considering one's own likes and dislikes. If you think that Mr. Sherpin's programme will in any way interfere with your enjoyment of the evening, I do beg that you will reconsider your acceptance!"

What could I do but grovel? I never saw Margaret in the daytime, since I was obliged to go up to town, and in the evening she and Sherpin were always studying *Public Property* or some other magazine, together because they were entering for the same competition.

At all events they couldn't sit hand-in-hand at an At Home, and perhaps I might get an opportunity on this occasion, at least, for a quiet word with her.

There seemed little prospect of it, however, when Thursday evening arrived, and I found my way into an already crowded drawing-room. Aunt Aster stood at its door smiling benignly as congratulations poured upon her from every fresh arrival.

"*Such* an original idea!" "*How* clever of you, dear Miss Aster!" "Delightful change from cards or music—not that your parties"—this from an old crock of a Major who lived at the hotel—"weren't *always* charming!" "Where is Miss Staines?"

She was moving among the guests, explaining, laughing, welcoming in a breath—the sort of charming, put-you-at-your ease woman that a man would like to see doing hostess in his own drawing-room. And at the far end of the room, with a black-board—a common or garden black-board—covered with sheets of white paper, stood Sherpin, chalk in hand, eager, perspiring, and issuing nervous directions.

"It simply couldn't be anyone else!" he said, beaming significantly at his hostess.

"Miss Staines has given you all cards with numbers, hasn't she, ladies and gentlemen? Now I'm going to draw—if you'll all kindly sit down—pictures on this board representing the names of people present.

"After each picture you'll be allowed two minutes to guess what I've drawn—I mean what name it represents, of course, and you'll kindly set down the name on your lists without, of course, saying it aloud. The winner will be the—er—lady or gentleman who has most names correct."

Aunt Aster sat down heavily and with an air of proprietorship beside a satin-wood table, on which reposed an inkstand and a cigarette-case, both in solid silver—her prizes to the successful competitors to be. She never did things by halves.

I surveyed my neat little card decorated with some thirty small spaces and corresponding numbers. (I treasure it yet.) Then I surveyed Sherpin. He "flaps" somewhat, with his particularly big feet and hands on most occasions, but at the moment he was literally hurling himself at the blackboard—which swung round and hit him at intervals—arms and legs working alike in the agonies of a portrayal of his artistic conceptions.

Presently he fell to one side. The sheet held a weird, globular object and a square block containing hieroglyphics of some kind. (Sherpin always did write a most villainous fist.)

"Pumpkin!" screamed a certain old Mrs. Appleton triumphantly from the front row of chairs. She was very deaf, by the way, and had absorbed the directions with difficulty. "It's a pumpkin—let me see—Cinderella—Cinderella—what's that coin in the corner?"

Digitized by Google

"You mustn't speak—you mustn't speak!" cried a score of voices.

"Dear madam, it's a football!" corrected old Major Ricketts—"a very well drawn—eh? Oh, beg pardon! Not speak? No, of course not!" He made excited signs to the old lady, who was still saying "Pumpkin!" triumphantly and explosively.

They had been helping each other for the past week in a competition for a certain weekly, and I suppose habit was too strong for him. The room was staring at the board, for the most part, in agonised perplexity.

"Would you—might I ask, is the foliage intended to be *inside* the pot?" queried a timid voice.

"*Foliage?*" said Sherpin. "Oh—er—well, that's got a bit rubbed—" he scored his drawing violently—"that's a '20' and 'c-w-t'—but I mustn't help you, you know!" he added playfully.

"A seat, does he say? Well, I should never have recognised it—never! Meant for Dr. Seaton, I suppose," said Mrs. Appleton across three women to the Major.

I made an entry on my card, having already divined that the appellation in question was her own. Sherpin, a trifle redder in the face than usual, intimated that the first two minutes had expired and turned over his sheet. "But that hardly gives us time to *see* it, even!" objected one, Mrs. Nettleship excitedly.

"Oh, nonsense," said Sherpin cheerily. "Two minutes is quite long enough for any intelli—I mean for anyone but an—good Heavens, Mrs. Nettleship, what is it? You're not going? There's one coming now that even *you* will see in a—I—I mean—I say I'm sure I——"

Mrs. Nettleship had risen from her chair. She has the reputation of being a touchy woman, and gave Sherpin a glance that would have annihilated a braver man and swept—looking neither to right nor left—from the room.

Under the circumstances, and in the uncomfortable silence that followed, an attempt at a delineation of a few stiff leaves and a vessel that would promptly have sought the bottom of any sea, fell a trifle flat.

Aunt Aster was looking uncertainly towards the door, and Margaret was looking uncertainly at Sherpin. I edged a little nearer to the board.

"*Now* I shall puzzle you," he said, laughing nervously. He flapped round the board a third time, and when he stepped aside we saw a sketch of a man who knelt at a woman's feet and kissed her hand. At least that was what Sherpin meant it for, and all, I am convinced, that he intended to convey.

But there was only one man in the hotel who had a long and fiercely-pointed moustache—a man whose interest in a certain lady visitor was a matter of general comment—and Sherpin had somehow managed to bestow one upon the kneeling figure in his drawing.

"Why, it's Mr. Spooner! Look at his mustashys!"

It was the shrill, distinct voice of the seven-year-old daughter of a friend of Margaret's, allowed among the throng by special concession and declaiming now with pointing finger.

"Hush, dear, hush," said Sherpin, in politely annoyed tones. "You mustn't say when you find them out. Beastly little nuisance!" he added in lower tones to a neighbouring guest.

There was a moment's silence—the silence of sheer consternation.

"But, good Heavens, Sherpin, that's going a bit too far! Turn it over, man," muttered his neighbour hastily.

"Upon my word, sir." The individual of the pointed moustachios jumped up from his seat. The lady of his attentions was already crying quietly in the shelter of a curtain.

"Will you pass on to the next, Mr. Sherpin?" said Aunt Aster frigidly, with intense presence of mind. Sherpin was staring at the agitated room in blank astonishment.

"Pass on to the *next?*" he said. "But they've not had their two minutes! They've not—good Heavens"—as comprehension dawned suddenly, "you didn't think I meant it for a *picture* of Mr. Spooner? That is, of course, it's *meant* for him—I mean his name—but it's only a man—*any* man—spooning with a girl! It's not Miss Walters! I say, I hope nobody thinks I——"

"Get *on*, you chuckle-headed ass!" I said fiercely. I was at his elbow by this time. Perhaps my tones carried authority, for he turned his sheet mechanically over. I saw the folds of a distant curtain move convulsively, and realised that Margaret was trying to comfort an almost hysterical guest. Aunt Aster had begun to talk loudly about the weather.

"I'm going on," said Sherpin, with nervous rapidity, curling a big foot round one leg of the black-board as if he were trying to climb it. "You'll *all* guess the next, I'm afraid! In fact, there's only one person in the room it could possibly represent."

I caught my breath apprehensively as I heard the soft whirring movements of the chalk.

"Only one lady," Sherpin repeated himself as he worked. "I should say person—it could possibly—represent. *There* we are!"

"I don't know that I was surprised to behold a drawing—the best that he had yet effected—of a peculiarly large-eared donkey. There was a quick gasp from the room.

"Why, I thought you'd all fly to your cards!" exclaimed the exhibitor airily. "It's so palpable! You wouldn't be in this room at this moment if it wasn't for this donkey—I mean this lady—I mean, oh, I've forgotten something."

He rushed to the board again and added a minute "T. E. R." to his handiwork.

"It simply couldn't be anyone else!" he said, beaming significantly at his hostess.

There was another moment of breathless silence. I think everyone was too scared even to smile. Then I saw Aunt Aster rise in awful majesty. And at the same instant I realised that the switches controlling the electric light of the room were exactly behind me—and that the gods had delivered the situation into my hands. In a second I had the assembly in total darkness, and Sherpin by the collar.

"Get *out!*" I whispered fiercely. "Go and get into bed—*under* your bed—anywhere—only disappear."

"But—but—but——"

I choked him at the third conjunction with a still stronger grip, and his voice broke in an odd gasp. I heard my own explaining to the company that something had unfortunately gone wrong with the electric light, but that if they would move on into the small coffee-room—where I knew that refreshments were spread—I had no doubt that matters could speedily be put right.

Someone opened the door, guests and hostess filed out obediently, and I shut it after them. When I turned on the light again Sherpin was not there. Nor was he to be seen when I, too, went to eat in the coffee-room.

I explained unblushingly to Aunt Aster that he had been taken suddenly ill, and I think she said that she was glad to hear it. We finished the evening with music and games—under my direction, since she and Margaret still seemed a trifle unhinged and grateful for supervision.

When Aunt Aster said good-night to me she pressed something into my hand. It was the silver cigarette-case.

* * * * *

It was actually Margaret herself who won the £500 that *Public Property* offered for the deciphering of its picture puzzles. She heard the news on the very day that I persuaded her to say yes to a question that I had been trying to ask for some time, and she went straight off and bought the motor-car in which, at the moment, we are enjoying a very golden month. I think Sherpin is abroad somewhere.

As I said at starting, I, of all people, have least cause to complain of the Picture Puzzle idea. I owe it a wife, and a particularly delightful honeymoon. I merely wanted to point out that in inexperienced hands it has its dangers.

Evelyn Glover.

Digitized by Google

The Lady Marion.

The Story of a Lost Identity.

Happily it is not often that titled women find themselves in such straits as did Lady Marion Grant on the death of her father. She was barely nineteen, and the Earl had left her penniless, having lost his whole fortune gambling at Monte Carlo.

He had quarrelled with every member of his family; he had changed his name, and, in his selfish anger, had refused to tell even his only child what his true name was.

That he was a Peer, he admitted, that she was entitled to the prefix of "Lady" he allowed, but she knew that Grant was not her real name, nor did her father leave any papers that enlightened her on the subject of her birthright.

There she was, a girl with a few kind friends, who knew her as Miss Grant, and were ready to give her a home till after she had recovered the first shock of her grief; but then she must go out into the world and fend for herself.

One thing at least her father had done for his motherless child, he had given her an excellent education. She could speak four languages, sing, play both the piano and violin, and was, besides, thoroughly well read.

Mrs. Harmon, the kind friend at whose house she was staying, strongly advised her to answer any likely advertisements for a finishing governess for girls, though, as she said to her husband, her very youth and beauty would go against her obtaining such a post.

Every morning the girl would anxiously scan the papers, but she found that when she applied in person for an engagement, her youth was always against her.

Well, something must be done, so she resolved to assume a middle-aged appearance, and persuaded her friend to lend her some money to buy a brown wig, in which streaks of grey hair were discernible.. This, with the addition of a pair of spectacles, immediately put quite twenty years on to her age, and in this disguise she sallied forth one morning in answer to a letter requesting her to call and see Lady Worthampton in person.

Terribly nervous, lest her trick should be discovered, and at the same time feeling like a child playing a practical joke, Miss Grant rang the bell of one of the houses in Park Lane.

It was immediately opened by the footman, who informed the butler that it was another lady come to see her ladyship about the situation of governess. Marion was at once conducted to the boudoir, where Lady Worthampton was writing.

A tall, beautiful woman, still in the thirties, rose as she was announced, and stretched out her hand in kindly welcome.

At a glance, her eye took in the slender figure, and high-bred air of the grey-haired woman before her, quite a different type from those who had hitherto applied for her situation.

"Your letter sounded so promising, Miss Grant, that I thought I would ask you to come and see me; I am devoted to my three little girls, and very anxious about their welfare, so I thought it best to see everyone before I engaged their services."

"Yes, indeed, Lady Worthampton, I am sure it must be a great anxiety choosing a governess, for it is such a responsible post," Marion answered, in a clear, sweet voice, that certainly seemed very fresh and impetuous for the owner of grey hair.

Lady Worthampton gazed at her curiously, and the girl felt herself growing red.

"You have, I understand, had no previous experience of teaching?"

"No, I have always lived with my father, we travelled about a good deal, and it was not until his death that I found myself compelled to earn my own living."

Here the girl's voice faltered, and Lady Worthampton gave a sympathetic movement.

"But," she continued, 'I have always been devoted to children, and I think have generally succeeded in winning their affection. As regards the actual teaching, I do not fancy you will find me inefficient."

The mother smiled, she liked this woman, why, she could not say, but there was a strength and self-reliance about her, that contrasted favourably with the somewhat depressed specimens of humanity that had hitherto sought the post.

"I have three children, as I told you; I will send for them. so that you may judge whether you are likely to be friends. The eldest is just at an awkward age, fourteen, and requires rather tactful handling."

In response to her summons, the butler went for the children, who shortly after burst into the room, the youngest one hurling herself on to her mother, in a manner which showed the perfect confidence of their relationship.

"Maisie, dear, don't you see there is a visitor here," laughed her mother reprovingly. "Edith, dear," this to the eldest girl," go and shake hands with Miss Grant, and you, Mary. She is kind enough to wish to be your new governess."

In spite of the spectacles Marion's winning smile was irresistible, and the three girls were soon talking to her quite naturally, whilst she seemed to enter into their interests in a wonderful way, considering those grey hairs.

Lady Worthampton was delighted, and when she had dismissed the children, turned to Miss Grant with a smile, saying:

"You may think me foolish and impetuous, Miss Grant, but I am still young enough myself to believe in the intuitions of children. I know now that you will make mine quite happy, and be able to make them mind you, for they will do anything for people they like, and they do like you. About salary, shall we say sixty pounds a year, till we see how things get on?"

"Thank you, I shall be very pleased indeed to accept your situation, they are dear children, and you," she added, "you are so kind to me, compared with the other people I have seen."

"I hope, Miss Grant, that when I have had time to know you better, we may be real friends," responded Lady Worthampton, as she shook hands with her new governess, and bade her good-bye till that day week.

* * * * *

It is three months later, and the London season is in full swing. Worthampton House is packed with guests, amongst whom is its mistress' brother, Captain Lancelot Hardcastle.

The children are all devoted to Uncle Lance, and lure him up to the school-room on every possible opportunity. But good as he has always been to them, his visits to them this time are more frequent than ever, for there is a certain mystery surrounding Miss Grant that he has made up his mind to fathom.

She bears a curious likeness to a girl, almost a child, whom he once met abroad in one of the smartest French hotels, living there with her father, and yet he remembered quite well, that Mr. Grant had told him that he had no relations

Digitized by Google

living of that name, on one occasion when he chanced to ask him if some Grants he knew were any connections.

The governess moved like a girl, talked like a girl, but yet had grey hair. That she was not what she seemed, he felt quite certain, and to-day he had confided his suspicions to his sister, who merely laughed at him, and told him not to interfere with Miss Grant's private affairs. She and the children were very fond of her, and that was the principal thing.

"I know, Molly, ask Miss Grant down to your fancy dress ball next week, and then let us see what we shall see," said Captain Hardcastle enigmatically.

"Certainly, I had intended to do so; I am quite sure that Miss Grant dances beautifully!"

That evening, after the children had gone to bed, Lady Worthampton went up to the school-room, and found the governess sitting by the open window, with her glasses off.

Instantly the door opened she sprang to her feet, and placed them on her nose, but not before the intruder had caught sight of a pair of exquisitely black-lashed blue eyes.

"I have come to ask a favour of you, Miss Grant, I want you to come down to my ball next Tuesday, and if you will let me, I should like you to hire a fancy dress for the occasion, and send the account in to me.

"And now comes the favour. I want you to choose whatever costume you like, but to let no one know what it is, not even the children, only myself. It is an odd request, I know, but there's method in my madness, and you know I am your friend," she added, laying her hand on Marion's arm.

The girl was too astounded to speak for some seconds. She had so longed to go to that ball, she was still not nineteen, and passionately fond of dancing.

"You are very, very good to me," she faltered at last, "and I should love to come down, but about the dress, I have some things by me that will do quite well."

"Then, that is settled; mind you do not tell anyone," said Lady Worthampton as she waved good-bye, and went downstairs to her guests.

Marion had all at once had an idea. Was it possible that by this means she might learn her own identity? She had three curious ornaments, which her father had warned her never to part with, heirlooms, he said they were, she would wear them on Tuesday.

As for a dress, she would wear her own beautiful golden hair in ringlets round her neck, whilst she would buy a large Duchess of Devonshire hat in purple velvet, with white ostrich feathers.

She had in her possession a dress of pure white satin, with a curious device in seed pearls, that had been her mother's, and which, with a little alteration, would fit her perfectly. As for the jewels, they were three brooches, composed of sapphires and diamonds, of remarkable beauty and design.

How she got through the day on the eventful Tuesday, she didn't know, even the children could not help seeing that she was excited about something, though they had no inkling that their mother had asked her to the ball, at which Royalty was to be present.

Captain Hardcastle told her that he knew she was coming, and wanted to know what dress she was going to wear, but his utmost intreaties only won the response, "a white one."

At nine o'clock that night, when she was dressing, a knock came at her door.

"Who's there?"

"It is only I, Miss Grant, may I come in?" said Lady Worthampton.

Marion felt herself in a dilemma, she could not refuse her kind employer entrance, but how would she take the deception of age she had practised on her?

However, there was no time to think, for again came the voice:

"Please let me in—I won't tell,"

Marion opened the door, and hastily retreated into the shadow of her room, in case anyone passing should catch sight of her.

"Miss Grant!" exclaimed Lady Worthampton in astonishment, as she saw standing before her one of the most beautiful girls she had ever set eyes upon.

"Oh, forgive me, I had to make myself look old, no one would take a young governess, and I really didn't deceive you about my teaching," she said imploringly.

There was a pause, and then Lady Worthampton spoke, as only one woman in a million would have been generous enough to speak.

"Child, for you are little more than that, I forgive you, for it is many a long day since I saw anything so lovely," and the elder woman took the girl's pure, beautiful face between her hands, and kissed her, as if she had been her sister.

"No wonder Lance has lost his heart to the governess, though he has never seen you like this, has he?" she inquired, holding up one of the golden tresses in her hands.

"Not since I was fifteen," was the blushing response. "I remembered Captain Hardcastle quite well, for he dined with my father one evening when we were in Paris, and I was still a child in short frocks, but he does not remember me," she added.

"No, he has never spoken to me of this, though it was at his suggestion that I asked you to say nothing about your dress to-night. My dear child, what a lovely frock, where did you get it?"

"It belonged to my mother," said Marion, with a pleased smile.

"I don't think you have told me all about yourself, have you dear?" asked kind Lady Worthampton, as she saw the three wondrous brooches.

"I have told you nearly as much as I know myself, dear, kind friend; there is a mystery about me, my father was an Earl, and I am his only child, but he had quarrelled with his family, and changed his name to Grant, and died suddenly without revealing the secret of his real name to me."

"Then you are Lady——"

"Marion, and I know no more," returned the girl.

"My dear child, this is romantic enough for a novel. Well, come with me, if you are ready, and we will solve this mystery between us some other time. I am so glad, dear child, that you came to me, for I have an idea, but I will not raise your hopes, that your identity may be revealed this very night. Oh, I came to bring you this from Lance," and as she spoke, Lady Worthampton took up an exquisite shower bouquet of white roses, and lilies-of-the-valley.

Captain Hardcastle was drawn aside by his sister for a brief moment, when he entered the ballroom, where she stood awaiting her guests, and listened to her explanation of the beautiful girl who stood at the entrance of the conservatory.

"Molly, you're a brick! Montague is coming to-night, isn't he?"

"Do you mean—do you think?"

"I am almost sure that Lady Marion will prove to be the child of Montague's eldest uncle."

An hour later Captain Hardcastle led the belle of the ball into the conservatory to rest, after her last dance with him. Marion, for it is she, had never looked so lovely, a pink flush was on her cheeks, the light of love in her eyes, and a joyous elasticity in her step that had been lacking ever since her father's death.

Half the men in the room were in love with her, and it was with a thrill of sisterly pride that Lady Worthampton noticed her brother lead the girl to a secluded niche.

"Marion, my darling, I could not wait any longer, you know that all these weeks past, I have grown to love you. You know, do you not, dear, that it is Marion, and not Lady Marion that I want for my wife?"

"I know," answered the girl, raising her lovely eyes to his, so that he might see the answering love to his own. "I know," she continued softly, "that you loved me as the poor, middle-aged governess, and oh, Lance, I believe I have loved you ever since that night more than three years ago, when you

Digitized by Google

gave me some chocolates, because my father would not let me go with him to the opera."

"My love, my little Marion," answered the enraptured soldier, as he folded her lovely form in his arms, and kissed one of the golden curls that lay near his lips.

"But Marion, do you really not know what your father's title was, have you no clue?"

"None," she answered, "only these three brooches I now wear are heirlooms."

Scarcely were the words uttered, than two men entered the conservatory, talking in low and agitated tones. On seeing that one of them was the Earl Montague, for whom he entertained a strong dislike, Lancelot drew his betrothed into an alcove shaded by a huge palm-tree, and laid his finger on his lips to enforce silence.

"I tell you, Caston, it must be the girl, how else could she have those brooches. You know they have always gone to the eldest daughter of the head of the house, to come back to the family at her marriage, or the coming of age of the daughter of the next in sucession.

"These brooches have been searched for everywhere. I know that my uncle had them in his possession when he left England but so cleverly did he disguise his identity that we have never been able to find out what name he assumed. He may indeed be living now, for all we can prove to the contrary."

"And what is it your intention to do?" asked the man addressed as Caston.

"Do? Why, nothing; do you think that after all these years I intend to try and find a claimant for either the title or the money? I am not quite such a fool, my dear fellow!"

"Blackguard!" muttered Lancelot to himself, "you will have to sing another tune presently."

Marion meantime had listened breathlessly, and when the two men had walked off, turned to her lover, saying:

"Did they mean me?"

"Yes, dear, undoubtedly they meant you, those jewels are recognised."

"Then I am——"

"Lady Marion Montague. My darling, do you know what the world will say of me?" he inquired anxiously, as he drew her arm within his own.

"Of you, no, what should it say?"

"That I gained your consent to become my wife, before you knew who you were, and what a high position you held in the social world. Darling, when your claim is made, you will be a very rich woman, whilst I am a comparatively poor man, will you also think that of me?"

"Lance, do you doubt my love? I was so, so happy, and you go and spoil all by thinking me capable of such mean things," and, greatly to Captain Hardcastle's dismay, Marion, who was overwrought and excited, began to sob quietly.

"Hush, my darling, my sweetheart, I cannot bear your tears, I know you love me, I know you trust me, thank God for it. Sweet, you mustn't cry, you must be very, very happy again; look up, dear, and let me kiss away those tears," said her lover, as, lifting up her face to his own, he bent and kissed the long black lashes and sweet, pure lips, until they were once more smiling back at him.

But time had passed quickly and the lovers had, in common courtesy to their hostess, once more to make their appearance in the ball-room.

* * * * *

But little more remains to be told. Backed by Lord Worthampton's money, the lawyers soon succeeded in proving Lady Marion's identity, and Lord Montague has to disgorge a good jointure out of his immense income.

Directly the case was settled, Lady Marion Montague became the wife of Captain Lancelot Hardcastle, and was presented at Court on her marriage by her sister-in-law, Lady Worthampton, who lived to bless the day when she took a fancy to the grey-haired, young-voiced governess.

As for the children, they were inconsolable at the thought of losing her, and their aunt's visits were always looked forward to as red-letter days in the schoolroom.

M. Hoey.

Your Editor Chats.

FIVE more lists of sentences will appear in connection wiih the competition, making a total of twelve to complete the set. You will find the seventh list on page 591.

When readers raise points on which they are in doubt, they must not expect to have them answered by post, as some of them do. This of course would give them an unfair advantage over other competitors. If a point of sufficent general interest is raised it will be answered in this column of the paper each week.

Below will be found some further points raised by readers, together with my comments thereon:—

Question: Before you made the rule regarding the making of names of stations out of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from a word, I had filled in several such. May I cross them out or must I obtain fresh lists?

Answer: Provided you cross them out so that the other names are not rendered illegible, it will not be necessary for you to get fresh lists.

Question: May the name of a station be formed from letters in the middle of a word, or must they be taken from either the beginning or end?

Answer: Provided the letters are consecutive, it does not matter from which part of a word they are taken.

Question: If the name of a station occurs in more than one of the sentences of a list, may it be put down each time?

Answer: It is clearly stated in the conditions that the names of stations should be put down each time they occur.

IN a few weeks' time a series by Winifred Graham, the talented authoress of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," which appeared in SHORT STORIES, and other tales, will commence. This series will be something quite different from anything we have had in SHORT STORIES.

THERE will also start shortly a new serial by Blanche Eardley, who is at present contributing her experiences as an actress to *Pearson's Weekly* under the title of "Tinsel Triumphs." This lady's writing is quite new to readers of SHORT STORIES, but I am sure you will all be very charmed by it. Watch this column next week for fuller particulars of our two new attractions.

I WONDER how many of my readers have sent their contributions to the FRESH AIR FUND yet. The earlier you send them the better, as the number of children to have a day in the country depends upon the money received. It naturally takes time to arrange for the parties, so if contributions do not come in very freely at the end of Spring and beginning of Summer it means that there must be many little faces wearing—instead of a bright, happy look—a look of intense disappointment that the summer has gone and they haven't had a FRESH AIR FUND excursion, just because the money came too late to be able to be used this year, or because it didn't arrive at all.

If you can't send so much as you would like to *now*, send what you *can* afford *at once*, and the remainder as you are able. Contributions should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, FRESH AIR FUND, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., who will forward collecting sheets on application. All amounts will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

NEW SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister, maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Ussher Interviews the Gamekeeper.

A THRILL of terror shook Lady Tarleton as she sank down upon the leaf-strewn soil of the plantation, crouching, like a hunted thing, into the wild undergrowth of the coppice near her. All the artificial courage that her unscrupulous nature had drawn from the atmosphere of wealth and comfort in which she lived, and had her selfish being, seemed suddenly to have deserted her. She was no longer "my lady," but that trembling and pitiable wretch, a guilty creature in hiding.

Shivering in her spasm of abject cowardice, she lay concealed, scarcely daring to breathe. The sound of crackling twigs and rustling leaves that marked the progress of the two men continued for another moment, then she heard the gamekeeper's voice again, and listened intently. He had moved with the detective to a more distant point, and his tones, though audible, were less distinct.

"Here was where I stood, Mr. Ussher, sir," he said, "just by this broken poplar. I was on my way to look round the rabbit-warren on the far side of the park. We've no end of trouble with those poaching iron-workers, they've dogs as dumb as fishes, and as clever as any Christian."

Lady Tarleton raised herself on her hands and knees and peered out among the thinner growths of the leafy screen that sheltered her. Some few yards away the gamekeeper and Mr. Ussher had paused—they were gazing across the open glade that framed the low, dark pile of the mausoleum.

"And as I was about stepping out on to this bit of lawn," pursued the gamekeeper, "I saw by the light of the moon two figures coming towards me, and going, as it were, in the direction of the Tower, too, for they were bearing over to my left a bit. Both were women, and they were walking quick, and had their heads down. One was taller than the other, and walked in a stiff, old-maidish way, the second was stouter and rolled in her gait."

"Now what," demanded the detective, speaking for the first time, "what do you mean by that? Do you suggest that she was drunk?"

"Oh, dear no," was the answer, "I should say short of breath. When they got near me I could hear her pant. And they were hurrying enough to make anyone short-winded that was given to stoutness. That was what made me think of her ladyship, who is stout and a trifle uneven in her walk."

"Quite so," responded Mr. Ussher, "but you told me you saw this person's face. Now what I want you to do, is to go out there into the open to about where they were when you say you saw her face. I will remain here and ascertain if my own sight will carry to the point in question."

"Very well, sir!" assented the gamekeeper, and he strode out into the glade.

Lady Tarleton bit her lip, she was beginning to shiver again. There was something unnerving about the spectacle of the two men so deliberately experimenting with a clue which, she knew, might lead, all too disconcertingly, to herself, and betray, in a flash, the buried secret of years.

Out into the moonlight stalked the gamekeeper. Halting between the rim of the plantation and the mausoleum, he faced the detective and took off his hat. Further removed from him than Mr. Ussher, Lady Tarleton could plainly

Digitized by Google

perceive, in the brilliant, steel-blue radiance of the spring moon, his simple, good-natured visage.

Mr. Ussher nodded gravely by way of a silent commentary on the experiment, and followed his companion into the glade. The unsuspected watcher sprang up and darted to the verge of the protecting shadow cast by the plantation. If it were at all possible, she must hear what else the detective had to say.

"Humph!" he exclaimed, thoughtfully, "so far the thing is feasible. But you told me that this—this female was closely muffled. How, then, could you see her features?"

"That was not difficult," rejoined the other, "it was cold, and she evidently wanted to wrap herself up a little more. One end of her wrap was thrown about her neck and face. She drew it off, and flung it round her again. The second woman, the woman of your photograph, who wasn't wrapped up much, helped her with it, and for an instant I could see both of their faces. The smaller woman was quite plump in feature, with a short nose and a pouty sort of mouth."

"Could you," queried the detective, "could you tell what colour her hair was?"

"No," said her companion, "she had a little shawl on over her head, and then the wrap she wore about her was thrown, as I tell you, round her shoulders, and brought, like a veil, across her face. Even when she took the wrap off I couldn't see her hair or her dress. But what struck me was that she was a dumpy, middle-aged, sourish kind of body, between you and me, Mr. Ussher, the spit of my lady."

"Humph!" coughed Mr. Ussher. "Well, I'm obliged to you, I'm sure. It may lead us somewhere, and it may not. But as her ladyship may not be too pleased at this particular female resembling her, you needn't be too free in mentioning the likeness. It's quite sufficient for me to know about it, and I don't want you to come to any loss through me."

"I'm obliged to you for the hint," answered the gamekeeper, a certain anxiety creeping into his tone, "is there anything else I can show you while we're here?"

Mr. Ussher reflected. "No, I think not," he decided, "but tell me, why didn't you follow the women?"

It was the gamekeeper's turn to cough. "Well," he responded, "fancying I had seen her ladyship in person, I concluded the best thing I could do was to mind my own business and get on to the rabbit-warren."

"Discreet, I own," admitted the detective, "but, from my point of view, regrettably so. However, it can't be helped. Which way did they go?"

The gamekeeper indicated the route, it led towards Groudle Tower. Mr. Ussher noted it critically.

"Well," he observed, "shall we get back?" And he suited the action to the word by commencing to retrace his steps to the plantation. He was bending his course to the very spot whence Lady Tarleton was straining her eyes and ears.

"This is a shorter road, sir," called his companion. Mr. Ussher diverged accordingly, and Lady Tarleton breathed again.

Not until the two men had vanished in the night did she dare to steal out, and make, with the utmost caution, by devious, leafy ways, for the Tower.

TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

"Quite Possibly Coincidence."

"INDEED, sir, and it's very natural to be interested in murders and such-like, and you a newspaper gentleman and all, they do say. I know I always take care to see the papers myself if there's been a big murder, or some great criminal is being tried for his life."

Paul Jerome smiled. "You are exceptionally candid, Mrs. Linton," he observed, "but I fancy most people are of

(*Continued overleaf.*)

EXTRACTS FROM TWO OF MANY MEDICAL REPORTS

"This addition to the list of patent foods is a very palatable and appetising article. By a series of digestive processes *in vacuo*, it is reduced to a form which furnishes a most readily digestible food, remarkable for its pleasant flavour. Experimental usage has proved this Food to be potently alimentive."—*Quarterly Medical Journal.*

"I have analytically examined Moseleys Food, and find that the relative proportions of carbo-hydrates, hydro-carbon, and proteid constituents are most excellently blended, so as to secure its being well digested by the delicate stomachs of children and invalids."—*Dr.* ———, *F.R.C.S., Bradford.*

UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS.

(HUNDREDS RECEIVED).

"My child, six months old, has derived great benefit from Moseleys Food. The poor little thing could not retain nourishment, and was daily becoming worse, in fact it was nothing but skin and bone. Moseleys Food was recommended, which I tried and have since used. I feel sure it has saved the little one's life."—*Mrs. Ellen Goodwin, 29 Foundry Lane, Hyde.* Jan. 9, 1903.

"I have found nothing to beat Moseleys Food. I have four children three brought up on the breast, one on your Food, and the last one has thriven better than the other three."—*H. Townsend, 32 Millow Street, Accrington, Lancashire.*

"Our last baby has been brought up on your Food *from its birth* and is now five months old, and the bonniest child we have had."—*Edward Dufty, 4 Bradbury Street, Sheffield.*

MOSELEYS FOOD Ltd., Sample Dept., Stockport.

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

your opinion at heart. And so it was here that the poor creature was found dead?"

The housekeeper pushed still wider the door of a small room on the topmost storey of the Tower, and, passing in, drew up to the roller the partially-lowered blind.

The apartment thus flooded with light looked into the central courtyard of the Tower, and was one of a row of servants' bedrooms, each scarcely larger in area than a billiard-table. Its furniture comprised a bed, a toilet-table, a wash-stand, and a single, cane-seated chair. The boards showing between the strips of carpet that diversified the floor of the room were dark with age.

Painfully neat as was the tiny chamber, it had an air of grim and desolate loneliness. Mrs. Lintot, with her rosy, withered cheeks, and sweeping gown, seemed out of place in it.

"Yes, sir," she said, "it is. Not a very homely corner to die in, I'm afraid, but my lady is very seldom here, and Davenal never had a proper room of her own. Not that she would have made it any more comfortable, sir, as some of us do, with nick-nacks, and bits of her own things. There was no sentiment about Hannah Davenal, or Mrs. Hartigan, as I suppose we ought to have called her."

The war-correspondent was examining the lock of the door. "There is no key to this?" he queried.

Mrs. Lintot shook her head.

"It's against the rules of the house for servants to lock their doors," she explained. "I have all the keys of this storey. As it happens, this room was shut up for a little while after the murder, but I soon had it open again, the sight of that locked door made me nervous, and servants are superstitious enough, always. I'm going to have the place turned into a box-room, no one will ever want to sleep here."

"A very tactful proceeding," said Paul Jerome, absently, and he crossed to the window. It faced the tall and ruined mass of the tower that had given its name to the antique residence, and it was practically inaccessible from without.

The point had not been without interest for him, and he nodded thoughtfully, as if registering a mental memorandum. Then, with a final glance round the little chamber in which so dark and mysterious a tragedy had been consummated, he passed out on to the landing.

Bare, irregular, low-ceiled, and lit by a couple of thick panes set between the huge rafters, it was a curious part of the Tower. The war-correspondent surveyed it—nook by nook.

"Is that the only means of access to these regions?" he inquired, indicating the winding staircase that left the landing at a distant angle, and plunged into the lower portion of the house.

"There is no other way up, sir," responded the housekeeper, closing behind her the door of the apartment from which they had emerged.

Paul Jerome traversed the landing. "Where does this lead?" he asked, peering down a narrow, doorless, dusky archway.

Mrs. Lintot came to his side.

"That is a blind passage, sir," she answered, "in either wall are cupboards—huge and rambling places. We never use them, though they are big enough to sleep in, excepting for the shelves and that they have no windows."

The war-correspondent took a stride into the passage, pulled open one of the ranged doors, and glanced in. As he bent forward to penetrate the gloom, he lost his balance and staggered into the darkness—there was a step before him which he had failed to notice.

"Dear, dear!" cried Mrs. Lintot, hastening to the threshold of the cupboard, "have you hurt yourself, sir?"

Paul Jerome reassured her. He had steadied himself against what he felt to be a tier of shelves, and proceeded to get back into the narrow corridor.

In its less equivocal light his hands attracted his attention they were thickly soiled with fine black dust. He took out his handkerchief and wiped it off. Abruptly he checked the action, contemplating the smeared finger-prints he had made on the white linen.

His lips pursed reflectively as he glanced back towards the cupboard. Again he checked himself, and pushing to the door of the shadowy recess, turned away with a jest at the expense of his grimy fingers.

Mrs. Lintot was apologising for the presence of the dust. "But, indeed, sir," she added, "no one ever troubles about those cupboards, they are unused from year's end to year's end. There must needs be such places in a big old house like this, sir."

"Of course, of course," assented the war-correspondent; "however, I shall be glad to 'wash the filthy witness from my hands,' as Lady Macbeth has it. So I will make for my room. Many thanks for piloting me round."

He slipped a couple of half crowns into the housekeeper's palm, cut short her acknowledgments, and dived downstairs out of the regions he had obtained her assistance in exploring.

Once in his own apartment he did not seem particularly anxious to cleanse his soiled hands. Instead he got out a beautifully laundered handkerchief, and began deliberately to impress his thumb and finger prints upon its snowy surface. Ultimately he had recourse to a magnifying glass and inspected the prints. His expression, as he busied himself in these proceedings, was absorbed to a degree.

At last he did wash his hands in a bowl of cold water, and plucking his bed-room candle from its holder, pocketed it. A hasty reconnaisance, and he stole out of the room, retraced his steps to the upper storey, and darted into the corridor between the rows of unused cupboards. A moment, and he was ensconced in the very cupboard into whose depths he had so unwarily staggered.

The spurt of a match lit the place with the glow of a vesta, he pulled the door to after him, lighted his candle, and examined his surroundings. He was in a species of store closet, reached by a step from the passage without. In it there was space sufficient to permit of his standing upright before a series of deep shelves.

The shelves were an eighth of an inch thick with dust and showed plainly where his clutch at one of them had brushed the wood clear. On a lower shelf, conspicuous in the direct illumination of the candle, were other and similar marks. But these did not show the wood beneath, nor were they clear and sharp. Fresh dust had settled on them, blurring and partially filling the indentations.

Paul Jerome's face fastened upon them and his eyes sparkled. Then he shook his head with a sudden dubiousness.

"Quite possibly coincidence," he muttered; "the murderer may have hidden here, and he may have tripped down that step as I did. He may have clutched at the shelf as I did, and as I did, left his sign-manual in the dust. But so—bar the hiding—might any one of a dozen innocent persons; a new and curious housemaid, for instance."

He shook his head, put his foot on the step, and made as if to blow out the candle.

"And yet," he said, "those marks on my handkerchief, grey, uneven, powdery, unmistakably suggested the prints on the pillow that was used to smother the chloroformed Davenal."

His soliloquy was interrupted. The door had a lock, and the lock a projecting, box-like case. About the lock, on the light green paint, exceptionally well preserved, of the door frame, were the prints of ranged finger tips.

The war-correspondent examined them. Then he opened the door and inspected the frame without—it was clean and unsoiled. He returned to his examination of the interior. The finger-marks had evidently been left by the hands of someone grasping the edges of the lock-case, as if to hold it to.

Some pressure had been used, and the formation of the skin-ridges peculiar to the tips of the human thumb and fingers was perfectly reproduced. Paul Jerome studied them for five minutes. At the expiration of that time he blew out his light and went back to his room.

Digitized by Google

Short as had been his occupation of this apartment, he had already transformed it into a species of "den." A small portmanteau full of manuscript and miscellaneous papers lay open on the bed, a metal ashbowl and a cigar-case stood on the toilet table, hard by a collapsible tube of paste.

Near the table was a folding deck chair, with the war-correspondent's initials painted on it, and a big blotting book thrown down in the seat of it. In an adjoining corner lay a pile of London "dailies."

Paul Jerome displaced the blotting book, pulled the deck chair to the corner, and commenced to burrow in the heap of newspapers. After hastily scanning several copies of a particular journal, he picked up, with an exclamation of satisfaction, a loose sheet of the same paper, a London "halfpenny morning" famous for its enterprising interest in criminology.

The sheet he had fished up was an illustrated one, and among its contents bore a couple of photographic reproductions. Each represented a set of finger-prints, and beneath them was a bold inscription—

THE GROUDLE TOWER MURDER.

How the Mysterious Husband's Innocence was Established.

HARTIGAN'S FINGER-PRINTS AND THOSE FROM THE PILLOW.

The war-correspondent sought out a penknife, cut away the illustration, and stuck it on to a piece of blank paper. Then he marched off with his candle and the piece of paper to the topmost storey.

Entering the windowless cupboard that he had submitted to so curious an examination, he set down the candle on the ledge, and applied to the finger-prints on the door-frame a portion of the paper he had brought with him. He took the precaution to damp it, and laying it cautiously against the soiled paint, he rubbed it lightly with the smooth end of a vulcanite fountain-pen.

Completing this extempore transfer process, he removed the paper. It bore a clear copy of the prints on the frame. He compared them with the newspaper copy of those found on the pillow. They were to all appearances identical.

Paul Jerome's face was grave as he extinguished the candle and carried off the sheet of paper upon which he had set up a parallel so deadly and yet so futile. For the discovery he had made could not be said to throw any definite light upon the problem that the war-correspondent, piqued into action by certain puzzling circumstances, had finally determined to solve.

TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

"Guy is Sweet on Her."

"CAN you spare me a moment, Edward?"

Edward Stormont arrested the progress of his steadily-travelling pen and looked up at the speaker. Lady Tarleton had come noiselessly into the library where he sat at work.

"Certainly, Adeline," he said; "I am quite at your service." He laid his penholder on the rack of the silver inkstand before him and waited.

Lady Tarleton sat down.

"I wanted to ask," she went on, "if you are likely to be staying at the Tower much longer before going south."

The explorer twisted his moustache, he was endeavouring to concentrate his mind upon the question thus abruptly presented for consideration.

"I can hardly say," he decided; "you see, I began to make notes for my new travel book, and note-making drifted into writing. And though, as you know, I am far from partial to the Tower as a place of residence, yet I have all my specimens and diaries here and unpacked, and the writing fit seems to have come on me. So, on the whole, I fancy I shall not leave Groudle for a month or more."

He glanced inquiringly at his sister-in-law's face; it bore a far from pleased expression.

"But don't let me interfere with your movements," he pursued. "That business about your unfortunate maid will

(*Continued overleaf.*)

A Woman's Life Prolonged.

Bile Beans Cure Headache, Nausea, and Debility.

Disorders of the digestive system and liver are so common and give rise to so many painful symptoms that the following facts, told by Mrs. J. Philip, of Warren Street, Fitzroy Square, London, N.W., cannot but prove useful to many readers. Said Mrs. Philp:—"Some months ago I began to experience severe pain in my head, accompanied by sensations of ringing and buzzing. Afterwards I became dizzy at short intervals, and I had all sorts of curious sensations, difficult to describe, while at times my sight became so blurred I could scarcely see. After a while to this torture was added an inability to keep food down. If I took a cup of tea in the mornings this would start sickness and vomiting, which made my head almost burst with pain. Then my appetite declined, and I became very weak and hopeless, and felt altogether knocked up.

I consulted three doctors in succession. One told me my condition was the outcome of worry and being indoors too much. Another said I had had my system impaired by cold and so on. All gave me various medicines, but none succeeded in making me the least bit better. I had been suffering between three and four months in the way described, and was still getting worse, when the wife of a friend of ours happened to call and express great enthusiasm about Bile Beans, which she said had worked a wonderful cure in her case. This friend pressed me hard to try them, so I sent for a box. You could scarcely imagine now the condition I was in at that time or realise what a marvellous change Bile Beans have made in me. They cleared away the headache and noises quickly, made me feel in the best of spirits, brought back my appetite, my flesh, and clearness of skin, in fact they have now built me up into quite a healthy happy woman. How many I've taken I can't tell you as I've given a lot away. They are so wonderful a medicine I can't resist giving them to anyone I see suffering, and I know I've done a lot of good in making them known.

There is an old lady neighbour of ours who is nearly eighty, and who would doubtless have been in her grave now but for my giving her some Bile Beans. She was very low down, and now she's so cheerful she seems likely to be among us for years yet."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are an absolute cure for headache, debility, indigestion, biliousness, weakness, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, anæmia, and all female ailments. Bile Beans may be had of all medicine vendors, but insist on seeing the full name: Bile Beans for Biliousness.

Miss MARIE TEMPEST says:—

"I have used your EUGOL TOOTH POWDER for some time, and I consider it the most delightful preparation ever brought before the public." A bottle of Eugol Liquid Dentifrice, also box of powder or paste, post free for 2s. 6d., with plan for return of your 2s. 6d. for four minutes' easy work.

EUGOL CO., 52 Berwick Street, LONDON, W.

SULPHOLINE LOTION.

For clearing the Skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

probably never come to a trial. I suspect that the police have no real clue to go upon. If they do secure a capture, there will, of course, be a hearing at petty sessions before the trial proper, and you will have to come north for that. But I should not, if I were you, tie myself here to avoid what is an improbable journey. As for me, Lintot will see that I don't starve."

"And Mr. Jerome," queried Lady Tarleton, drily.

The explorer suppressed a smile.

"Jerome is settling down on to a book also," said Edward Stormont, "or so I understand. He is to republish his war-correspondence, with notes and a preface. So both of us will be able to work quietly and entertain one another between times. Though if both you and Irene flit he may not elect to stay." And the explorer chuckled.

Lady Tarleton frowned. "I prefer that he should," she retorted; "Irene is quite sufficiently enamoured of muscle and daring as it is. She might get into a dangerously silly mood if this soldier-scribbler went on making eyes at her. And, as you know, she is practically betrothed to Guy Vanbrugh."

"Is she," said Edward Stormont; "well, my dear Adeline, marry your daughter to please yourself. If I had a daughter, and Jerome took a fancy to her, I should give them both my blessing. He is a sterling good fellow, and could be trusted to retain permanently both a woman's love and respect. Not that I've a word to say against Guy. I wish I had a son like him. If Irene were mine she should choose for herself."

He shook a pile of manuscript into order, noting slyly the dark sneer that crossed his sister-in-law's features.

"But a truce to these romantic problems," he added. "I shall stay on at Groudle and keep Jerome, if he will let me. Yet you must consider yourself free to get back to town, or, if you like that better, abroad. But I'll wager you, should Jerome be really in earnest about Irene he will haunt her in London or Paris as easily as here."

The explorer laughed mischievously, and Lady Tarleton shrugged her shoulders. "That is as it may be," she rejoined, "but I don't think I shall remain at Groudle, for many reasons."

"I shall be sorry to lose you," said Edward Stormont politely, "but no doubt we shall soon meet in London, especially if Jerome decides not to give me his company."

Lady Tarleton's brows knitted, but she evaded further discussion of the subject.

"I am not certain precisely when I shall return to town," she answered, "but probably it will be within the next few days. Groudle has completely got on my nerves."

Her brother-in-law rose to open the door for her. Then for the first time, he noticed her pale cheeks and drawn features.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, "I believe you are right. You are looking quite hipped and off-colour. And yet I'll be sworn a morning's shopping in town would pull you round. How you women do miss your beloved Bond Street. But there, to speak seriously, Davenal's death must have given you rather a nasty shock."

"Bond Street and Davenal apart," said Lady Tarleton coldly, "Cumberland has never suited me. I haven't Irene's rude health or your cast-iron constitution. Well, the afternoon is slipping away, and I will leave you to your work."

With a glance at the clock on the mantel, Lady Tarleton quitted the library, and directed her steps towards her boudoir.

At the foot of the stairs she came face to face with her daughter. Irene was dressed in the hard felt hat and dark habit of the English horsewoman, and she was singing a snatch of her song about the Scottish gentleman who went to war and returned home again to his lady love.

Her mother barred her way, to regard her disapprovingly.

"Irene," she remarked, "I wish you wouldn't sing about the house—it is so school-girlish. And, by-the-bye, you may be interested to know that we go back to town shortly. Your uncle will probably remain with this newspaper friend of his. But I must get home to Portland Place and civilised society."

She had fired her bolt with characteristic suddenness and brutality, and, with a cruel little smile, passed on. But she had marked the swift pallor that whitened momentarily the roses of Irene's cheeks. They flushed again, slightly, and Irene herself pursued her own way in a stern assumption of indifference. But her step was slower and nothing more was heard of the song with which she had begun the descent of the stair.

"The little fool cares for him," muttered Lady Tarleton, "or, what is as bad, she thinks she does. I must cut that knot, and, if possible, get Guy to town, away from——"

She stopped, reflected an instant, and turned from the stair-foot to the hall-door. It was open, and Irene had just mounted the tall brown hack—the groom was about to spring to his own saddle. Lady Tarleton went to her daughter's stirrup.

"Irene," she said, "you might ride round by the Close and ask Guy to dine with us before we go to town. Say to-morrow, or even to-night."

Irene gathered up her reins.

"I'm not going that way, mamma," she replied calmly, "and yet, as it happens, I am bound on Guy's business, something he asked me to do. You will have to find another messenger."

Lady Tarleton's face relaxed.

"Oh," she observed tolerantly, "may I ask the nature of your commission?"

"I am going to pay a call," said her daughter, "on a little *protégée* of his—the girl who did that beautiful piano-screen. She is quite an artist, Guy says, and we ought to take an interest in her, for she is actually a niece of poor Davenal's. I set this afternoon apart to go and see her."

She bent from her saddle to add a subdued sentence.

"As a matter of fact," she said, "I believe Guy is sweet on her, if the truth were told."

And having, with this stab, paid her mother handsomely, Irene shook her hack into a trot and rode off before Lady Tarleton could reply.

A sinister cloud settled on her mother's features. Lady Tarleton was looking across the park in the direction of the glade where, within sight of the Lennox mausoleum, she had held a certain grim colloquy with Dennis Hartigan.

TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

"That Name was Moira."

"How clever you are! Do you know, Miss Davena, if I were not going back to London any day now, I should ask you to give me some lessons."

Irene Tarleton laid down the pieces of finished and unfinished ribbon-work she had been examining, and glanced about her.

"What a quaint, delightful room," she said, "this is the sort of place that I should like to live in. Some day, when I am my own mistress, I am going to have a cottage in the country and spend no end of time there, far from London seasons and scandal, and shopping, and all the things that one is supposed to live for."

"I—I should be very glad to show you how to do the ribbon-work," answered Moira gravely, passing over the other's outburst of confidence; "it is very easy—all but the designs, and most people prefer to buy those."

Her visitor laughed and gathered up the folds of a voluminous habit.

"I'm afraid," Moira was told, "that I really should not have the patience to learn to do it really well, Miss Davenal, and I hate to botch things. So possibly it is just as fortunate I am not staying in Groudle. But I'm glad to have met you, I'm sure. If you can design like that, you ought to be painting

(*Continued on page 604.*)

Digitized by Google

ALFOSCO REG.

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Call or Write

ALFOSCO REG.

Design No. 899 10/6

Design No 899. 10/6.

New Style. Costume with tight-fitting back, pouch front, made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new **Zibeline Cloth**, also in their **Specialite Serge** and **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Navy, Royal, Green, Oxford, Fawn, Brown, Purple, Light Grey, Dark Grey, Black, etc. Stylish Costume with bell sleeves, tastefully trimmed fancy braid. Bell-shaped Skirt. Wonderful value for **10/6.** Sent carriage paid, 6d. ex. Skirt alone, only **5/6**; carriage 5d.

WRITE FOR OUR **NEW SKETCH BOOK** AND **Catalogue of Bargains** Containing hundreds of Illustrations of Latest Novelties for the Summer Season, Sent with Patterns, post free. Call or write.

4/11 4/11

Design No. 1019. 4/11.

Costume Skirt in good-wearing Black and Navy **Serge**, trimmed two flounces and braid; lined throughout linenette. Price only **4/11**, carriage 5d. In ordering, give length of skirt in front and size of waist. Post orders receive prompt attention. Every lady should see Allen Foster & Co.'s New Illustrated Catalogue of Skirts, Blouses, Corsets, Underskirts, &c., sent post free.

Design No. 456. 13/9.

Stylish Costume. Special value for 13/9. The bodice has a blouse front with tight-fitting back and is lined throughout; trimmed tucks, silk strappings and small buttons. Skirt also trimmed tucks, silk and buttons to match bodice. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new **Zibeline Cloth** (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect), or in their world-renowned **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth**, all colours. Patterns post free. Price only **13/9**; sent carriage paid 6d. extra. In sending order please give bust measurement under arms, length of sleeve, size of waist, and length of skirt in front.

LOWEST LONDON PRICES. UP-TO-DATE STYLES

Design No. 456 13/9

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

SEAWEED AS A MEDICINE

Its Marvellous Effect upon the

STOMACH, LIVER, KIDNEYS AND BLOOD

SEAWEED possesses a natural strengthening, healing, and purifying power, infinitely greater than ordinary medicines. This is now regarded as conclusive by eminent authorities, who recommend it daily, since Veno's Seaweed Tonic was first introduced.

A pure palatable extract of Seaweed is one of the principal ingredients of Veno's Seaweed Tonic. This remedy excels in the cure of INDIGESTION, WIND, HEADACHE, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS, KIDNEY TROUBLES, WEAK AND PAINFUL BACK, TORPID LIVER, FEMALE TROUBLES, POORNESS OF BLOOD, and "HABITUAL CONSTIPATION." Its most brilliant effect is produced in Stomach, Liver, and Kidney Troubles. The remarkable cures Veno's Seaweed Tonic effects even in the worst cases is positive proof of its great therapeutic value.

Ask for VENO'S SEAWEED TONIC, 1/1½ and 2/9 per bottle, at Chemists and Drug Stores.

FREE TRIAL BOTTLES. A free trial bottle of either Veno's Seaweed Tonic or Veno's Lightning Cough Cure, and a free copy of "**The People's Medical Instructor**," an indispensable treatise on diseases for the household, a complete family doctor in itself, will be sent to any address on receipt of 3d. for postage from

THE VENO DRUG CO., Hulme, Manchester, Eng.

BORAX

Extract of Soap

To the woman

who tries it for the first time, the superiority of Borax Extract of Soap comes as a pleasing revelation. Whether used for washing clothes or for house-cleaning it proves itself so much better—both in effectiveness and labour-saving—than anything ever used before, that its regular use is assured.

The fact that thousands of commonsense women will have none other is convincing proof of its merit.

Try it in your spring clean.

Sold at usual dry soap prices by Grocers, Oilmen, and Stores everywhere.

FREE SAMPLE PACKET & SOME NOVELTIES if you name this Paper and your Grocer.

BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT MAKERS TO THE KING.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham

instead of doing fancy-work. Guy says you're a born artist, and now I've seen you I believe him."

Moira blushed.

"Sir Guy doesn't judge my work very critically, I fear, Miss Tarleton," she responded evasively, "but it was kind of you to come and see me. Sir Guy told me about you when he ordered the piano-screen, and I took quite an interest in doing it for you."

Irene's eyes sparkled.

"Oh," she said, "and what did he tell you about me? That I am a tom-boy and knockabout, trying to pretend I'm not grown up? That he and I have always been the best of friends, till our people wanted to make us something more, and we decided we knew better than they did? That I have a designing mother whom I have to bully unmercifully and that, as a consequence, I am in perpetual hot water? Did he tell you all this?"

"Miss—Miss Tarleton," stammered Moira, but Irene only laughed the more.

"Oh, it would all have been true," she said; "however, I suppose I mustn't take it for granted he was quite so confidential. Good-bye, for the present," she added, "the world is a small place, and I have a presentiment we shall see more of one another. I think you and I would get on famously."

Moira accepted the extended hand—it clasped hers warmly. Then, with a nod, and a little wave of her whip, Irene stepped out of Hawthorn Cottage to mount and ride off, her groom at her heels. She looked back to smile and nod again at the girlish figure that had followed her to the garden wicket.

As Moira stood, pondering the significance of Irene Tarleton's conspicuous friendliness, some one passed before her. She glanced up, saw Dennis Hartigan, and retreated. He entered the wicket, throwing away the end of a strongly-smelling cigar.

"Well," he inquired, "and how is the dad?"

"Getting on nicely," said Moira; "I will ask nurse if he is to have any visitors to-day."

The ex-steward checked her with a gesture as she went towards the cottage.

"Never mind," he answered, "I didn't come to see John—it's you I want a chat with."

Moira had gained the threshold of the little hall; she paused and the vaguely repellent air with which she had addressed him became more marked.

"I'm afraid I'm rather busy, Mr. Hartigan," she said; "you see I am dad's housekeeper, and while he is ill I have a great deal to do. The nurse is very kind, of course, but nurses have to be made comfortable."

Dennis Hartigan lounged on the step of the cottage, fingering his peaked cap.

"You're dad's housekeeper, are you," he repeated; "now that's not as true as it would be if you put it another way. You are John Davenal's housekeeper, and I'll be bound you're a good as well as a pretty one. But you don't keep house for your dad, because——"

He stooped to peer into her face.

"Because," he said, "John Davenal isn't your father, and well he knows it. And you know it, too," he added slowly, "or so I understood from John when he and I had a chat a day or two ago. But there's something you don't know—something you went diving the other evening near the breakwater to try and find out."

Moira was gazing at him with wide, penetrating eyes. Perceiving, by instinct, the ex-steward to be coarse, brutal, and dissipated, she had disliked him from the first, and to discover him on a sudden intimately acquainted with her and her doings troubled and bewildered her.

"I don't see," she parried, "how you can tell what I know or what I don't. And if dad told you more than he has told me, he has reasons for it, and I prefer to wait until he chooses to tell me what there is to tell himself."

Dennis Hartigan made a grimace.

"There are things John Davenal isn't certain of," he said, "and it's those that touch the heart of the matter."

"Then how do you know them if he doesn't?" queried Moira bluntly.

The ex-steward grinned.

"I didn't say I did know them," he rejoined, "but I'm a rare hand at piecing a tangled skein. And, besides, there's such a thing as a lucky hint. By chance I've lighted on a track that may lead us to the truth. Come here."

He beckoned her out of the porch, and from the step of the cottage pointed to a barque lying in the outer bay. Her sails were shaken out and the blue peter, the signal of her approaching departure on a voyage, was flying at her fore.

"In that ship," said the ex-steward, regarding her with a fierce craftiness out of the corner of a bloodshot eye, "there is a sailor, booked for a trip to Valparaiso—the barque sails in an hour or two. This morning he is probably sober, last night he was drunk—drunk at the Half Brick Inn, where I was having some supper. When the wine is in, boys, then the wit is out."

Moira looked at the speaker with a kind of impatience.

"Well," she asked.

Hartigan laid a hand on hers.

"Now I've found out what set you diving by the breakwater," he pursued; "it was Kit—I know that yarn of hers about the drunken sailor and his 'This is out far enough—over with it.' Though what made either you or John connect that with your arrival in Groudle I don't know."

Moira's face showed him that he had hit some part of the target at which he had aimed. He tapped her hand significantly.

"My drunken sailor," he said, "was, it appears, all one with Kit's, and thanks to his loose jaws and the Half Brick liquor I can tell you what was thrown over—a little coffin, empty, and with a name on it. That name was Moira."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Moira, breathlessly "but what else—Moira who?"

Hartigan shook his head.

"That's what I couldn't get out of him," he said, "but you might have better luck—sailors have a weakness for a pretty face. I did try to see him again this morning, but he had gone aboard and his ship is on the point of sailing. How would it be if——"

He stole another anxious glance at her.

"If I was to run you aboard of her," he added; "for—half an hour?"

(To be continued.)

The Art of Beauty.

By A TOILET SPECIALIST.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Price 1s., post free 1s. 2d.

Some of the Seventeen Chapters are:

The Cure of Stoutness—The Cure of Leanness—The Figure—Bad Complexions, How to Cure Them—The Hair in Ill-health—Moles, Warts, and Superfluous Hair.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To the Book Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, W.C.
Please forward me a copy of "THE ART OF BEAUTY," for which I inclose the sum of one shilling and twopence.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Digitized by Google

"Dont's for the Deaf."

The things that deaf people should avoid are well summed up in a few brief hints entitled "Dont's for the Deaf," part of an article on "Hygiene of the Ear," contained in the latest number of the "Review of Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases." Turning the leaves of this popular magazine one finds also much of interest in the way of general information on deafness and different forms of catarrh. The routine treatment of the aural specialist comes in for much criticism, and new methods are thoroughly discussed, preference being given to the new treatment based on outward applications behind the ears. This treatment, the Drouet method, which can be applied at home, is said to have effected a large number of cures in cases where other methods failed. Those who are interested in the subject can obtain a copy of the "Review of Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases," free by post, by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. Another special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged if given by correspondence.

The Editor advises patients, however, whenever possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are, in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultations.

Rupture Free Cure.

Wonderful Home Treatment that Cures Without Pain or Loss of Time.

Dr. W. S. Rice (Dept. 953), 8 & 9, Stonecutter Street, London, E.C., has invented a method that cures rupture without pain, danger, operation, or an hour's loss of time from the day's work. To avoid all questions of doubt, he sends free to every sufferer a free trial of his method, and there can be no earthly reason why anyone, rich or poor, should not avail themselves of this generous offer. As an instance of this remarkable method, the cure of Mr. John Foulkes, 317, Beaufort Street, Toxteth Park, Liverpool, is well worth noticing. Mr. Foulkes is 74 years of age, and had suffered from a scrotal rupture for nine years. He used Dr. Rice's home method of treatment, and in a short time was cured sound as a bell. A full description and sample of this remarkable method of cure will be gladly sent upon application. It has cured thousands. Do not hesitate to give it a trial. Write at once—to day.

Mr. J. FOULKES.

COMPLEXION AND HAIR.

We receive, from day to day, many letters from readers asking us how to clear the complexion of Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, etc. The most marvellous preparation that we know of is "PERALIA," manufactured by the "Peralia" Perfumery Co. of North Shields. This wonderful liquid, while it instantly beautifies the complexion, and removes all obnoxious excrescences, such as pimples and blotches, is perfectly harmless, and its purity is guaranteed by a well-known medical man, whose certificate accompanies each bottle. Besides acting on the above, "PERALIA," by frequent application, will remove wrinkles, crow's feet, and, in fact, entirely rejuvenate the features. This is due to its penetrating action, as it makes its way through the pores of the skin, exerting its beneficial effect on each and every one, and cleansing it effectually from dirt, callous growth, and decayed tissue. "PERALIA" is, in our opinion, the only beauty specific that does its work in such a thorough and scientific manner. It is the most successful remedy we have to aid us in the fight against the ravages of either Time or Disease. If you feel that your beauty is waning, or that fine complexion being marred by disfiguring humours, you should at once have recourse to "PERALIA."

We cannot speak too highly of this preparation. Readers can obtain it of all chemists, in bottles, at 1s., 1s. 6d., and 2s. 6d., but the proprietors offer to send a sample bottle, under cover, on receipt of the price, and 3d. postage.

In conclusion we must say a word for their unique preparation "CRIMPOLINE" for curling the hair. Most women, and all young girls are extremely anxious about their hair being trim, and yet having that graceful curly appearance that is so attractive. Unlike other curling fluids, "CRIMPOLINE" is not sticky, nor greasy, and curls the hair so much that once the hair becomes curly you need not continue using it. The rain does not take the curl out of the hair either after using "CRIMPOLINE," so you need not fear that washed-out, bedraggled look again.

It is used and recommended by Madame Patti, Vesta Tilley, Minnie Palmer, etc. Prices, 1s. 9d. and 2s. 6d. per bottle. When sending for, or ordering, "PERALIA," we advise you also to send for "CRIMPOLINE." Don't forget the address, "PERALIA" PERFUMERY CO., Dept. 14, Camden Street, North Shields.

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

"In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED).

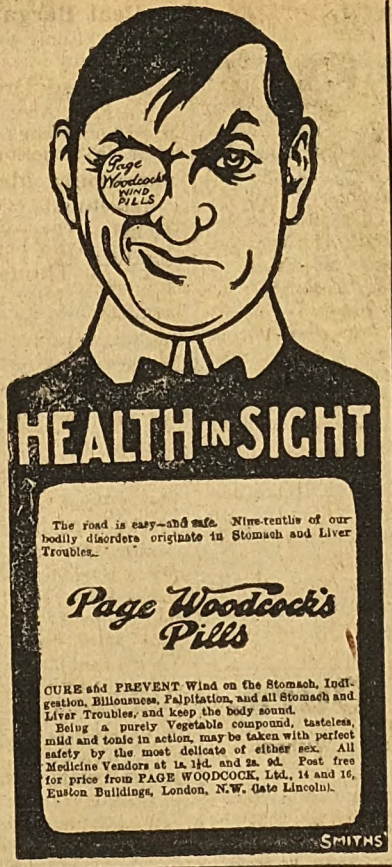
Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/4, 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by **Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard-Bishop, Devon.**

From Factory

to Rider.

How Does This Suit You?

Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. **£14 14s** Grade for **£6 10s** Write, H Dept, Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 12 Approach, London Bridge, London.



HEALTH IN SIGHT

The road is easy—and safe. Nine-tenths of our bodily disorders originate in Stomach and Liver Troubles.

Page Woodcock's Pills

CURE and PREVENT Wind on the Stomach, Indigestion, Biliousness, Palpitation, and all Stomach and Liver Troubles, and keep the body sound.

Being a purely Vegetable compound, tasteless, mild and tonic in action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex. All Medicine Vendors at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. Post free for price from PAGE WOODCOCK, Ltd., 14 and 16, Euston Buildings, London, N.W. (late Lincoln).

SMITHS

GIVEN AWAY

with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 486).

Paper Pattern OF THIS

GIRL'S SMOCKED BLOUSE

(10—12).

Of all Bookstalls & Newsagents.

PRICE 1d.

SPECIAL BARGAINS

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE £ d $

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER,** jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

POWERFUL FIELD GLASSES by celebrated optician (Le Gautier, Paris); 30 miles range; 8 achromatic lenses (guaranteed), nickel silver eye-shades, in leather sling case; sacrifice **10/6.**

GLADSTONE BAG, 24in., superior quality, real brown cowhide, strong leather straps, nickel silver fittings, &c.; in perfect condition; unsoiled; cost 4 guineas; accept **25/-**; approval.

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH,** extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6.**

MAGNIFICENT 5-ROW PEARL COLLARETTE; finest quality; mounted with four bars of lustrous Orient diamonds, in velvet-lined case, complete; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING,** 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6.**

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument. 12-fold bellows (metal bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

FEATHER BOAS; bankrupt stock, special bargains, real Ostrich Feather Boas, beautifully curly, perfectly new, in box colours, grey and white, black and white, and natural. Prices **10/6** and **12/6.** Original price 30/- and 42/-; each approval willingly.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH,** jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-.**

A full list of **Special Bargains,** New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, Pawnbroker and Jeweller
284 Brixton Road, London, S.W.

Hygiene of the Skin explains how the famous Natural **Icilma Water** and the preparations made with it keep the skin healthy and free from lines, chaps, chilblains, sunburn, rashes and irritations. The only absolutely safe Natural remedy for the complexion. Send 1d stamp for postage of free sample and book, ICILMA (Dept. 127), 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

Rider Agents Wanted

in every district to buy sample cycle at **special price** and take orders for us. Large profits in spare time. **1903 Models**

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake, Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory in any way.

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. Address Dept. 44B,

MEAD CYCLE CO., **Liverpool.**

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** repayable on demand. **2½%**

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free
C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!

PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.

A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

Digitized by Google

What was the Difference?

HE: "You haven't a mind above a new hat." She: "And you haven't any mind under yours."

What an Insult.

"I SUPPOSE you've never been kissed by a man before?" he said. "Do I look as plain as all that?" she demanded haughtily.

Fond of Arms.

CLARA: "I see Cynthia had decorated her room with guns, pistols, swords, and the like." Cora: "Yes, she always has been a great girl for having arms about her."

No Cloak Needed Then.

SHE: "There are people who use religion as a cloak." He: "I know it." "What will they do in the next world, do you think?" "Oh, they won't need any cloak there."

She Knew Something.

"I HAVE one request to make," said the pretty typine, when she had accepted her employer's proposal of marriage. "Name it, my love." "Let me select my successor at the desk."

Very Temperate Man.

GRIMSBY: "So you want to marry my daughter, sir! What are your principles? Are you temperate?" Fledgely: "Temperate! Why, I am so strict that it gives me pain even to find my boots tight."

Both Had Changed.

SHE: "It is ten years to-day since we were married. I notice a great change in you. You don't kiss me any more. You are not like what you used to be." He: "Well, you see, that comes from you, too, not being like what you used to be."

Spelt His Name Wrong.

SHE: "What makes you look so sad?" He: "I had hoped to be able to make my name go echoing through the halls of Time." She: "Yes?" He: "Well, after many efforts I've just succeeded in getting it into the papers, but, confound them, they've spelt it wrong!"

Mental, not Sentimental.

"I HAVE to help Johnny with his mental arithmetic every evening," said the young woman, "and it is a nuisance." "Do you—er—find that celebrated problem about one plus one equals one?" asked the young man. "I said mental arithmetic, not sentimental," said the young woman, with great dignity.

Not the Only Lunatic.

"DID you read this, dear?" said Mrs. Grigsby to Orlando the other night. "It's a strange case. A harmless lunatic imagines that he's a grain of corn, and will not go into the yard lest a chicken eat him. Isn't it an odd delusion?" "Oh, the world's full of such delusions, dear," said Grigsby. "I know a harmless lunatic who seems to imagine that she's a piece of cheese, and she will fly from a room when a mouse enters it for fear the little creature will devour her."

A Real Bargain Sale.

HE: "I only pay a shilling an hour for this boat." She: "That's why I like it. It's a regular bargain sail."

What Had Dropped.

MAMMA: "Alice, what happenedlas t evening? I thought I heard something drop in the drawing-room." Alice: "I think Mr. Templeton fell in love with me."

She Could Measure His Pocket.

HER RIVAL: "Of course you can't measure his heart by the size of the diamond in your engagement ring." She of the ring: "No, but I can measure his pocket by it."

Such a Thoughtful Girl.

CLARA: "She is an awfully thoughtful girl." Tom: "Indeed?" Clara: "Yes; she has trimmed her new theatre hat with a pair of opera-glasses for the use of the gentleman who sits behind her."

They Parted as Friends.

"WHAT a hold Maud seems to have on all her rejected suitors." "Why shouldn't she, the artful thing? She always tells a man, when she refuses him, that she is afraid to marry a handsome man because she would be so jealous."

He Liked the Musician.

"ARE you fond of music?" asked a stranger of the young man at the concert, who was applauding vigorously after a pretty girl had sung in a very painful way. "Not particularly," said the young man frankly, "but I'm exceedingly fond of the musician."

The One Who Guessed Lowest.

"YOU see, it was this way. They were all three so much in love with her and all so eligible, that to settle the matter she agreed to marry the one who should guess the nearest to her age." "And did she?" "I don't know. I know that she married the one who guessed the lowest."

It Wasn't Cheap.

AGED HUSBAND: "You are going to ruin me with your extravagance. You don't need that cape any more than a cat needs two tails. How often have I told you never to buy anything because it is cheap?" Young Wife (with an air of one who has got the better of the argument): "But it was not cheap; it cost ten guineas!"

A Difficult Question.

SHE was a bride of only three short months, but she had her troubles, and naturally made a confidante of her mother. "My dear child," said the mother, "if you would have neither eyes nor ears when your husband comes home late from the club you might be happier." "Perhaps so," answered the young wife, with an air of weariness, "but what am I to do with my nose?"

Not what was Expected.

"NAOMI," he said softly, as he gazed at the moon above them, "isn't the evening beautiful? Do you know, strange fancies throng my mind on a night like this. Every zephyr seems to bear gentle voices, perhaps from the spirit world. Do you hear such voices?" Silence for a moment. "I think I do, George." "What do they sound like to you?" "They are very indistinct, but they make me think that papa and brother Henry are calling the dog."

The Old Man's Sorrow.

"YOU have a daughter, have you not, sir?" said a minister to an old gentleman, with whom he had formed a casual acquaintance as a fellow-passenger. The old gentleman essayed to answer, but the question had strangely affected him. "I beg your pardon," said the minister, "if I have thoughtlessly awakened in your mind recollections of a painful nature. The world is full of sorrow, sir, and perhaps my question recalls to your memory a fair, beautiful girl, whose blossoming young life had withered in its bloom. Am I right, sir?" "No, not exactly," replied the old gentleman, sadly; "I have five unmarried darters, mister, an' the youngest of the lot is twenty-eight years old."

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Honeymoon Cloud.

"JAMES" was at a seaside watering-place the other day, and met an old college friend, who invited him to dinner, adding, "I'd like you to meet the wife." It appeared that the friend was newly married, and was in fact on his honeymoon. "JAMES" accepted the invitation. While at dinner, he made himself as agreeable as possible to both his friend and his wife, and on leaving thought he had made quite a good impression on the latter from a social point of view.

* * * * *

Later on he thought to return the hospitality, and invited the young couple to dine with him. In reply he had a curt refusal. On inquiry it turned out that "JAMES'" politeness to his wife had deeply offended his friend, his motives having been entirely mistaken. What can "JAMES" do in the matter? He says he was only agreeable to the girl in a social sense, and had no idea whatever of trying to attract her.

* * * * *

Of course, "JAMES," you do not know exactly that your friend has taken offence with you for the reason stated. It is only hearsay. If so, he must be an exceedingly foolish man, who evidently has very little confidence in his friends. You had better write him a nice letter, expressing your disappointment that the couple cannot accept your invitation, add a word of appreciation for their hospitality and let the matter drop. Young married couples are frightfully sensitive in such matters and it requires a very tactful man to avoid causing jealousy.

* * * * *

And, in future, when you again meet a young married couple in their honeymoon stage, have as little to do with them socially as you possibly can. Nine chances out of ten you will arouse the jealousy of one or the other, and probably without the slightest reason.

❦❦❦

Unfriendly Sisters.

"FREDA" is engaged and has been introduced to her sweetheart's family. His sisters, however, clearly show that they do not care for her, though she has made herself as agreeable as she could. It looks as though they wish to drive her to break off the match.

* * * * *

You should reply by showing your devotion to be unbreakable. That is an argument even unfriendly sisters cannot resist, and is the only one in your case. When they see that neither you nor their brother have even a thought of breaking off, they will soon come round, and in a very short time will try to make themselves agreeable. They will see that such bickerings must cease, or they will alienate their brother.

The New Venus and Adonis.

How is a man to know when a girl is paying attention to him? "S. D." has been meeting a girl for some little time, but has not made any overtures to her. She, however, never loses an opportunity of speaking to him, and hinting at future meetings.

* * * * *

It looks as though she is fond of you, and not backward in wishing to show it. Be careful, though there is no reason for you to be stand-offish. Take up the attitude of a friend, but avoid committing yourself, unless you are really fond of her yourself.

❦❦❦

Women Can't Get on with Him.

I HAVE a gloomy letter from "WEARY," who is thirty-three years old. He complains of the attitude of women towards him. They are cool, and sometimes rude. Any politeness he shows is seldom appreciated, and it seems as though his liking for the society of the sex is evaporating. Can I recommend him a cure for this morbid state?

* * * * *

Probably you are not in good health. A disordered liver often creates in men all sorts of delusions as to the attitude of others towards themselves. That, however, is for you and your doctor to decide. As to your relations with women, if you find you are growing weary of them, why not give the sex a rest altogether for a while?

* * * * *

Both you and the ladies may benefit by an interval. Try a few weeks with your male friends. No man should allow his thoughts to concentrate too much on the opposite sex. Probably you have neglected other men, and therefore lost sight of the consoling influence of friendship.

❦❦❦

The Lonely Girl.

"ADA" lives in a quiet country town with an exacting parent. She gets no society at all, and scarcely knows any other girls, much less any members of the male sex. She is twenty, and has not seen any life at all, as her parent will not hear of her accepting invitations to stay with friends. She feels that she is growing gloomy and despondent. What can I suggest to her?

* * * * *

Take plenty of exercise, long walks, cycling, and read as many light and amusing books as you can. Cultivate music or some hobby to distract your thoughts. One of these days something—or somebody—will turn up which will give you the chance you need. Meanwhile, don't let yourself get despondent. It spoils the complexion. I know that will appeal to you probably more than any moralising from me. Besides, young men *do* come to country towns, and when they see a girl who attracts them, they usually find some way to make her acquaintance.

❦❦❦

To Turn Friendship Into Love.

So you are in great perplexity, "X. Y. Z." You are on friendly terms with a gentleman, but you feel more than friendship towards him. How can you attain your desires?

* * * * *

I suppose if he also feels more than friendship towards you he will show it in some way. I should try to give him the opportunity by seeing him as often as possible, without, of course, appearing to throw yourself at him. You may have developed the stronger feelings a little earlier than he has, in which case you will have to wait until he catches you up. Real love usually arrives before mere friendship has had a chance to look in. But there are exceptions, and I hope your own case is one of them.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

HYPNOTISM

PERSONAL MAGNETISM

Can you hypnotise? Can you exercise that strange influence, known as personal magnetism? Would you like to know more about these things? Then write to our London Office for the wonderful little illustrated **FREE BOOK, "The Power Within."**

This little book deals with the most interesting and important subject in the world—the influence of the mind upon human life, health and affairs.

How to use the mind power, or mental magnetism, to attract friendship and success, to break up depressing conditions and influences, to hypnotise, to maintain health, to kill fear and nervousness, to develop a strong, magnetic, attractive personality—these things are what investigators have been lately working upon.

In the free book, above mentioned, they tell you of their fascinating work and how you can reap the benefit of it. This little book is a brilliant suggestion to those who are groping in the dark for something practical and tangible in occultism.

Thousands of people have been delighted with the work of these men. Glowing testimonials come in every day's mail. Are you going to let this valuable opportunity pass? The book is free for the asking. We give it away because we want to arouse a popular interest in up-to-date psychic literature, publishing which is our speciality. Please do not ask for it unless you are sincerely interested. Address (enclosing 1d. stamp for return postage),

PSYCHIC RESEARCH CO. (Dept. 437),
Temple Chambers, Temple Ave, London, E.C.

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 12 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

"NO BETTER FOOD."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

Fry's

Pure Concentrated

Cocoa.

300 GOLD MEDALS, ETC.

The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET," "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and "MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its

ABSOLUTE PURITY.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.—Sold only in tins with gilt top.

Digitized by Google

BEECHAM'S PILLS

"Worth a Guinea a Box."

AT THE TOP.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

are right at the top. They are at the top in point of sales—at the top in point of merit—and at the top in the estimation of tens of thousands of regular users. And not without good reason.

BEECHAM'S PILLS will do more to build up robust health and maintain it than any other medicine. They have done this, and are continually doing it for thousands all over the world. If you start now and take BEECHAM'S PILLS occasionally you will certainly benefit to a remarkable degree.

You will soon be "at the top" in point of health and so really enjoy life. Now follow this advice! Will you?

Beecham's Pills are sold everywhere in boxes, **1s. 1½d.** *(56 Pills) and* **2s. 9d.** *(168 Pills), each with full directions.*

Prepared only by the Proprietor, THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

SHORT STORIES

No. 750.] Week ending May 16th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

THE PHOTOGRAPH IN HIS HAND WAS NOT OF HERSELF, BUT OF ANOTHER YOUNG AND LOVELY WOMAN!

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "A TANGLED WEB." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

GRAVES' WATCHES

"SAFE AS THE BANK OF ENGLAND."

THIS is the feeling of those who deal with the Firm of J. G. GRAVES, because all Goods are sent out to handle and examine at leisure, and NEED NOT BE KEPT unless they give the fullest satisfaction.

THE 'BEATRICE' 25/-

Lady's Sterling Silver Horizontal Watch.

Specification. Horizontal Movement, Jewelled throughout; Automatic Stop to prevent over-winding, Artistic Dial, Handsomely Engraved, Extra Strong Sterling Silver Cases.

A Thoroughly Reliable Timekeeper, and Warranted for Five Years.

Terms. Send only 2/6 with order, and remit the balance in nine more MONTHLY payments of 2/6; or, if you prefer to pay the balance in one sum within seven days of delivery, a *Handsome Bonus Present* will be sent you as discount.

THE LARGEST WATCH-SALES FIRM IN THE WORLD.

No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., etc., post free.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. No risk. Good pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 DIVISION ST., SHEFFIELD

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model C is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for Cash is £8 8 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 15/10 each. Gentleman's machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns

Juno Cycles, Trailers from £5 5 0, or 10/6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—JUNO CYCLE Co. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

PUREST & NICEST.

PINK'S JAMS

A good housekeeper thinks The "pink" of Jams is PINK'S.

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.

TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with

"KEATING'S POWDER,"

unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

From Factory to Rider.

How Does This Suit You? Handsomest & Best of Cycles right away after payment Month's Instalment—or Deposit—as you wish. £14 14s Grade for £6 10s Write, H Dept. Williams' Direct Supply Mfg. Co., 13 Approach, London Bridge, London.

IT IS THE LAW of common sense that a firm could not sell cycles on instalments, expecting persons to pay while using the machines, unless they were really strong, hands me and easy riding. Prices £4 to £8 for Warranted cycles. Catalogue free. SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128, City Rd., London, E.C.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C

Short Stories

No. 750.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending May 16th, 1903.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

A Tangled Web.

Telling of How a Photograph Nearly Brought Trouble.

"Good-bye, Cecil, I'm off now."

Fitting on her gloves as she went, little Mrs. Bertram tripped gaily downstairs, and paused at the door of the room where she supposed her husband to be. He was not there, however, so she went across the hall towards his study.

She had only been married six months, and the idea of going out, even only for a few hours, without a good-bye kiss from her husband was simply unthinkable.

The door stood ajar, and peeping in, Nell saw her husband seated before his writing table, looking intently at a photograph, and so absorbed that he did not hear her step as she approached to surprise him with a kiss.

But before the kiss was given Nell started back in burning anger. The photograph which her husband was studying so intently was not hers; it was that of a young and very lovely girl, quite unknown to her.

Now Nell had a temper; those very tiny, sparkling, vivacious girls generally have, and for a six-months' bride to find her husband hanging absorbed over another girl's photograph is enough to rouse the sweetest temper.

The large dark eyes flashed; the fairy hand clenched itself; the sweet little face reddened with anger.

Not trusting herself to speak, she stole softly away, and set out without the coveted good-bye kiss. But as she sat in the carriage with the friend she was taking to the *matinée*, her mind was on the mysterious photograph, and she returned perfectly random replies to Laura Grant's chatter.

When they reached the theatre it was the same thing. She gazed at the stage with unseeing eyes, and the smartest and wittiest speeches passed her unnoticed. She had never before known jealousy.

Married at nineteen to a man sixteen years her senior, who made her his idol, she had never cast a thought to any other woman who must have had a part in the years of his life before Nell entered it. Who *could* this woman be?

"Isn't this a pretty scene?" whispered Laura, and Nell, turning lack-lustre eyes on the stage, murmured assent.

The next instant she uttered a half-suppressed exclamation, and sat staring at a girl, who, representing a wood-elf, had just run on. It was the girl of the photograph, but how much more beautiful in life!

The violet eyes, the waves of rich brown hair, the pure Greek profile, the exquisite figure made up a lovely picture, and Nell gazed at her fascinated. Her heart felt like a stone. Was this the explanation of the photograph? Had her noble husband stooped to a low intrigue with an actress?

The *matinée* over, Laura dropped at her own house, and Nell, once more at home, the weight of her spirits grew heavier. She was so unlike herself that her husband was alarmed, and kept anxiously glancing at her as they sat together after dinner. She would not give him any music, and after sitting silent for some time, jumped up, and stood looking absently into the fire.

"What's wrong, Baby?" he asked, drawing her down on his knee. "Aren't you well, sweetheart?"

Her heart was too full to speak. She made a little grieved mouth like the baby he loved to call her, and hid her face on his shoulder.

"What is it, darling? Do tell me what is wrong, and trust to me to put it right."

She clung round his neck and cried bitterly.

"Oh, Cecil, I have so loved and trusted you," she murmured through her sobs. "How could you deceive me?"

"Deceive you? Why, darling, I have never deceived you, never."

She raised herself suddenly, and looked deep into his eyes; those clear, candid, dark grey eyes.

"Cecil, whose photograph is that you were looking at this morning so intently that you did not hear me come in to say 'Good-bye'? Who is that beautiful girl?"

Cecil crimsoned from brow to chin, put his wife hastily off his knee, and began to pace the room in agitated silence. At last he stopped in front of the chair where Nell sat, a little heap of misery, and picked her up in his arms like a child.

"Little Nell," he said, in a voice of exceeding tenderness, "you must not be jealous of the dead."

Nell started, and looked up incredulously.

"What a jealous Baby it is!" he went on, fondly pressing the little hot, flushed cheek to his own. "Shall I tell you all about the original of that photograph, Nell? I ought to have done so before I married you, perhaps, but I thought it best to 'let the dead past bury its dead.'

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

"Well, Baby, when I first met Patricia Stanley she was a very young girl, an orphan, and alone in the world except for a sister, a baby three or four years old. I sought the sisters out at their father's request.

"He had saved my life at the cost of his own, and his last words were to ask me to look after his little girls.

"They were very poor, but Patricia refused all help, and I did not know how to assist her. I admired her beauty, but I did not love her, and therefore I did wrong when I asked her to marry me. It was the quixotic act of a very young man, for I was just one-and-twenty."

Nell looked up again quickly. The wood-elf must have been cleverly made up, for she had looked quite a young girl.

"Well, we married."

"*What?*" broke in Nell, almost screaming. "You *married* her?"

"Yes. Remember I did not know you then. It is more than fourteen years ago, and you were a real baby then, a tot in the nursery. And I never loved her, Nell; I never loved anyone but you. And she is dead, dear."

Nell tore herself from his arms, and stood facing him, white and rigid.

"You *married* her," she repeated. "Then, as we live and breathe, Cecil, she is your wife to-day, and I—what am I?"

"But I tell you she is *dead*, darling."

"And *I* tell you that if that photograph I saw you looking at this morning represents your first wife, she is alive and well. I saw her myself this very day."

"A chance resemblance. Come, Baby," and he drew her to his arms again, "let me finish, and then we'll forget it all and be happy again. I have not a word to say against Patricia, but we were not suited to each other, and I was not happy. I tried to make her happy, and she loved me, but it was not a union of hearts.

"Shortly after our marriage an uncle of hers died out in Australia, and left her a large fortune, and this place, the Grange, so she would have been well provided for without my marrying her. She made a will then, leaving everything to her sister Violet, who, of course, lived with us, and was a dear little thing, and to me, in case of Violet's death.

"In the second year of our marriage Violet was sent by the doctor to Eastbourne after an attack of bronchitis, and Patricia went with her. The boarding-house where they stayed was burnt to the ground one night, and Patricia, Violet, and the maid were burnt to death."

"How terrible! Then if Violet had lived she would have inherited her sister's property."

"Certainly; and this dear old house we love so much. Poor Patricia, it was a sad fate. And so, as I was looking for some papers this morning, I came upon her photograph, and I felt sad to think that she perished so young, and that I had never loved her. I know how sweet love is, for I love my Nell."

A few days later Nell was told that a young man wished to see her. He had asked first for Mr. Bertram, but learning that he was out, he requested to see Mrs. Bertram. He was a good-looking young fellow, not quite a gentleman, but still with a certain polish of manner and educated speech. Nell asked him to state his business.

"I have reason to believe that my wife is Mr. Bertram's sister," he began.

"Mr. Bertram has no sister," said Nell, frigidly.

"Sister-in-law, then. My name is Taylor—George Taylor. A year ago I married a girl my mother had adopted. More then fourteen years ago my mother, then newly widowed, was staying at Eastbourne with my two-year-old sister.

"The boarding-house where they were staying was burnt out, and little Violet lost her life.

"The nurse was killed too, so when my mother claimed another little girl as her own there was no one to contradict.

"This little one had lost all her people in the fire, and nearly lost her wits too through the fright. She was older than my sister, being quite four or five, but she could say nothing about herself beyond that her name was Violet.

"I was at school at the time, but of course I knew that the child wasn't my sister, though my mother told me nothing about her then. We're a theatrical family, and Violet seemed to take to the boards quite naturally.

"When my mother was dying some months ago, she told me she knew who Violet was, only she was so desperate at losing her own little one that she had resolved never to give her up. She told me all she knew, and I have been making inquiries ever since. Recently I have discovered that Mr. Bertram is Violet's brother-in-law."

During this long speech Nell's mind had been rapidly working. If Violet Stanley were alive, Violet Stanley was the mistress of the Grange, and owner of quite half Cecil's income. If Cecil knew of her existence, he would at once hand over house and money to her. Therefore, he must never know it.

"This is a somewhat far-fetched story," she remarked superciliously, "and very—very theatrical. Such things do not occur in real life. But even supposing your wife should be the sister of my husband's late wife, what then? She had no claim on him."

"No legal claim, of course," admitted Taylor. "But—we are very poor. I am resting at present, and my wife's pay is very small. I thought—perhaps—when can I see Mr. Bertram?"

"My husband is abroad," said Nell very sharply, "so you can't see him, and I shan't give you his address. He shan't be worried by you; but if a ten-pound note will be of any use to you, here it is."

Taylor gratefully accepted the money, and withdrew, leaving Nell to plume herself on the address with which she had managed the affair and finally disposed of it. She had yet to learn:

What a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive.

A few weeks had passed without a sign from Taylor, when, one evening a note was brought to her, which proved to be from the young actor, asking for more money, and hinting that he had suspicions his wife was entitled to property from her sister.

"What's wrong, Baby?" asked Cecil, glancing up from his newspaper. "You look queer. From whom is that letter?"

"From Taylor," she replied absently. "From my dressmaker, I mean."

"Is it a bigger bill than poor Baby's dress-allowance will cover?" laughed her husband. "And would she like a little cheque to help out?"

"Oh, I should, Cecil!" came in tones more earnest than he was prepared for. "Oh, I *should* be glad of it!"

"I'll write one to-morrow, then. I don't like to see Baby's brow puckered like that. Or—let me have the bill, and I'll settle it for you. That will be best." He extended his hand to take the paper she held, but Nell hastily threw it into the fire, and, flushed and tearful, turned to face her husband.

"What does this mean, Nell?" he asked in a changed voice. "Why am I not to see that bill? Is it a bill at all? Are you deceiving me?"

Nell burst into tears, which naturally did not soothe her husband.

Digitized by Google

"That does no good, Nell. I must have a full explanation of your conduct. I don't want to be suspicious, but your manner is so extraordinary, and you have been so unlike yourself these last few days that I can't helping seeing there is something wrong. Now, trust me, dear, and tell me all about it."

But Nell sobbed on helplessly, and though he was wonderfully patient and tender with her, he could get no explanation. Consequently, relations were somewhat strained for the next few days, and the promised cheque was not forthcoming.

Another letter came from Taylor to say that Violet was seriously ill, and he must press for assistance from Mrs. Bertram. He said he was making inquiries as to what claims Violet had to her sister's property, and insisted on seeing Mr. Bertram, who must now have returned from abroad.

Driven frantic, Nell dispatched all the money she had in the house, and wrote that her husband had gone to Australia, and would not return under six months.

She hoped by this letter to free herself from Taylor's importunities for some time to come; but barely a week had passed—a week of miserable estrangement between husband and wife—when, as she sat down to lunch a message was brought her that a Mr. Taylor wished to speak with her on pressing business.

Cecil watched the little face opposite him change to a vivid scarlet, and then to a deadly white, but he said nothing. In a hurried undertone Nell sent word that she would be with Mr. Taylor in a few minutes.

"Who is it wishes to see you?" asked her husband quietly, and, as she stammered out a few incoherent words, he continued, "Your dressmaker, perhaps. She seems a formidable person. Do not keep her waiting."

Taylor was pacing the room impatiently when Mrs. Bertram entered it.

"Violet is dying!" he said abruptly. "Pneumonia has set in, and the doctor gives no hope. Curiously enough her memory has come back to her after lying dormant all these years. She remembers Mr. Bertram perfectly, and longs to see him, but, as that cannot be, she wishes to see you."

"To see *me*. Oh, no, I cannot come!"

"You cannot refuse the prayer of a dying girl. I have promised to take you back with me."

"I can't! I really can't! It's impossible!"

"Impossible to refuse, you mean. Get ready quickly and come with me."

And, overborne by the man's strength of will, Nell yielded.

"Wait a moment. I will get ready and come with you directly," she said, turning to the door, which opened before she could touch the handle, and Cecil stood there.

"And may I ask who is this gentleman with whom you are going away?" asked the cold, clear voice.

Nell collapsed on a couch and began to cry. Cecil turned to the young man.

"Perhaps you will kindly inform me why Mrs. Bertram is going with you, and what your business is here?" he said sternly.

Taylor looked at him uncertainly.

"I don't know what right you have to ask," he began, "This lady——"

"This lady is *my wife*," said Cecil briefly.

Taylor looked bewildered.

"Mr. Bertram? Have you returned from Australia then?"

"Australia? Never was in Australia in my life. What do you mean?"

"I thought it was Australia," replied Taylor meekly; "but perhaps it was America. Anyhow, Mrs. Bertram said you were abroad and weren't coming home under six months, so——"

"Mrs. Bertram said?—Nell said?" gasped Cecil. "Oh, this is madness. There isn't a gleam of reason in the whole affair. I don't know who you are, but there's something here that wants a lot of explanation, and I mean to have it. My wife won't speak, so you've got to. Now, explain."

And Taylor explained.

There was a dead silence when he had finished. Nell simply dared not look at her husband, and she shivered as his voice, cold as ice, cleft the silence.

"I will come with you at once, Taylor, and see my poor little sister. We must have better medical advice. Come!"

Without a word to his wife, Cecil left the room with Taylor, leaving Nell utterly crushed.

"He'll never forgive me!" she moaned. "I've told him too many lies. I used to think I could never be so mean as to say what wasn't true, but directly I'm really tempted I tell lies like — like — oh, Ananias and Sapphira simply aren't in it with me. Cecil can never forgive me, and directly he comes back he'll turn me out. I'd better go at once. I dare say Aunt Hattie will take me in."

But Nell was too spent with weeping to make any move for some time, and it was quite three hours later that she was crawling broken-heartedly along the deserted road to the nearest station, the rain beating down on her defenceless head, for in her flight from her outraged husband she had not thought of anything so unromantic as an umbrella.

A man driving past in a station fly glanced out at the forlorn little figure, uttered an exclamation, and in another minute Nell found herself in her husband's arms.

"Where are you going?" he asked anxiously; and a few sobbing words made him understand the situation. "You sweet idiot!" he went on, "you silly baby, come, jump into here, and we'll get home in no time. Why, you're soaked, you naughty child! There, now we're off, and you shall have the scolding you deserve. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Nell?"

"Oh, I am—I am! But, tell me, Cecil, is Violet dead?"

"Not she, getting on all right, the doctors say. Nell, you need not trouble to explain. I know all about it. You thought if Violet were alive she would have the Grange, and you didn't want me to lose it. Well, if you had come straight to your husband like a sensible girl instead of getting all tangled up in a web of deceit, your mind would have been relieved at once.

"Patricia left everything to Violet with a reversion to me in case of her sister's death, but she stipulated that Violet was not to marry before she was twenty-five. If she did so she forfeited the Grange entirely, and was to inherit twenty thousand pounds only—a nice little sum with which she is quite satisfied. Now, Baby, promise never to tell fibs again, and we'll kiss and be friends, and you shall never hear another word about your naughtiness from me."

And Nell was so overcome by this unlooked-for generosity that she could only cling round her husband's neck in a mute embrace more eloquent than words.

Vera Serkoff.

Sandstone: "Weren't you dancing with Miss Calloway last night?" Fiddleback: "Yes; how did you know?" Sandstone: "I saw her going into a chiropodist's this morning."

Digitized by Google

A Race for Happiness.

Telling of a Bicycle Ride and the Winning of a Wife.

"I'm afraid poor old Uncle Herbert is really going to make a 'die' of it this time," my chum Westropp said as he stuffed a letter he had just re-read back into its envelope again. "Phyllis writes me he isn't expected to live through the week."

"Well, I suppose, old chap," said I, "that he'll leave you his fortune, and then all your scruples about marrying an heiress will be overcome. Phyllis Westropp's a pretty name," I added musingly as I lay back in my armchair and watched my cigarette smoke curling out through the window into the summer night air.

"Don't be a fool," said Westropp; then, after a long pause, which I believe he utilised to cover an incipient blush, "Uncle Herbert's such a queer old chap, he changes his mind about the property once a month; it must cost him a perfect fortune in wills. One month I'm to have the old place and the next it's that fellow Lawton—nice mess he'll make of it too if he gets it."

"Anyway he can't will the beautiful Phyllis away."

"Of course he can't, but don't you see if I'm a pauper that won't help me much; I'd rather sweep a crossing than propose to a girl with £10,000 a year."

"Well, I've discussed that point till I'm sick of you and your affairs. Pass the whisky; thanks! All I know is that if I was in love with an heiress and was pretty sure she cared for me I'd give up all idea of amateur crossing sweeping."

It was a lovely night last June that the above conversation took place; we had finished dinner in the pretty little flat in South Kensington that my chum and I occupied conjointly.

A long pause ensued after my last remark—one of those pauses that are the proofs of true friendship, and then Westropp started the everlasting topic—bicycle! He and I had just invested in a new tandem, and we had done some very excellent times on it; we—though I say it who shouldn't—were both first-class riders, and we went splendidly in double harness, so much so that a prominent cycling firm had offered to give us a machine if we would try to break some road records for them.

We talked on for about an hour, discussing gears, pedals, saddles, records, and such like, and the clock had just struck eleven when the maid brought in a telegram and handed it to my companion; he glanced over it, and then handed it to me. It ran—

"*Come at once. My guardian can't last out night. Says he will leave property to whichever nephew arrives first.*

"PHYLLIS."

Scarcely had I put down the pinky-brown paper when the door opened and Mr. Lawton was announced. He nodded curtly to us and then at the telegram.

"Oh, you've got one too," he said. "Pity, isn't it, Westropp, that the last train for Oxford has left Paddington," and he smiled maliciously at us. It was an open secret that my chum and he detested one another.

"May I ask to what cause I may attribute the pleasure of your visit?" Westropp said sarcastically, as he indicated a chair.

"Oh, I only just popped in on my way down to Oxford to see how you'd take the idea of being too late."

"Well, you might have saved yourself the trouble and me the annoyance. Good-night."

"All right, I'm just off; but I flattered myself you'd enjoy hearing how I'm going to manage this little biz. You've heard of Doyen, of course, one of the crack cycling 'pros.'? Well, he's waiting outside with a tandem, and he and I are going to Oxford by road. Pity you've not got a 'pro.' up your sleeve too."

"Get out!" said Westropp, rising to his feet and pointing to the door, and Lawton got out, but as he reached the hall door he stopped, and called back—

"By the way, I heard you were rather good on a cycle, and as I saw two singles in the outside hall I took the precaution of cutting the tyres open. I owed you a grudge for cutting me out with the beautiful Phyllis, and I came round to-night to pay it you in full. So long," and this loathsome young fellow shut the door and clattered down the stairs, four at a time.

We looked at one another aghast for a minute, and then we both ejaculated together:

"Lucky he didn't know we had a tandem."

"We'll break the London-Oxford record to-night, anyhow," I said a few minutes later as I was changing out of my smoking jacket into a cycling costume.

"Begorra, we'll teach that spalpeen to ride," ejaculated Westropp through a shirt into which he was struggling. My chum always lapsed into his native Irish brogue in moments of excitement.

Five minutes later we were in the saddle, and as we flew past the church in the Earl's Court Road the clock struck half-past eleven. Lawton had ten minutes' start. We were going by the Henley route, as old General Lambert's house was on that road, some three miles out of Oxford.

We were just getting into full swing as we passed Olympia, and our ninety-six gear was spinning round with a delightful churning-grinding noise. The few policemen we passed blew their whistles right lustily.

"Bedad, and it'll take a steam roller all its time to stop this old 'yoke' now. Fancy you a-thrying to stop it with a sax-

Digitized by Google

penny whistle!" shouted Westropp, as we left one of these disgusted 'Bobbys' behind us.

"That's it, lad, that's it! Run like the dickens and begorra! we'll make the pace for you down to Hounslow!" he cried to a more active member of the force who gave chase. "Sure that man was too 'low-geared' to 'take us on,'" he added to me as the discomfited Peeler slowed up and resumed his majestic dot-and-carry-one walk.

Hammersmith, Gunnersbury, Kew, and Brentford came up one by one out of the darkness, winked at us with dirty yellow gas lamps, and then dropped behind. We were exhilarated by the lovely night air, and the head wind only got our "danders" up and made us work the harder.

Swishity-swishity-swishity-swish! And the grand old tandem seemed to waken to life beneath us like some thoroughbred steeplechaser determined to win the race for its master.

A cloud of dust got up behind our back wheel and gave chase all along the road. "Hounslow—ten miles in twenty-three minutes!" Westropp yelled into my ear as we streaked past the clock.

"Now for a pacy seven miles," I cry, as we clear the fork roads, and we bring every muscle of our bodies into play; gradually our heads get down lower and lower, and the strain on my arms and shoulders (I am steering) becomes well-nigh unendurable as the pace increases.

Faster and faster and faster we go until the "swishity-swish" of our ninety-six gear fades into the everlasting "t—s—s—s—s" of what might be a sixty-geared machine.

Colnbrook and Slough leave Buckinghamshire to meet us—twenty miles in forty-six minutes! The very pace we cleave the air is beginning to tell and on the front seat I gasp for air, and I can hear Westropp's breath coming in gasps.

Three of the young bloods of the place who are going home arm in arm to steady themselves greet us with "A bicycle built for two," but we are out of earshot before they can hiccough out the second line.

As the last house of the long straggling town fades out of sight I can just make out a shadow moving along the road a few hundred yards ahead—another half minute and we can make out a tandem by the aid of the full moon.

An extra pressure on the pedal and we are riding abreast of our rivals! Lawton swears softly in gasps, and the Frenchman bites a "*Sacré-bleu!*" off his tongue and settles himself down to race.

"Come on, you brutes, if ye're coming," Westropp ejaculates, and they do come on—they pass us—we pick them up; they forge ahead again—we ride abreast, and I can see the perspiration on the Frenchman's eyelids gather in thick drops and run down his cheek; and so neck and neck we race on, through Taplow and across the sleeping Thames, through Maidenhead, and now Castle Hill bars our way.

The pedals go round perceptibly slower as the steep ascent and rough surface begin to kill our pace. Every muscle is strained to the utmost; the Frenchman seems to be licking the dust off his front tyre.

On, on, through the night we four men race for a woman and a fortune. Hedges, gates, cottages and trees skim past unnoticed.

Another terrific hill leaves us panting and aching in every fibre some twenty yards ahead; but Doyen isn't to be beaten. He remembers the Bordeaux-Paris race he won last year, and we rush, bump, and skid down Henley hill side by side, through the peacefully sleeping town, and out again into the moonlit country.

"Thirty-four miles in an hour and twenty-four minutes," Westropp tells me as we settled down to the "Fair Mile."

"Surely we've broken some record!" I think, but haven't breath to say.

Side by side the two tandems start to negotiate the three miles of up hill to Nettlebed. The perspiration is running from us in streams.

How we reach the apex of the Chilterns I cannot tell. I only know that the four of us are working out our souls, and the live steel beneath me seems to leap with joy as we rush down a steep decline

We leave the last slope of the Chilterns, and Doyen and Lawton make a final sprint. They are going to pieces now; instead of the even push-and-pull they are jerking their cranks round.

As they gradually move past us I hear Lawton whisper to his companion in French, "I'm done! We can't beat them! We must upset them!"

I translate to Westropp and grasp my handles firmly. Now at last my trick-riding will be of some avail. Many a time in my volunteer corps have I practised riding over supposed wounded men. I grind my teeth as we draw nearer to our rivals and increase the pace.

"Now, lad, show the craytures what you can do, and the Lord be with us all!" And I can hear my chum's teeth snap together as he nerves himself to the ordeal.

We are riding six inches to the right and to the rear of our rivals. Suddenly I hear their brake scream against their tyres and they make a half-right turn.

Crash! Bang! Crash! A thud! A muttered oath! Our noble yoke leaps in the air! I hold on for dear life. A bump and a rattle, and—we are over them and safe.

"Lord, lad, you can ride!" and Westropp's hand on my shoulder is like a vice. I take my hand off the handlebars and put it in his—no need for words, we understand what is in each other's hearts.

A hundred yards behind the moon is shining on a mass of crumpled tubes and twisted steel, and I can just make out two dark forms huddled together on the hard white road.

Mile posts come running up like baby ghosts as we spin along through Benson, Dorchester, and Nuneham. We turn up a wide avenue and glide noiselessly up to a fine old manor house. We throw ourselves off to the right, and the tandem falls to the left. Westropp leaps up to the porch and rings the bell.

Phyllis herself opens it and the light in the hall seems to make a halo of her silky-golden hair.

"Thank Heaven, Terence, you're in time." I see him take her hand, and bend his head down close to hers, and then I see—that our lamp is smoking, and that the dear old machine would be all the better for a little oil.

How long I stood out there in the shrubbery I do not know. The old house brought back many memories of my Oxford days when Terence and I were up at college together.

'Twas under yonder elm two years ago that my chum had first confided in me his love for Phyllis. I remember it as if it were yesterday. Aye, and I remember the fierce struggle in my breast as I had pressed his hand and wished him "Good luck!" Since that day I hadn't seen Phyllis again.

As I stand leaning on the machine that has carried us so well I hear a voice by my side that brings me back from my memories, and a dainty little hand is placed in mine, and I am looking down into two soft brown eyes.

"Terence has just told me what you have done for him—for us"—and a blush suffuses her soft velvet skin—"this evening, Mr. Cuthbert, and I'm going to thank you as best I can. You may kiss me if you like," and she frankly offers a dimpled cheek that sets the blood racing through my veins. I feel that I have tasted the greatest joy of my life. My exertions have been paid for a million times.

* * * * * * *

"Congratulate me, old man, on having won the sweetest little woman in the world, thanks to you. God bless you, lad!"

"Allow me to congratu——" I try to pull myself together. "I'm awfully glad," I add tamely, as I turn my head to gaze down the drive.

"Well, you don't seem in the least pleased! Hang it, man, you might show a little more enthusiasm!" and he places a hand on my shoulder and we stand face to face. His steel blue eyes change from wrath to wonder at what they read in mine. "Good Heavens! What's the matter, Reggie! What do you mean?"

"Nothing, old chap; only don't ask me to be 'best man,' that's all." I take his arm, and I notice that the blood is trickling from a cruel bite in his lower lip, as we go silently back into the house together.

A. H. Trapman.

Digitized by Google

THE MYSTERY OF ADAM BARR.

An Editor's Love Story.

BASIL MAYNE sat in the editor's chair at the offices of the *Grecian Magazine*. There was plenty of work to be done, and he was not the man to shirk it.

Healthy, active, intellectual, Basil Mayne was at two-and-thirty as fine a specimen of mankind as could be met with in the vicinity of Fleet Street. He was handsome too, and yet, despite this additional charm to his already striking personality, he was still a bachelor.

Not that he advocated the wisdom of celibacy. Indeed, he had arrived at that age when the inefficiencies of the genus housekeeper make a man desirous of changing his condition. There is but one antidote for this disease, and Basil Mayne did not deny its efficacy. But as yet he had not prescribed it for himself.

He had just laid down his pen for a momentary respite when the door opened, and the sub. entered the sanctum.

"Here is another story from Joan Barr," he said, "which, if I am not mistaken, will confirm your former opinion of her ability."

Basil Mayne took the MS. in question, and glanced quickly over the first page.

"It begins well," he said.

"And ends better," added the sub. with enthusiasm.

"But who is this Joan Barr?" said Basil, knitting his brows and mentally cataloguing the known writers of the day.

"That I cannot discover," replied the sub. "She appears to be quite unknown as yet. But that will probably not last long, for her stories will bear comparison with any on the market."

"I think you are right, Weston," said the editor thoughtfully. "At least, so far as her former story is concerned. I have yet to read this." And he touched the neatly-typed MS. which lay on the table. "By the way," he added, after a pause, "did any communication accompany it?"

"Yes," replied the sub. "I will send it in." And he withdrew from the room.

Basil Mayne picked up the MS. and began to read. Before he had come to the end of the first quarto sheet his attention was riveted on the story. Every passage bore the hall-mark of truth. Every incident stood out in bold relief.

Humour and pathos tripped one upon the other in the fresh, crisp sentences which followed each other in such harmonious sequence.

The whole story was real—unmistakably and intensely real—and that carried him on, through page after page, till, with a sigh, he came to the last word and leant back in his chair with a glow of pleasure on his handsome face.

"The woman's a genius!" he said admiringly. "I suppose it *is* a woman, though the name may be a pseudonym. I wonder who she is."

His eye fell on the letter which the sub. had sent in. He took it up and examined it critically. It was written in a clear, feminine hand, and ran as follows:

"*Ivy Lodge, Finchwood, Surrey.*

"*Dear Sir,—The gratifying reception accorded to my previous contribution to the Grecian Magazine has induced me to submit a second for your kind consideration.*

"*Should this also suit your requirements I shall be happy to hear from you in the usual way.—Yours very truly,*

"JOAN BARR."

Basil smiled.

"A practical business letter," he said musingly, "with no more words than are necessary. I wish all my correspondents were as considerate of an editor's time." And he glanced whimsically at a pile of unread communications which lay on the table beside him.

"But who, in the name of fortune, is this Joan Barr? Surely she is no mere novice, taking her first plunge into the stormy sea of literature? If so, she has little to learn from experience. But I must find out. It might be a good thing for the *Grecian*. Something permanent might be arranged, and then—— I'll drop her a line and ask her to run up to town."

He took a sheet of paper from the rack before him and prepared to write. But just as his pen touched the paper he paused, and, pushing it from him, said:

"No—I'm hanged if I do! I'll run down to Finchwood myself, and try to get a glimpse of this rising star in the firmament of literature. I'll go incog. too, and perhaps, if I'm lucky, obtain an introduction to Miss Joan Barr; though how that is to be accomplished Heaven only knows!"

He rose.

"Pooh!" he muttered. "What an ass I am! For all I know, she may be a middle-aged spinster or the curate's wife, or some other, to me, uninteresting specimen of womanhood. Well, if so, I can come back. In any case a week-end in the little Surrey village of Finchwood will do me more good than harm these bright Spring days. So I'll go. That's settled."

He seated himself once more in the editorial chair and gave himself up to the business of the day. But throughout it all the name of Joan Barr stared at him persistently from the title-page of the MS. which lay on his table. Nor did it forsake him when he put on his hat at the close of the day's work and returned to his house in Highgate and the remainder of his housekeeper's inefficiencies.

The afternoon was well advanced when, the following Saturday, Basil Mayne alighted at the little Surrey station of Finchwood. The meadows were yellow with cowslips and primroses, over which the cool Spring breeze gambolled, and mingled with its own freshness their fragrance.

Exhilaration was in the very air, and Basil Mayne was not the man to be unconscious of its influence.

He walked along the white, winding country road with a light, elastic step, and was soon standing at the door of the village inn—called by courtesy a "hotel"—where arrangements for his accommodation were speedily effected. Then, after a cup of tea, he lit a cigar and sauntered out in search of Ivy Lodge.

It is more than probable this task might have been much

Digitized by Google

more difficult than one might imagine, for he wished, if possible, to avoid any inquiry as to its situation, in order that the object of his visit, as well as his identity, might not thereby reach the ear of Joan Barr.

What he wanted was to meet this unknown woman who wrote with such intense realism and purity of thought and diction, not as the editor of the *Grecian*, but as a casual visitor to the little village.

He wanted, in short, to take her off her guard. Precisely *why* he wanted this he did not stop to inquire; and, even had he done so, the result would, in all probability, have been the same.

But Fortune favoured him.

He had just turned into a shady lane when his eye rested on a small, exquisitely-kept cottage, over which the trailing ivy spread its dark-green leaves and clinging tendrils till every trace of stone or brick was lost to view.

A little garden stood in front, tastefully arranged and fragrant with sweet Spring flowers. And on the low wooden gate which led within, and opened from the lane, Basil Mayne read the inscription, "Ivy Lodge."

He passed the house at a leisurely pace, his eye taking in every detail of its appearance, from the pretty gilt vane upon the roof to the neatly-trimmed box-borders of the flower garden.

"Modest," was his inward comment, "but decidedly tasteful. Not too neat to be prim, but just enough to be 'home.' Ah, what a thing it is to live in a home, and not a 'desirable residence!'" And he sighed as he went on past the pretty little cottage and down the quiet country lane.

Presently he turned and retraced his steps. It was growing dusk now, and a soft, serene hush lay, like an angel's wing, over the smiling landscape—a hush which the jubilant singing of wood birds among the trees served only to intensify.

Stopping before the gate of Ivy Lodge, and partly screened by the tall hedge which inclosed the garden, Basil Mayne looked once more at the cottage within.

As he did so, the graceful figure of a girl came out from behind the hedge and approached the gate. She started when she saw him and hesitated. The last lingering light of evening shone full on her face, and Basil was struck by its rare and sensitive beauty.

Most men of his age would have experienced a feeling of embarrassment at being thus discovered. But Basil Mayne, in his intercourse with the world, had learnt that art of perfect self-possession which, when acquired, lends both charm and dignity to the character. Lifting his hat, therefore, and with a frank, winning smile on his handsome face, he said:

"If to sin with one member is to sin with all, I am afraid you have discovered me in the act of trespassing. I trust I may be pardoned, however, for admiring what is so inexpressibly beautiful."

He waved his hand indicatively to the tastefully-arranged flower-beds, but his eyes still rested on the lovely face of the girl before him. A soft flush deepened the delicate beauty of her cheek at the subtle, gracefully-veiled compliment of the tall, handsome stranger, and her eyes fell.

"I am glad our little garden affords pleasure to others as well as ourselves," she said. "But," deprecatingly, "it is so very small!"

"Perhaps that is one of its chief attractions," said Basil quietly, while the girl looked at him wonderingly. "One often sees a cottage which is more pleasing to the eye than the lordliest palace. And possibly the same truth is responsible for both these apparent incongruities, since the loveliness of a spot and the sweet influences of a home are not determined by their superficial area."

The girl looked up brightly, the large eyes expressing their appreciation of Basil's words.

"Perhaps you have experienced the beauty of both influences?" she said timidly, and then blushed at the boldness of the implied question.

Basil Mayne smiled, and a moment later sighed.

"The first—yes," he said; "for, with two good eyes in one's head, it was impossible to do otherwise. But the second is not so readily acquired, and, having hitherto escaped me, I am compelled to worship from afar."

The girl felt his eyes upon her, and turned away her head.

"I am afraid this is very unconventional," Basil continued with a return to his genial manner. "But I trust you will pardon my apparent presumption and blame, not me, but the irresistible loveliness which seems so peculiar a characteristic of this ideal spot." And, once more lifting his hat and courteously inclining his head, he moved away.

As he did so the door of the little cottage opened, and a deep, manly voice called:

"Joan! Joan!"

"Ah!" murmured Basil to himself, "so my fair contributor is neither a middle-aged spinster nor a curate's wife! Well, so much the better!"

The next day being Sunday, the landlord of the inn found leisure from his accustomed duties to converse with his guest. He was exceedingly communicative, and from him Basil Mayne learnt many things. Breakfast over, the latter offered his cigar-case to the attentive landlord, and, after one or two purposeless observations, casually remarked:

"By the way, to whom does that pretty little cottage known as Ivy Lodge belong? I passed it in the course of my walk last evening, and could not help remarking its aspect of freshness and homeliness."

The landlord's countenance assumed a solemn expression.

"Ah!" he said in a whisper, "there's a mystery about him. Adam Barr he calls himself, sir, though folks *do* say it might be anything else for all *we* know. He come here about six year ago from nobody knows where, takes and shuts himself up in Ivy Lodge, and—excepting a 'Good-morning,' or a 'Good-evening,' never speaks to nobody."

"Perhaps he prefers solitude," suggested Basil.

"Then he didn't ought to grumble," retorted the landlord, "for he gets it, year in and year out. All the six year he's lived in Finchwood he's never put his foot in my bar! Solitood!" grunted the landlord indignantly. "Well, let them as likes it have it. But *I* likes a man to be sociable-like—what you London gen'lmen calls 'greengarious'—*that's* what I likes!"

"I don't doubt it," said Basil innocently. "But you see we are what Nature has formed us, and we must not be too hard on a man because, in this respect, he shows himself to be less enlightened than you or I."

The landlord thoughtfully caressed his ample chin and appeared somewhat mollified.

"Well, there may be something in that," he said. "But he's a queer character for all that. He goes up to London now and then, and always carries a suspicious-looking black bag along with him. Sometimes he's gone for two or three days, but mostly he catches the night train, stays overnight in London, and comes back the next morning."

The landlord looked significantly at his visitor.

"So his work's done in the night," he said in a low, impressive voice. "And he takes precious good care to keep it to himself. Nobody knows where he goes or what he does, and there are some as say out plain that Adam Barr's bread is not got honest."

Basil Mayne puffed thoughtfully at his cigar.

"That is scarcely a charitable view of the matter," he said.

The landlord looked suspicious.

"Perhaps you're a friend of his?" he suggested.

"Not I!" replied Basil with a laugh. "But, tell me, has he any family? I thought I saw a young lady in the garden yesterday."

The landlord's face brightened perceptibly.

"Ah!" he said enthusiastically, "and as sweet a flower as ever lived among us! She's his daughter Joan, and wonderful clever she be, too! I heard the schoolmaster say t'other day she'd taken to writing for the big London papers. She's a kind word and a smile for everyone, sir, and we're all proud of her—every man Jack of us!

"Of course, she's far and away above the likes of us, but she never makes us feel it when she's talking to us, like the

Digitized by Google

parson's wife and daughters. She's a lady—that's what she is!"

There was a pleased light in Basil Mayne's eyes as he listened to this glowing and evidently sincere eulogy of the girl in whom, within the past few days, he had taken so strong and unaccountable an interest—an interest generated at first by purely business considerations, but which, now that he had seen her, was fast developing into a more ardent sentiment.

"The girl has no mother," went on the landlord with a sigh; "and, except for one servant—who knows as little about her master as we do, sir—Adam Barr and his sweet young daughter live quite alone at Ivy Lodge."

Basil Mayne put on his hat and, going out, sauntered leisurely along the quiet country lanes, speculating as he went as to the possible nature of the occupation which had bred such unqualified suspicion and distrust in the minds of the villagers towards Adam Barr.

Mechanically he wandered in the direction of Ivy Lodge, and presently saw approaching him the graceful figure of Joan on her way to church.

He was not the man to take undue advantage of the fortunate circumstance which had led to their conversation of the previous day. So he merely acknowledged her in passing, and was rewarded by a gracious smile in return.

But that evening chance again led him across her path; this time on the outskirts of the village, and, their direction being the same, Basil asked to be allowed to accompany her.

Thus, step by step, the chance meeting by the little low gate of Ivy Lodge ripened slowly but surely into an intimacy as welcome to one as the other; and Basil Mayne became a frequent visitor to the little village of Finchwood.

But everywhere he heard the same dark rumours of Adam Barr, the same covert hints as to the nature of his occupation, and although they lacked foundation, no answer, explanation or refutation was forthcoming to effectually silence the universal suspicion.

Basil had, in the village, adopted the name of Bernard May, for, as yet, he did not wish his identity as editor of the *Grecian* to become known to Joan Barr. It was more than possible his own name was known to her in that capacity, whilst the one he had assumed was an old pen name which he had several times used to sign his American contributions.

So the months sped by and acquaintanceship ripened into friendship, and friendship into love, under the genial warmth of the all-developing sun and the softening influence of the summer moon.

But still no solution came to the problem:

"Who is Adam Barr?"

* * * *

One evening in August, Basil Mayne and Joan Barr were sauntering together through some old woods on the outskirts of the village. Few of their walks now were the outcome of chance, and this one had been prearranged at Basil's earnest request.

For some time they walked along in silence, and then, stopping suddenly, Basil took the girl's hand in his, and, with quiet, steady earnestness, said—

"Joan, I cannot longer keep silence. For months past—from the very day when I—a stranger in Finchwood—saw you standing in the dusk by the gate of your garden—I have loved you with an intensity of which I had before never believed myself capable. And now there is but one hope in my heart, the hope that you, who have won my love, will consent to become my wife."

The girl's eyes drooped, but, lifting them for an instant, Basil saw the happy light that shone in their blue depths, and his heart bounded with exultation.

"Joan," he said tenderly, "may I hope that the love I thus yield to you is not without its response in your own heart?"

The little hand trembled in his as, lifting her eyes, she said—

"I have loved you from the first, Bernard."

Basil smiled as he heard the name.

"I am afraid," he said, "I must plead guilty to a little innocent deception. My name is not Bernard May."

Joan looked up in unmistakable surprise.

"Not—Bernard—May?" she said in bewilderment.

"You have never even inquired who or what I am," he said banteringly, smiling down into the lovely face. "Truly, love is blind!"

Joan lifted her head proudly.

"I knew you were a gentleman," she said simply, "and I left the rest to you."

Basil stooped and kissed her tenderly, almost reverently.

"God keep me worthy of such love!" he said earnestly. "No, Joan, my name is not Bernard May, that is a pen name I have adopted, my real name is Basil Mayne."

"Basil Mayne!" exclaimed Joan in surprise. "Not—not the editor of—the *Grecian?*"

"Yes, dear," said Basil, laughing at her bewilderment. "I ought not, perhaps, to have concealed it from you, but my first visit to Finchwood was made solely with a view to seeing, and, if possible, speaking with you, and, if the result were favourable, to open the negotiations, which have since been satisfactorily concluded, to secure for the *Grecian* the inestimable advantage of your literary co-operation.

"I did not, for many reasons, wish to be known to you, and it has since been a difficult matter to tell you. Thus, you see, we have the somewhat startling phenomenon of Commerce as the mother of Cupid!" And he smiled into the upturned face. Then he drew her towards him. "Am I forgiven?" he asked.

A look answered him, and he pressed the hand that lay in his.

Presently they turned and walked slowly in the direction of the village.

"I must call on your father to-morrow," said Basil meditatively.

The girl's face became grave.

"I hope he will be nice to you," she said. "But he is so reserved, and

Digitized by Google

never converses with anyone but me."

Basil looked at the girl as she finished speaking.

"I have gathered as much from the villagers," he said quietly. "I wonder if you will think me unpardonably curious if I ask what your father is."

A look of perplexity, almost of anxiety, came into Joan's face.

"I really do not know," she said. "The subject is never mentioned between us. He goes occasionally to London by the night train, and generally returns in the morning, and, though I know these irregular excursions are in some way connected with his business, I am ignorant of its nature.

"He always has enough money, but by what means it is obtained I know no more than you. Once I questioned him on the subject, but he evaded it with so much persistency that I have never repeated it. He is my father, and I trust him. I know he loves me very dearly, and that is all I wish to know." And she looked resolutely into the face of her lover.

Basil lightly changed the conversation, and returned to the subject of their love. It was late when they reached the gate of Ivy Lodge, where he bade good-night to his promised wife, and returned to his inn, pondering still more deeply upon the mystery surrounding Adam Barr.

The following morning he rang the bell of Ivy Lodge, and a moment later found himself, for the first time, in the presence of Adam Barr. He was a tall, squarely-built man, with iron-grey hair and clear blue eyes, which now and then clouded over with an expression of deep melancholy. Quietly and briefly Basil Mayne explained the nature of his errand, and waited for a reply.

"Mr. Mayne," said Adam Barr sadly, "I have long foreseen this, and, could I have done so, would have averted it. I am afraid you have, in your love for Joan, overlooked the fact that, deservedly or otherwise, her father is the possessor of an unenviable reputation."

Basil Mayne looked straight into the old man's eyes, which returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"I will trust you for that," he said confidently, and impulsively held out his hand. But, to his surprise, Adam Barr drew back.

"My hand is not fit to touch yours," he said, turning away.

For a moment Basil stood watching the old man in unqualified astonishment.

"Pardon me," he said at last, "but your appearance does not confirm your statement. Yet such a confession is scarcely one which a man might involuntarily make without good reason."

"Unfortunately for both you and Joan, it is but too irretrievably true," replied Adam Barr sadly. "Nay, more, for, did you know what these hands of mine do, you would shrink from me."

Again Basil was silent, bewildered by the old man's words. Presently, however, he roused himself.

"May I know," he said steadily, "the nature of this dishonest or unlawful work which occupies you? The revelation would be safe with me."

Adam Barr lifted his head proudly.

"It is neither dishonest nor unlawful," he said shortly.

Basil was becoming more and more bewildered each instant.

"Pardon me," he said, "but your words admit of no other construction. If it be neither dishonest nor unlawful, for what reason should I, to adopt your own phrase, 'shrink' from you?"

"That," said the old man, "must ever remain my secret. I love my daughter far too well to risk her happiness by revealing it to one who might inadvertenly transfer it to her."

A graver shade came into Basil Mayne's face.

"Mr. Barr," he said, with emphatic earnestness, "if you withhold your consent to your daughter's union with me, you will not *risk*, but *destroy* her happiness, and you will also seriously imperil the love which she bears *you*.

"You have chosen to make me the recipient of a partial confidence where none was asked or required. Were you the most loathsome and abhorrent of all God's creatures my love for Joan would be in no wise affected or diminished."

For a moment Adam Barr gazed at the earnest, impassioned face of the man before him. The nobility and resolution of his words had touched him to the heart.

"Mr. Mayne," he said at last, "I will not stand in the way of your object, and in this I earnestly hope I am doing right. But lest the knowledge I hold in my breast some day reach my child's ears and cause her misery and unhappiness, I will give up this life that I am leading, with all its attendant horrors, and, for her sake, retire into some far corner of the earth, where the past may be forgotten.

"May God bless both her and you, and comfort a father's heart, who, for his child's sake, goes out into voluntary exile, where his solitude and old age may never be cheered by the smile and sunshine of his daughter's presence."

Three months later the marriage of Basil Mayne and Joan Barr was solemnised, and the same day Adam Barr bade farewell to his daughter and sailed for southern seas.

His departure was a great grief to Joan, who, throughout the whole of her life, never learnt the mystery attending her father's career. But a week after his departure Basil Mayne chanced to pick up a newspaper, when his eye fell on a paragraph which caused him to utter an involuntary exclamation. For this is what he read—

"*We understand that the post of public hangman has become vacant, the man who has hitherto occupied it having permanently left the country. His former assistant will probably succeed to the position thus made vacant.*"

Walter J. Mowbray.

Digitized by Google

What's in a Name?

Being the History of Another Quarrel at Laburnum Villa.

["*The Romance of an Unpaid Bill*," *which introduced Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair to readers of* "*Short Stories*," *appeared in the issue dated February* 21*st.*]

It was quite two years since the quarrel over the milliner's bill, which quarrel some of you may remember. And I am happy to relate that since then there had been no quarrel worth speaking of, but this one seemed to bid fair to rival its famous predecessor. This is how it happened:

Gerald was impatiently pacing the dining-room floor at Laburnum Villa, waiting to hear the verdict from upstairs. Presently the doctor entered, his face all wreathed in smiles.

"Is it a b-baby, doctor? No, confound it, I mean, is it a boy, doctor?" spluttered Gerald.

"It is, Mr. Sinclair, and a very fine specimen too," replied the doctor, as though he were commenting on the merits of a prize bull calf; but that is beside the question.

"Ha!" almost screamed the delighted Gerald; "a boy is it? Then I've got his name all ready. Gerald Arthur Sinclair, he will be. And how's Mrs. Sinclair, doctor?"

"First rate, couldn't be getting along better. Now here's the nurse with your son and heir."

Then Gerald displayed a large amount of lunacy. After having decided that there was something alive in all that mass of wrappings, and having been solemnly assured by the nurse that it was his own and they weren't trying to substitute some inferior infant on him, "For I've read of such things," he said, he held it in his arms, until the terrified nurse took her charge again and retreated.

Thenceforward Gerald was an authority on children, and the next day he took a father of fourteen children to lunch with him, and gravely contradicted all his views on the bringing-up of children. "From experience" was his favourite remark. Still, the man who had had experience didn't mind, he'd been like it himself, and, as Gerald was paying for his luncheon, he ate a great deal and smiled.

Soon, however, the time for christening the juvenile Sinclair drew near, and Ethel mooted the subject to her husband.

"Certainly, my dear, by all means have him christened," was that gentleman's lordly reply, as though he were granting a great favour.

"Of course we must have the sweet little dear christened you silly man, but what name shall the precious darling have?"

Hereafter I will not chronicle the endearing names Mrs. Sinclair used when speaking of her offspring. It is a peculiar thing, uncommon to most young mothers, I believe, but Mrs. Sinclair had come to the conclusion that there never was a baby like hers in the whole wide world.

"Name—er—oh yes, I've already got that—Gerald Arthur."

"Oh, you've already got it," repeated Mrs. Sinclair, somewhat nettled. "Then presumably I have nothing to say in the matter?"

"Peculiar thing if you don't; I never knew any matter before but what you had a great deal to say in."

"That's it, now be a brute to me!" cried Mrs. Sinclair, commencing to sob. But Gerald cut her short

"My dear, there's no logic whatever in your remarks; you——"

"Logic?" broke in Mrs. Sinclair; "I don't want to know anything about your old logic. Why don't you want the baby called Logic, you're always talking about it?"

"My dear, I could hardly misname a child of yours so."

"Your sarcasm is wasted on me, and now, once for all, I will not have my son called Gerald Arthur."

"Your son?" repeated Mr. Sinclair. "I'll have you know he's as much mine as yours. Now then, what's this foolishness about the kid's name?"

"How dare you call my son a kid?"

"Well, he bleated like one all last night so neither of us could sleep," responded her husband ungraciously. Which lack of sleep may perhaps account for the peculiar tempers that particular morning.

"That was the way you held him. You can't expect a child to do anything else but cry when you grasp him tightly round the middle like a—er—cricket bat." People are not in the habit of grasping a cricket bat tightly round the middle, but still, we will pass that over.

"Well, madam, I've not yet gone through a course of nursing lessons nor did they include that in my early training."

"Now you're getting ridiculous, and, once for all, I will not have my son called Gerald Arthur."

"You may have your son called what you like, but my son shall be christened Gerald Arthur Sinclair."

"Fancy how everyone would laugh. Look what his initials would be—G. A. S. Why, everyone would be calling him 'Gas.'"

"And everyone would say, 'How like his mother.'"

"Brute!" responded his wife.

And that was the last word spoken on the subject that morning, for presently the maid brought in the breakfast.

Gerald sat down to the table and helped himself to various edibles, and then got up and poured out his coffee. This being done, he commenced to eat. Then Ethel came to the table and did exactly the same thing.

For some unaccountable reason the morning paper had not arrived so that Gerald was unable to take refuge in man's natural morning retreat. So they both sat in stony silence.

Presently Gerald wanted some salt. Laboriously he got up and walked round to where it was just by Mrs. Sinclair's side. Noticing what he was wanting, Mrs. Sinclair picked up the salt and began to leisurely help herself. Gerald waited five seconds and then with a snort rushed out into the kitchen and returned with a great lump of cooking salt, and, taking up the bread knife, proceeded to shave some off on to his plate.

Then Mrs. Sinclair wished to cut some bread, and picking up the bread knife (which Gerald had used for the salt), gazed at it critically and laid it down again. Then she rang for the maid and told her to bring in a clean bread knife.

This sort of thing would have gone on all breakfast time, if it were not for the fact that both husband and wife noticed a book in the room. As it happened, it was the only book in the breakfast-room that morning. It was Nuttall's dictionary, a

Digitized by Google

present to Gerald from a friend of his. A dictionary, by the way, is always such a nice friendly present to give.

Well, as I have said, husband's and wife's eyes alighted on this volume together, and in consequence they both rose together and walked to the side table where the book lay. Mrs. Sinclair seized it first, but, seeing her husband was on the same quest, she turned her nose up and released her hold and walked away to her breakfast again.

Gerald picked up the book and also sat down, and then opened it so that the title page with "Gerald N. Sinclair" written on it could be plainly seen by his wife.

He studied his name himself for some minutes and appeared to find it most diverting. He finished his breakfast with his interesting companion propped up against the bread, which gave Ethel the opportunity of ringing for a fresh loaf when she wanted some bread, which she did with the greatest apparent zest.

The air was almost blue when Gerald put on an old black cutty clay pipe, which his wife disliked more than anything. And when he walked upstairs smoking it, her rage knew no bounds. She rushed to her room, and, putting on her hat and coat, went out of the house, whilst Gerald grinned from the bathroom window as he watched her.

Mrs. Sinclair returned about lunch time; she felt she was sinking but she still kept her colours flying and her decks cleared for action. And neither spoke all lunch time. Now when they had a bad quarrel two years ago Gerald had gone to a hotel and stayed there, but he was wiser now. "No need to chuck away money on a hotel," he philosophised.

To tell the truth and shame someone or other, as the saying is, neither of them was in a temper any longer, but each still thought the other was. So that when presently an infant's howl penetrated into the dining-room Ethel rushed frantically upstairs, and Gerald's anger revived sufficiently to take him into the drawing-room and there cause him to play Chopin's Funeral March.

Suddenly there was a violent attack on the door from the other side, and it was burst open by Ethel, who came in with a rush and a scared face.

"Oh, Gerald, baby's choking! Oh, he'll die, I'm sure he will!" she cried.

Hurriedly dispatching a maid for the doctor, Gerald rushed upstairs to find that his son and heir had got the mouthpiece and guard of his feeding-bottle firmly wedged in his mouth and was going black in the face. How he had done it, Heaven and itself alone knew, but babies are marvellous creatures.

It took Gerald exactly twenty seconds to get it out, and then he returned to the dining-room whilst Ethel commenced to soothe the child.

In about a quarter of an hour's time Mrs. Sinclair entered the dining-room, and, closing the door behind her, stood still, gazing at her husband.

"Gerald," she said presently; "I'd like the boy to be called Gerald Arthur now."

She commenced this speech standing but finished it on her husband's knee.

"You'd like Gerald Arthur, would you?" replied that worthy. "Well, I've been thinking I don't care for it much now."

"Well, we must keep Gerald, at any rate."

"Yes, dear."

"And I think Austen is such a nice name for a second name. Shall we call him Gerald Austen, dear?"

"I think that sounds very well, Ethel. Yes, we'll call him that. And now, aren't you sorry you ——" But I really must break off there for the remainder of the conversation is very private.

Thus it came about that after the christening, one of Gerald the younger's uncles said to Ethel, "Queer initials you've given that nephew of mine—G. A. S., we shall have to call him 'Gas.'"

"But we altered them; we didn't call him Arthur," cried Ethel, and then she stopped as she caught her husband's eyes and heard a subdued whisper—"How like his mother."

E. Newton Bungey.

TWO WEBS OF MEMORY.

Telling of the Awakening of a Husband.

"MILDRED!"

It was the young wife's name which was called, and the husband was sitting in the cosy drawing-room of their happy little home, reading by the soft light of the flickering gas burner, and resting his slippered feet upon the burnished brass fender in front of a glowing fire of rosy embers.

"Mildred!" he called again, as when a lover he breathed her name, the sweetest in all the world to him.

But there was no answer.

"Ah!" he murmured, "the dear girl does not hear her husband's voice," and he lay back in his easy chair and watched the blue flames dance in and out among the sparkling coals.

At such a time memory weaves cunning webs of softened colours and sweet designs, and the young husband's thoughts flew backwards and forwards in the loom of the past.

Three years ago he had been a mother's petted darling, with no wish ungratified, no comfort neglected, no luxury forgotten. Yet he felt within his heart a tender longing, an empty void, which so far in his happy life had remained unfilled. Mildred Ray came, and the mother's heart knew that the wife was greater than the mother.

A year passed, and Mildred was his wife. Gentle, loving, beautiful, he took her to their new home, and for two years she had filled his mother's place, and made his home a beautiful ideal, a four-walled paradise upon earth, yet far above it.

He was serenely happy and peacefully comfortable. Mildred had given him her thought, her energy, her time, her endeavour—and he was at rest.

He awoke from his reverie with a start.

"Mildred!" he called.

No answer.

He became alarmed. Was it, then, all a dream? And was he to be rudely awakened?

Alas, for the mutability of human affairs.

"Mildred!" he called for the fourth time.

"Yes, Henry," came the sweet-voiced answer from a sofa in the corner.

"Oh!" he said, in a tone of relief. "Are you there, darling?"

"Yes, hubbie mine."

"Well, love, the fire is going out; won't you go and fetch some more coal?"

"Not much, petsey! I've been doing the loving-wife slave business long enough, and if you want any more coal you'll have to get it yourself."

Mildred's memory had been weaving a few webs itself while that fire was slowly getting cold.

O. P. W.

"The Bond Between"

is the title of our New Serial Story which will commence the week after next—in *Short Stories* dated May 30th. It will be written by Blanche Eardley, the talented young authoress who is at present relating her stage experiences in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Remember the date - - MAY 30th.

Digitized by Google

OUR SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.

Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

I Meet with an Accident.

September 11th.

So I am to be a peeress after all.

We have been engaged just two weeks now, and everyone who knows has got over the first surprise. I begged there should be no fuss made, so we were very kindly left to ourselves, and permitted to remain still a secondary topic to the birds. People have been nicer about it than I thought they would be, but possibly as a prospective duchess, they think it policy to keep in my good books. Bah! How sceptical I am growing!

Thank Heaven! St. Aubyn has scarcely any relations. I should think there never was another duke so impoverished, or I might say so blest, in that respect.

There is a married sister, who has written me quite a passable letter—an old bachelor uncle who has sent a message—and a maiden aunt, who had an epileptic fit on hearing the news, and has been ill ever since.

St. Aubyn was quite pleased about the aunt. "I have owed her a grudge ever since she boxed my ears once as a boy," he said. "Now I think I have got my own back again," which was very horrid of him, and I told him so. But he only laughed and said, "Would you have me pretend I was sorry?"

I never knew anyone so absolutely indifferent to the world's opinion as he is. Sometimes I think it is because of his colossal faith in himself, and it irritates me.

I often wonder if Di has heard yet, and Bobbie? I wonder if any of us can ever be the same again, or anything like it? And if Di will mind at all? I know Bobbie will

I shall not need a banker any more I suppose, and I have a shrewd suspicion that Bobbie, for all his boyishness, will not be allowed to lounge any longer in my drawing-room at will. For I have discovered that St. Aubyn is decidedly masterful, and I think he would be jealous.

So far I have let him have his own way pretty well; but that is partly because I am still tired, and it is so much simpler to do as you are told. Before we get married I shall have to put my foot down over something, or I shall have no will left at all.

He was not very pleased yesterday when I was telling a girl about some of Bobbie's escapades, and what a dear, delightful, foolish boy he was. He said afterwards when one opened a new chapter in one's life quite unlike the rest, it was wiser to close the last and begin again as if it had not been.

I said nothing could ever make me change to my old friends, and he bit his moustache, in a funny little way he has when not pleased, and said it would of course have to be a question of "give and take."

I don't know what he meant, unless he has some girl pal he thinks I shall want him to give up. I certainly shall not, if she is anything like Bobbie was to me. I should think he was lucky ever to have had such a pal, and ought not to lose her at any price.

He has been very honest about his affairs, and I am glad, though he must have spent an unconscionable amount of money to get through all he has, since he came of age. But there, I have always known he was not a saint, and it is better to have one's eyes open.

———

September 13th.

A strange thing happened last night. I sit down to write about it feeling almost as if there were nothing else at all in Heaven or earth.

St. Aubyn and I were sitting on the terrace when he suddenly said—

"Do you know, from the first time I saw you and Di Northcote together, after I returned from abroad, I thought he was in love with you."

I felt my heart give a great bound, and I caught my breath with a little gasp.

"What an odd idea," I said, as he seemed to expect me to speak. "Why I remember you telling me he was just the kind of man who would never marry."

"Very likely, but it doesn't follow he would never fall in love."

I did not speak, and he went on.

"The first night I went to see you act I sat just behind

Digitized by Google

Northcote in the stalls. He was at one side, rather in a corner, and he never took his eyes off your face."

Still I did not speak. Something like a terrible fear was dragging at my heart strings.

"I saw him three separate times," he continued, "and he was always the same—he never took his eyes off your face, and afterwards he went away directly without speaking to anyone. I remember once, too, hearing a fellow at the club make a bet that if Northcote were not such a confirmed old bachelor he would be head over ears in love with you."

"Well, he was quite wrong then," I said shortly. "Mr. Northcote has never shown me the slightest attention, except over business matters, with which he was pleased to amuse himself. Besides, he is practically engaged to Lady Danestone."

"Lady Danestone!" he echoed in surprise. "Whoever put such a tale as that about? Why she is engaged to General Lumley and has been for some little time, though it may not have been public. She is a sort of connection of mine, so I know it's true. The doctors won't let her go to him in India, so they are waiting until he comes home for good next Christmas, and then they will be married."

"Then why are they always together?" I asked, half-defiantly, with an odd bursting sensation about my head.

"Oh, Northcote has been hand in glove with her family for years and years. Her brother, who was killed in Egypt, and her husband, who died from a hunting accident, were his two greatest friends. They were known at one time as 'The Inseparables.'

"No," he continued, "I think Di liked you. I once said something about you purposely before him, to see how he would take it, and he went as black as thunder, and looked furious. I'm glad I've cut him out; he such a very superior being in his own estimation."

"I think we'll go in," I said, getting up rather hurriedly. "It has turned so chilly."

And all the way along I kept saying to myself:

"What if Di did love me after all? What if Di did love me?"

That was yesterday, but I am saying it still, and I seem to have been saying it ever since.

Shall I go on saying it all my life, I wonder? Will it lie like a cold hand across my happiness for ever?

September 20th.

How long it seems since I last wrote? How hopelessly hopeless everything seems to be getting? Two days after that last entry we went to a garden party at the neighbouring castle. And Di was there.

I saw him in the distance before he saw me, and suddenly everything seemed to reel and grow indistinct, and I clutched Mrs. Mateson's arm.

"What is the matter?" she asked anxiously, and I managed to stammer:

"It is nothing. I am only a little faint. Please don't say anything about it."

"All right," she answered. "We will take a turn down here," and I think she guessed I had had a shock of some sort, for she was just kind without asking any questions.

By the time Di came to shake hands with me I was quite collected again. It was well on in the afternoon, and St. Aubyn had left me to talk "big game" with another guest.

"So my duties are nearly at an end?" he said simply, taking an empty chair beside me.

He looked ill, I thought, and though his face was still the same impenetrable mask, there was something new in his eyes. In a certain suggestion of hopelessness they showed more feeling.

"You must be very glad," I said, scanning his face half-eagerly, in spite of myself.

"Why should I?" he asked. "It was my own wish all through."

"Yes, but I think you were prompted by a sense of duty towards a country mouse at large in town."

"No," he said, thoughtfully, "I don't think I was."

Then he fell to drawing a pattern on the gravel with his stick, and for some minutes neither of us spoke.

"Have you heard from Bobbie?" he asked at last.

I answered "Yes," and smiled faintly. For Bobbie had not been pleased to approve of the match, and after describing my *fiancé* as "that doll faced man with the skylight," had announced his intention of shooting him at the first opportunity.

"If I don't do it for you, you will do it yourself in three months," he had written, "and I should be much more entertaining on the scaffold than you."

Di seemed to gather some of this from my silence, and presently said:

"I suppose it really means 'Good-bye' for Bobbie and me?"

"Bobbie will perhaps mind a little?" I said half bitterly.

"And why not I?" he asked.

"You!" I cried, goaded suddenly to rashness. "Of course you will not mind! Why should you? When have you minded about anything for years? Hasn't it been your studied aim to teach yourself not to mind anything? To become a sort of polished statue instead of human flesh and blood?

"Do you think I have not known that you were pleased to show an interest in me because I happened to be a little out of the common? And that all the time, in reality, you had a sort of tolerant indulgence towards me as an actress, not good enough for a friend?"

I got up and walked to a low terrace wall, and leant my arms upon it, breathing heavily. Di did not speak for a long time, but when at last he came to me, there was a yet further change in his face, though I cannot describe it.

"I think you have accused me unjustifiably," he said. "Have you ever known me make a friend of any woman?"

"What of Lady Danestone?" I asked.

He seemed surprised.

"I have known Edith Danestone all my life," he said, "and I loved her husband as few men love each other. For years after his death she was inconsolable, and I was almost the only one she could bear to speak to about him. In consequence it drew us very near together. It is quite eighteen years ago now since he died, and she is engaged to be married to General Lumley, also a friend of mine, who is out in India. I might remind you," he added, "that sometimes when I have tried to be a friend you would not let me."

"Yes, I know!" I cried. "I could not bear your condescension. I felt you were sneering at me up your sleeve, all the time you were kindly directing my steps in the way they should go. I was a kind of automaton to you—all women are—that should run upon certain lines, and whom you could occasionally treat as possessing some intellect, and worthy of a passing consideration.

"Some of my worst exploits were the result of your veiled sneering. Sometimes you made me feel I could do anything to oppose you. You seemed to think any woman would be glad of your guidance. I wanted to show you that I did not care a fig for it, whatever the consequences. That you were always right in the end, only made me more sore."

He had grown very white while I talked, but I could not leave off—wrong or right I felt I must have it out with him, and he did not attempt to stop me.

"One of the first aims I conceived in London was that of making you feel," I ran on. "I believed you had a heart somewhere, and I made up my mind to try to get at it. I know that I have failed ignominiously, but I do not think anyone else will succeed. I do not think anything can touch you very much again."

"You are wrong," he said very quietly. "Far from failing, you have signally succeeded. During the last few weeks, through you, I have discovered that I have a power to feel equalled only by a power to suffer."

In the quiet of his voice, characteristic still of his complete mastery over himself, there was a note that left no room for doubt. I dare not look at his face—all at once I was conscious of a new hopelessness in it that stirred my soul to its inmost depths. I tried to speak, but my tongue refused

Digitized by Google

to frame any words. In the hour of my longed-for triumph, I felt only humiliated and crushed.

"I hope you will be very happy," he said, in that same quiet way, "and since it means the end of our—our friendship, I should like to say, only you will not have it—our intercourse I will take this opportunity of saying I shall always feel indebted to you for showing me what you have about my own heart."

In a kind of daze, I saw St. Aubyn coming towards us, and then Di walked slowly away in the opposite direction. I tried to call him, but I seemed speechless, and I felt myself gripping the stone parapet in a kind of frenzy. If he had heard and come back I verily think I should have explained everything then, before the two of them.

But he did not hear—he did not hear. He went away out of my life, and perhaps I shall never see him again, to tell him I know I have wronged him.

October 20th.

This is the first time I have held a pen for a whole month, and now I am writing on a sofa, when I believe I am supposed to be sleeping quietly. Anyhow nurse has gone for a walk, and Mrs. Mateson has just crept out of the room and closed the door.

A good deal has happened since I last wrote, but of course the chief event is the one which laid me on my back a prisoner—I cannot even yet say for how long. It resulted partly over that incident of putting my foot down about something I once spoke of, and happened in this way.

The day after the garden-party St. Aubyn wanted to go into Glasgow, so he borrowed Colonel Mateson's motor, and prevailed upon me to drive with him.

We started off very early, just our two selves and a footman, in a beautiful little Panhard, and had a delightful run into Glasgow. It was a lovely day and St. Aubyn did not want to talk much, for which I was grateful for I was still feeling somewhat dazed over Di's revelation the previous day.

When we reached Glasgow St. Aubyn did his shopping, and we went to a hotel to lunch. Afterwards we stood in the entrance a few minutes waiting for the motor, and just then a girl I used to act with, and with whom I had been very friendly, came into the hotel with two men. She saw me at once, and hesitated as if to see whether I wished to acknowledge her. I did instantly, and said to St. Aubyn: "I know that girl well, I will go and speak to her."

He hurriedly studied the trio, and his mouth immediately assumed a scornful expression.

"You mean you used to know her," he said coldly.

"Not at all," I answered with spirit. "I was rather fond of her, and must just ask her about one or two of the old friends."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "You cannot possibly be seen speaking to anyone in company with two men like that."

I admit the men were terrible, but I was angry at St. Aubyn's peremptory way of putting it, and saw a good opportunity of asserting my independence.

"It is not of the least consequence to me who sees me," I said airily. "I shall not keep you long."

"I object," he said angrily. "If you go it is against my express wishes."

For answer I crossed the hall and held out my hand to Ellen Grey.

After a little desultory conversation, in which the two men proved themselves the bounders they looked, I said good-bye again, and went back to St. Aubyn.

"Are there any other third-rate, low comedians you wish to converse with?" he asked scathingly, "before we start."

"Not unless we meet Bertha Grey on the road," I answered coolly, "her sister says she is in Glasgow. But I'll thank you not to insult my friends, St. Aubyn," I added.

"Oh, ask them all out to the Nest by all means, if you like," he snarled. "I'm sure Mateson would allow them to have tea in the servants' hall."

I hated Bertha Grey as much as I liked her sister, but seeing her cross the road at that moment, I went down the steps to meet her, and doubtless, as much to her surprise as anyone's, shook hands with her affably.

Then, without a word to St. Aubyn, I took my seat in the motor. He mounted beside me with a like silence, and we started homewards. I leant back and professed to be lost in admiration of the scenery, gazing about me with an air of the utmost unconcern.

St. Aubyn bit his moustache hard and put on the speed, until we must have got to thirty or forty miles an hour. When we came to corners, he shot round them with mad recklessness and took the hills in a break-neck fashion. The only time we broke the silence, was when after rounding a particularly nasty curve, I remarked: "I am sorry I have not made my will."

He did not reply, but continued the same speed.

So we flew on until it seemed to me the motor was a live thing, to which he had transmitted in some way his ill-temper. It was as though he was working it down into the motor, which in its turn became more reckless and unmanageable.

There is no denying it was exciting, in fact thrillingly so—I found myself presently holding tightly to the seat with my whole body strung to a tremendous pitch of wild, reckless enjoyment. I do not know what St. Aubyn felt, but I could see he had an iron grip upon the steering gear, and his eyes rigidly fixed on the road.

The climax came suddenly, when we were nearly home, and was due to a side-slip. Had the road not been greasy at that particular curve, we should doubtless have reached home in safety. As it was, the motor gave a terrific skid, and was flung full tilt against a bank.

The footman cleverly jumped over the bank, but it was a positive miracle St. Aubyn and I were not killed outright. As it was I knew no more until I came round in my own bedroom, and found Mrs. Mateson bending over me.

When I was sufficiently myself to speak, I asked about St. Aubyn. They told me he had a broken arm, and was rather badly cut and bruised, but had insisted on remaining near me until he had nearly fainted, and then the doctor had carried him off to bed. After that I do not remember anything much for a week.

I had a slight concussion of the brain, and had ricked my back badly. I know St. Aubyn almost lived in the room, and that he brought me lovely bouquets every morning, but I was too ill to do more than smile faintly when he spoke to me.

I remember, whenever I could think coherently at all, I thought I was dying, and I was glad. I suppose it was then that Nelly Mateson guessed my secret. Anyhow, I feel that she knows it now though nothing has been said between us.

But I did not die in spite of my wish, and now I am nearly all right again except for my back, which will not get well. St. Aubyn is goodness itself to me—he cannot do enough. I wish it were not so.

I am breaking my heart for Di. If only I had died—no one need have been hurt then. But now that St. Aubyn is waiting on me hand and foot, and has become more than ever wrapped up in me, how am I ever to tell him that I cannot marry him? I feel as if I should hate myself forever.

And when I have told him what am I to do? I feel I shall never see Di again at all, and so it seems as if I might just as well spare St. Aubyn the blow, and do all I can to make him happy. Only how can I marry him? How can I, when all the time I am breaking my heart for someone else?

(Next week I shall conclude my confessions.)

A SPLENDID SERIES

by Winifred Graham, whose work will be best known to readers of *Short Stories* by her serial "When the Birds Begin to Sing," which appeared some little time ago, will start next week. It will be quite a different style from any of the series which have recently been published. Order a copy of next week's *Short Stories* to be reserved for you.

Digitized by Google

Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The ninth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

<---------- CUT THROUGH HERE ---------->

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

EIGHTH LIST.

43. We have eaten that Indian curry you bought in a side street near Kentish Town; we wished there had been a little more of it.

44. He suffered from ingrowing toenails, even though Merton, who cured similar cases, had spent a lot of time treating him.

45. The supports of the new bridge were splendid to rest on, until someone leant on them too hard, when they gave way.

46. During a fit of frenzy she said: "If I had a mother, be sure that she would end my pain to-night, instead of prolonging it as you do."

47. I heard you were thinking of selling the cattle you bought in Turner's sale. Are you willing to name a price for them?

48. It was very late on Friday when the last train reached London Bridge. An accident on the line had caused the delay.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

Digitized by Google

Love's Awakening.

The Story of an Artist's Model.

"And so, Lottie, you are looking for the last time upon 'Thoughts,' for to-morrow it goes to its new owner."

"I *am* glad you have sold it," said the girl, "but I shall miss it, sir; it has grown to be like a friend to me."

"Which I hope it is," said the handsome young painter, smiling; "for it is your very self, when you are deep in thought; ah, Lottie, it was an unfortunate day for Claude Leclerc, when first he saw your face in the Strand."

"Taking out papers for mother," said the girl musingly. "I remember it so well. Mr. Leclerc, I *did* wonder, when first you spoke, why you could want me for a model; for I had never thought that I was such as you said—beautiful."

"You had never consulted your mirror then, Lottie, or those eyes of yours are not so perfect in sight, as in beauty."

The girl smiled, a rather sad smile, but free from all vanity or self-consciousness; she was accustomed by now to hear the artist praise her beauty."

"I never had overmuch time to look at my face, true, sir," she answered, "for since father died, mother has had to work very hard in her little shop and needed all my help, but things are better of late—good-night, sir—good-bye dear 'Thoughts,' I shall not see *you* to-morrow."

"Not unless you come very early in the morning, which is unnecessary, for you may in your mirror see its counterpart at any time."

As he spoke Claude Leclerc threw himself into the one dilapidated armchair the studio contained, and with his chin resting on his hand, intently and thoughtfully, regarded the model and the picture.

To describe one were to describe both, so lifelike was the picture, a face of rare beauty, such as an artist loves; eyes, deeply, richly blue, with changing tinges of grey in their depths; a mouth of much sweetness; a fair, rounded chin; and hair, with sunny rays, intermixed with its brown wealth; skin of rich, creamy texture, tinged with a delicate colour, that would come and go unbidden; it was a sweet, sensitive, thoughtful face.

"I think I named my picture rightly; do you not think so, Lottie?" said the artist at length; "for the face is full of thoughts; do you know that I am sometimes curious as to the nature of those thoughts; is there not a lover somewhere in the background colouring them?"

He sometimes jested thus, that he might watch the changes in her face, and so gain ideas as to how he should next paint her.

"No, indeed!" and she laughed a merry little laugh; "no, indeed, sir—good afternoon!"

"Good afternoon, child, and you will come to-morrow—for to-morrow—" and he rose and followed her to the door—"we begin our next picture—the picture which is to bring me wealth and fame."

His voice had sunk to a murmur, so that she did not hear his last words, so she merely asked:

"And what are you going to call it—this new picture, sir?"

"I cannot tell you what the subject is to be," he said as though aroused from a reverie; "I may not name it until it is finished—but—it is still something in the thought line—only—the thoughts must be concentrated on one object or subject; but we will see. Good-night, child, good-night!"

He spoke dreamily, he was thinking of his picture, and another face that was not that of his model.

"Good-night, sir," said the girl, with a perplexed air; "I will come early to-morrow."

The sound of her footsteps had long died away ere Claude Leclerc rose, and, standing before the picture, looked at it long and critically; then he walked thoughtfully up and down the studio, pausing now and then to look at the still uncovered picture.

"She is evidently perfectly heart-whole," he spoke at last, aloud, in one of his pauses before the picture. "Ah, could I but bring that look into her face, which is now lacking, it would mean the realisation of all my hopes!

"Yes, it would be grand, that heart of hers, roused to life and transforming her face, would radiate the canvas, and—the world would be at my feet, then—Rome—Italy—and Irene."

His voice lingered—tenderly, caressingly, on the last name, as though loth to let it leave his lips; his step up and down the room quickened; then he paused and covered the picture gently and caressingly, as though it lived.

As it disappeared from his view he spoke again, and in his eyes was a light of determination and resolve.

"I will do it." The words left his lips slowly. "I will do it—the task will be easy—it will not harm her—she is very young—she will forget."

* * * * *

"Turn your head a little more this way, little one—ah, that is perfect—now the arm."

Claud Leclerc touched his model lightly as he spoke, touched her as though to rearrange her hair, her pose; but, in those light, indefinable touches, the girl felt the shadow of a caress, for of late his speaking eyes seemed to love to linger on her face, and his voice when addressing her was ever soft and low.

"You are looking too thoughtful, little one," he continued softly. "Ah, those thoughts, those thoughts—look this way for a second; yes, that is better—but I tire you?"

"No," she answered, the soft colour stealing to her cheek, "I never tire; I so love to see the picture grow."

She felt his breath on her cheek as he touched her hair, his hand lay lightly on hers, and he withdrew its touch from her fingers, slowly, lingeringly, as though reluctant to do so; he stooped closer to the canvas and his hair touched her forehead. Oh, the sweetness of it all! Her heart was waking to life.

And this waking had been going on for days now; for the

Digitized by Google

artist had found his task more difficult than he had anticipated, the picture was near its completion, save for a few touches that would make or mar it, that were needed to give it life.

Never had days been so fair as this, to the never-weary model; she lived in another world—a world of perfect bliss and beauty.

Her happiness was apparent in her face; she daily grew more beautiful; for every morning was the beginning of a new day of happiness, so that upon waking she would sometimes cry out, "I am glad, so glad that it is morning, and I shall see his face again."

For her heart, slow to love, but tenacious in its affections, was turning slowly but surely to the artist; she felt that he loved her; and, like an opening bud, the petals of her soul were expanding, showing forth in her face new beauties, such as one sees in the opening rose.

She had always had a strong liking for him; he was handsome and polished, and the first of his class with whom she had come into contact.

Moreover, he had ever treated her with courtesy, yet none of these things, although winning her regard and liking, would of themselves have won her love; for hers was not a nature to give its love unsought.

Besides, she had too modest an opinion of herself, and too much good sense, not usually found in people of her station, to mistake superficial flattery and attention for love.

But of late the thought would recur, although she had put it away again and again; the belief that the artist loved her; his every look and action showed it so plainly, and love for him was overwhelming her with a force that Claud Leclerc could never have realised, for, had he been able to comprehend how love could sound the depths and change the current of life, in a heart like Lottie's, he would have paused, aye, and paused long ere tampering with such a nature.

"I seem to have done but little to-day, Lottie," he exclaimed, after he had arranged her to his liking, "I cannot get the expression——"

"Oh, I wish, I do wish, I could look just as you would have me," she answered earnestly; "yet to me the picture is now beautiful enough."

"Ah, Lottie *mia*," he said tenderly, "were your wishes my charioteers, I know that ere this I should have reached the goal of fortune."

As he spoke their eyes met and the girl's fell before the look in those of the artist; she felt the warm flush steal over her face and neck, then it receded, leaving her pale and trembling.

She would not meet his eyes again, she dared not, he saw, and impatiently threw down his brush.

"My hand fails me somehow, these last days," he said, throwing himself into a chair and drawing her to him. "Come, let us talk instead of what I shall do should this picture bring me wealth.

"I shall go to Rome and Italy; I shall see and study the works of the great masters, and on my return we shall take what the gods have sent us—happiness—love and joy."

His voice became low and dreamy, his eyes shone as he pictured in his mind a face; a face as fair as Lottie's, aye, more regally, royally beautiful—the one face in the world for him.

The dream passed and his eyes dwelt once again on the still unfinished picture.

"Lottie, my beautiful Lottie!" He bent forward and sought her eyes; "shall we not be happy—say, little girl, for I love you, Claud loves you."

She trembled with joy and fear, the rose she held in her hand fell to the ground. Claud leant forward to regain it, then, drawing her gently to his side, he placed it in the bodice of her gown; then he drew her closer into the fold of his arms.

Raising her face to his with a tender smile, he looked into it until he had compelled her sweet, shy eyes to meet his.

She had thought to veil her heart beneath those long lashes; for the eyes beneath told him all; in them he saw the look he waited for—love, shy wonder, rapture and ecstasy—the girl's heart was awake to life and love.

With trembling haste Claud Leclerc rose, seized his brush, and touched the picture swiftly and lightly; all was forgotten—love, ambition, even the little model at whom he glanced occasionally with the eye of an artist—all but those last touches.

At length he paused, threw down his brush—triumph, elation, and other feelings, at war in his face, for the picture was finished.

* * * * * *

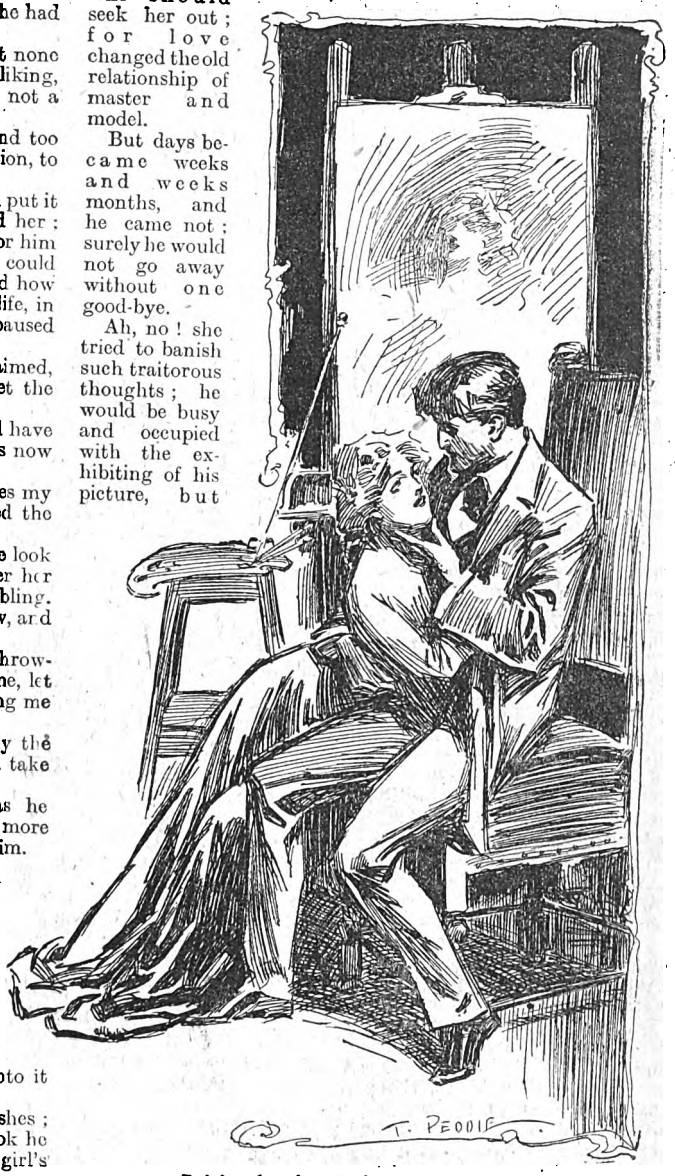
Three months had passed away, and whilst all London was talking of the picture of the season, a girl's heart was silently breaking with longing and waiting, and waiting in vain.

Lottie had not seen the artist since the eventful day of the picture's completion; she would not seek him at his studio, for he had said he would write or see her ere he went to Rome.

Besides this, a shyness had come to her, and a feeling of pride; he had told her of his love, then, she argued, it was he who should seek her out; for love changed the old relationship of master and model.

But days became weeks and weeks months, and he came not; surely he would not go away without one good-bye.

Ah, no! she tried to banish such traitorous thoughts; he would be busy and occupied with the exhibiting of his picture, but



Raising her face to his with a tender smile he looked into it.

Digitized by Google

one day he would come and she would meet him as her lover.

But as time went on, hope became doubt, and doubt deepened into a grim certainty; and the heart of the girl grew sadder and heavier as the empty days passed, until upon it settled an oppressive weight that would not remove.

"He has gone," she would whisper sadly to the now faded brown rose, her one treasure; "he has forgotten me so soon, can he have loved me as he said and have left me like this?"

Then bitter tears would fall on the rose, tears that would almost have awakened the heart of any dead thing, and then she would brush them away and call herself silly and foolish for her mistrust of him, and, kissing the brown petals of the dead rose, she would try to smile again.

One keen, cold day in December she arose, and the load that oppressed her seemed heavier than usual; and suddenly a sore longing came upon her to see the picture once more. Claud had once said it would be hung at the Royal Academy; she would find it, wherever it was.

She gained her mother's permission who, poor soul, was sorely at a loss to know what had so changed her of late, and, drawing her thin black cape around her frail form, Lottie set off to the Academy.

Her heart throbbed with tumultuous feeling, as she peered into every room, then she saw it—saw it in the distance in a prominent place.

It seemed to her that most of the people who were there that day stood around it; and as she took a place in the background she caught faint words of approval and praise of its beauty.

How beautiful it was, and how much joy and sorrow it had caused her; she stood long before it as if spell-bound, hearing as in a dream the remarks of the passers-by.

She could almost smell the perfume of the rose as he had placed it in her bosom, she could feel his kiss on her cheek, and see his handsome, impassioned eyes looking into hers.

Some turned to look at the slight, attenuated form, but they did not recognise her as the original of the picture, for the bloom had left the cheek, now so drawn and thin.

She wondered how she could ever have looked so radiantly beautiful as the picture portrayed her; that her eyes could ever have looked so glad, her breast with its weight of heavy hopelessness could scarce believe.

These and more were her thoughts, interrupted by a voice which floated to her ears—she would have heard it even had she slept, so familiar it was; yea, and so dear.

"True, it is a charming face, Irene"—the voice softened at that name—"but it is a beauty that will soon take to itself wings, for she will marry, which among her class means work, care, drudgery——"

She heard no more, but that sufficed—that and the airy lightness of the tone; her heart became a stone.

She turned and saw him; upon his arm leant a lady of matchless beauty. Lottie saw the proud pose of the neck and head, she saw also the look, fond and worshipping, with which Claud Leclerc regarded his companion.

"Why, Lottie, you here!" he said, quickly recovering from his momentary confusion.

Something took possession and gripped her heart, something that impelled her to touch Leclerc's arm; he turned, and met a face flushed as with hectic, and eyes wildly bright.

"Why, Lottie, you here!" he said, recovering quickly from his momentary confusion and turning with his old charm of manner to his companion. "Lady Irene, Lottie, my little model; but you will know her well by now from my pictures."

"But surely"—the lady's voice was low and sweet—"surely she is changed, Claud? How thin, how ill——"

"Yes," he interrupted carelessly, "I believe she is thinner; gone off too!"

Lady Irene had been holding out her hand, but Lottie did not take it—she was powerless; she saw the sweet smile, the gold bronze of the hair, the violet eyes; she to be compared with this grace and beauty!

"I thought you had gone away, sir," Lottie managed to say at last, and her voice sounded husky and strange, even in her own ears. "As you did not write as you promised I——"

"No, I have had a very busy time," he answered, breaking in quickly ere she had finished speaking; "fame brings plenty of work and worry in its train. I go next week."

"And so he came to look once again ere his departure on 'Love's Awakening,' which would never have had an existence but for you, Lottie; but have you not been ill of late—you are much thinner than in the picture?"

Digitized by Google

It was Lady Irene who spoke ; her voice, low rich and full of sweet sympathy fell on Lottie's ears unheeded.

"Love's Awakening!" a sudden pain shot to her breast ; she put her hand there and turned dazed, unseeing eyes to the artist's face.

"Is that—is that its name?" she faltered.

He looked at her keenly, feeling slightly uneasy, a feeling strange to him. Did she guess—was it a challenge that shone in her fine eyes? Well, she must be disillusioned sometime, better at once ; but Irene must not know.

He held out his hand as these thoughts flashed through his mind, and his voice deliberately assumed a tone of regard.

"Lottie, in my absence, you must take care of yourself," he said gently, "for on my return I shall need you again, but now—good-bye, we are late."

"And whilst Claud is away may I come and see you?" said the lady kindly ; "for when he returns, we are to be married in early Spring——"

The happy laugh on her lips was stayed, changing to sudden sadness, for the girl's lips moved ; and when she found her voice it was a voice as of one in pain and anguish.

"No, you must never see me again ; you must not come," her tone was low and intense, "for I cannot bear it—I cannot!"

Her voice broke suddenly, she drew a handkerchief weakly from her breast and held it to her lips—it was stained with crimson ; then she threw up her arms and would have fallen, but Lady Irene caught her and held her close to her breast, saying quickly and decisively :

"Claud, a doctor, and my carriage, quick—I will take her home."

"Yes, home," Lottie whispered, "home ; I am so tired—so tired!"

The perfume of Lady Irene's roses stole over her senses, she saw the kind, angel-eyes filled with pity and love shining above her ; to her desolate heart they gave comfort and a sense of security, and then she seemed to fall asleep.

But once or twice her lips moved tremulously, and, Lady Irene, stooping forward eagerly, heard the whispered words : "Love's awakening!" "Love's awakening!"

* * * * *

It was a glorious February day, a day that gave promise of a glorious Springtime. Claud Leclerc was seated at breakfast in a luxuriously furnished room in a pretty Roman villa.

The hour was late, but he had only just risen ; several unopened letters were before him ; he chose one that caused him to tremble with impatience as he broke the seal.

"At last!" he said aloud. "Irene, my darling, how I have longed and waited for this! Surely she has not been ill."

His eyes scanned it eagerly, the well-loved writing ; then his face paled, his lips trembled, and he fell forward, covering his eyes with his hands—fell forward with a heavy groan. For this is what he read :

"*I have just returned from laying flowers—pure and sweet as herself—on the dead form of Lottie—Lottie, an artist's model.*

"*You broke a true heart that you might win wealth and fame ; these are things which may be bought with the price of blood, but not so the love of Irene Vercourt. I pray God that I may never look upon your face again!*"

Besy.

"Did she thank you for the seat?" "No ; but after she had settled down in it she smiled sweetly, and begged me not to rise."

"Here, what does this mean?" shouted Whooply, as he found his youngest riding a broomstick over the top of the piano. "It's all right. Mamma said if I'd stay in I could play on the piano."

"Darling," said she, "do you love me as much as ever?" "Yes, dearie," said he, with his nose buried in his newspaper. That ought to have satisfied her, but she had to ask : "Why?" "Oh, I dunno. Habit, I s'pose."

Your Editor Chats.

On page 623 appears the eighth list of sentences in connection with the Competition, which will be complete in twelve lists. Below are some fresh points raised by readers, together with my replies to them.

Question : May the letters in any of the words be transposed so as to form the name of a station?

Answer : It is distinctly stated in the conditions of the competition that the words or parts of words must be taken consecutively, in order to form the names.

Question : May I make the name "Heath" out of the last four letters in the word "beneath" should that word occur in any of the sentences?

Answer : Certainly not. The four letters you mention form only "Eath," there is no "H" with which to commence "Heath."

Question : May I copy the sentences out on to a piece of foolscap paper and then write the names of the stations underneath each sentence on the foolscap, instead of in Short Stories? When sending in my complete list of sentences I would, of course, inclose the pages from Short Stories.

Answer : All names of stations must be written legibly on the line given for that purpose under each sentence in Short Stories.

Back numbers containing the first seven lists can be obtained through your newsagent, or, if stamps for tenpence are sent to the Publisher, Short Stories, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., they will be sent direct, post free.

Next week will see the conclusion of the "Confessions of a Self-made Girl." In that number a series by Miss Winifred Graham will commence. This series will consist of stories told by friends to each other during journeys in the train on different occasions. Each story will be complete in itself.

In Short Stories dated May 30th, on sale the week after next, will appear the opening chapters of a new serial, the plot of which is an entirely novel one, and it will be worked out in a way quite fresh to readers of Short Stories. This story will be written by Blanche Eardley, the clever writer who is at present relating her life history in *Pearson's Weekly* in a series of articles entitled "Tinsel Triumphs." You should tell your friends of both this series and the new serial to start the week after next, they cannot fail to be interested.

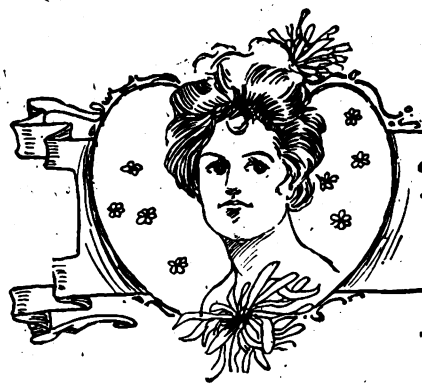
I am glad to be able to announce that the Fresh Air Fund is beginning to swell in a most satisfactory manner, and if it continues in the way in which it has started it cannot but have a successful season. Just because it has started so well without your help, don't think that there is no need for you to send along a donation. It is needed just as much as ever, for the more money we receive, the greater the number of children who will be able to have a day's outing.

It is really astonishing the number of children there are in our big cities—a very large sum of money would be required to enable them all to go away just for one day.

If, however, each person who saw the notices regarding the Fresh Air Fund were to send only ninepence, it would mean a big increase in the number of happy little ones. Send your contribution, and ask your friends to send something as well—the sooner the better—to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Collecting forms can be had on application. All amounts received will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google



The Interference of Selina Smith.

Telling of a Postcard and a Jealous Wife.

MILLY CORTON was not in the habit of opening her husband's letters, but that custom of privacy was naturally inapplicable to postcards. They had only been married five months, and were still on the heights of romance, when the midday post brought an innocent-looking card.

Milly took it herself from the postman, giving him in return a cheery good-morning. "George Corton, Esq.," and the address were inscribed on the front. She turned it over. This was what her amazed eyes read on the back :

"98 *Lonsdale Road,*
"*Plynton.*

"DEAR GEORGE,—*When are you coming to see me? I got to this place last week, and hope to be found here for a good while. Do walk round one evening and take me out! I know we shall have a happy time together, and I could probably tell you a few things that you aren't aware of.—Yours ever,*
"SELINA SMITH."

For the moment Milly was literally stunned. She sat down in a dazed condition on the hall-chair. A thunderbolt had fallen from the blue ; the sky was suddenly black with clouds.

Who was this Selina Smith who dared to write to her husband in such a familiar strain ? What dreadful secret in his past life had come by chance to-day into her possession ? Five months of undimmed happiness, and now a terrible mystery that put an end to everything !

Milly read the card over and over again, till every word was photographed on her mind. It seemed to have been dashed off in a hurry, but the handwriting was not uneducated. Milly was sure that she had never seen it before.

Presently she arrived at the one possible solution of the affair. Some old, unknown admirer of George's had come to reside in Plynton, and wanted to meet him on the same footing as in his pre-nuptial days. How awful to think that such a wicked creature could even exist !

Whatever George had been before marriage—and such a very good-looking man could not help being a bit of a flirt perhaps—he was goodness personified now, never looking twice at any woman except his wife. This Selina Smith—whoever she might be—must be sent about her business.

Although profoundly assured of George's rectitude, Milly felt very miserable—so much so that after lunch she indulged in a good cry.

Her feelings thus relieved, she began to think out the plan of operations. No general tackling an unknown enemy in an unknown country could have given the matter graver consideration.

Should she let the postcard fall into George's hands or not ?

She decided that she would, and in this wise. He always went to the letter-box for the early morning delivery. The last thing to-night she would slip that fatal postcard inside, so that he might take it out with the other letters in the morning.

Thus no suspicion could occur to him that she had sighted the incriminating document. It was her unpleasant but clear duty to put her husband to the test, convinced though she was that he would emerge therefrom with flying colours.

When Milly came down next morning he first glance was towards the breakfast-table, at which George was seated eating his porridge, the newspaper erected in front of him.

There appeared to be no letters at all, and the post-card was conspicuous by its absence. George must have pocketed it. She watched from behind the tea-pot for a sign of guilt, but his appetite was as good as ever.

"I say, Milly, you look rather pale this morning."

"I didn't sleep very well."

"Something disagreed with you perhaps ? "

She nodded. Something had disagreed and was likely to disagree, until the mystery was cleared up.

As she handed him his carefully brushed hat, he remarked :

"I shall be home a little later to-night, Milly."

A dread fear clutched her heart and showed in her face.

"Don't look so woebegone about it, dear ! Only a very little later than usual ! "

She affected playfulness, though goodness knew her spirits were despondent enough.

"Oh, George ! Going off on a little spree that you won't tell your wifey about ? "

"No ! Don't be too curious ! You'll know some time."

"Won't you tell me now ? In what direction is it, I wonder ? "

"Well, I'll tell you this. I've a call to make in the Lonsdale Road. There, don't ask me anything else. Good-bye, dear ! " And he kissed her and was gone.

It was true then—terribly true. Milly staggered back into the dining-room. That adventuress had cast her spell about him ; he was going off to the address named on the post-card. Yes, the husband she once trusted had proved himself to be an arch-deceiver.

In a very short time Milly came to a decision. Her first act was to consult a Plynton directory. Feverishly she turned over the pages to ascertain who lived at 98 Lonsdale Road. Numbers 98 to 106 were occupied by Wheeler's, the biggest emporium in the town, employing over a hundred assistants. Selina Smith must be a shop-girl !

At this discovery Milly's tears broke out afresh. A person of high degree would not have mattered so much, but that a common shop girl should have had the effrontery to approach her own darling George—oh, the infamy of the thing was increased tenfold !

Half-an-hour after luncheon Milly went upstairs and put on her things—her best things. She intended to seek out Selina Smith at Wheeler's, and make an impression upon that young person which she would not speedily forget. Instant dismissal, if not something worse, would be her punishment.

All the principal shops in Plynton were situated in the Lonsdale Road. At the further end stood Wheeler's. It was an establishment that provided one with nearly everything from patent baby foods to coffins.

You could match any shade of wool there, and you could buy the best Stilton cheese in the town.

Not only could Wheeler furnish your house from attic to

Digitized by Google

cellar, but he could clothe your body from head to foot, whilst an excellent circulating library catered for the good of your mind. "Put yourself in Wheeler's hands" was a favourite maxim of Plynton's inhabitants.

For a few minutes Milly hung about the windows. She was not, however, peering at bonnets or studying shades of cretonnes, though she appeared to be. In reality she was rehearsing her part and mastering her nerves. Presently with some trepidation she went in.

An obsequious shop-walker glided forward.

"What can I show you, madam?"

"Er—nothing just at present, thanks! I wanted to see—— Have you a Miss Smith here?"

"Smith! Yes! In the silk department. You want to speak to her?"

"If you please!"

"Step this way."

Milly followed him upstairs and along a corridor, her courage oozing away with every step. Should she make some trivial purchase and withdraw? But duty was paramount. The man stopped at a counter.

"Miss Smith, forward!"

No one appeared. He called again. With a "Yes, sir!" a girl came running up.

"This lady wants to see you, Miss Smith," and the shop-walker withdrew—to a discreet distance.

Taking stock of the young person who had sought to impress her husband by her fascinations, Milly experienced a considerable shock. Where—oh, where—was George's taste? A raw, large-boned, country miss in an ill-fitting black dress, and without one decent feature in her face.

George had always said that good looks in a woman were a necessity (Milly knew that she herself had strong claims to prettiness.) In what could possibly consist the attractiveness of the girl before her?

Milly gradually awoke to the fact that she was expected to speak, but her rising anger made it difficult.

"What can I get you, madam?"

"Nothing, thanks. You are Miss Smith?"

"Yes."

"I wanted a word with you privately. Oh, how could you do such a thing?"

Miss Smith opened her eyes. Had she palmed off some indifferent material at the recent sale to this now better-informed customer?"

"I'm afraid, madam, I don't understand."

"You soon will, then. You know my husband, Miss Smith?"

"If you would kindly tell me what your name is I might answer your question."

"My name is—Corton."

"Corton! I don't know anyone of that name."

This apparent innocence was disgraceful. Milly felt herself swept away by a tide of moral indignation.

"Oh, you wicked girl! You are now adding lying to your other sins. But you'd better throw up the sponge. I know all about it."

The girl's mouth—and such a plain one too—was wide open with astonishment.

"You've been writing to my husband," continued Milly, "and asking him to take you out. Where did you meet him first I want to know? Why have you come to Plynton to break up our happy home? What are the horrible lies you want to tell him about me? You're a bad woman. I shall get Mr. Wheeler to send you away."

Miss Smith's cheeks were red with surprise, indignation, fear. This woman must be mad. A lunatic asylum was situated on the confines of Plynton, and evidently one of its inmates had escaped.

Fixing her eyes on Milly—Miss Smith knew by tradition that this was the wisest course to adopt with mad people—she called loudly: "Mr. Wood! Mr. Wood!"

The shopwalker appeared. His first glance at the two faces told him that a storm was raging, but he always had a plentiful supply of oil to pour on troubled waters.

"Perhaps you will explain to this gentleman, madam," said Miss Smith, signalling something to the shopwalker which he could not understand.

Milly repeated her charge as coherently as her temper would allow. The man looked her through and through. He too had doubts of this lady's sanity.

"There must be some mistake, madam. The morals of the young ladies we employ are quite above——"

"But I tell you she has written to my husband. I've seen the card."

"Signed, madam?"

"Certainly! Selina Smith, as bold as brass!"

"My name is Violet, and it's my only one," observed Miss Smith.

"Did you say Selina Smith, madam?" inquired the shop-walker.

"I did. Isn't this she?"

Mr. Wood's next action was so unworthy of the honourable position that he held that one hardly likes to mention it. He smiled so broadly that the smile could not be hidden by the big pocket-handkerchief of which he hurriedly made use. He took it away to speak, but exploded again.

Milly—the picture of virtuous wrath—looked from one to the other.

"I asked you a question, sir."

"Pardon me. It is so funny. There's no such person as Selina Smith."

"No such person?"

"Not outside the pages of a book." He searched among some papers in his pocket. "Doubtless your husband had a postcard exactly like that, madam?"

He was holding out an exact duplicate of the card that George had received. Milly nodded.

"It's a publisher's clever but rather unscrupulous dodge to advertise a new novel called 'The Interference of Selina Smith.' These postcards have been sent, I find, to a good many people in Plynton, but, needless to say, without our co-operation. Perhaps you didn't observe that yours was lithographed?"

"I didn't. It was stupid of me." Milly turned to the girl. "I ask your pardon, Miss Smith."

"Oh, it's granted."

The shopwalker's dignity had returned.

"If you'll step downstairs, madam, to the book department I'll show you a copy of the novel. You might like to buy it as a curiosity."

* * * * *

George Corton arrived home only twenty minutes later than usual that evening.

"There, Milly, that's the reason I'm late."

She opened eagerly the small case which he thrust into her hand.

"A silver manicure set—the very thing I wanted! Oh, George, how good of you!"

"Not at all! I just thought it might look better on your dressing-table than in Wheeler's window."

Milly could not suppress a smile. So he had been there after all.

"I was in their shop this afternoon and bought a book for you, George. Do you know it at all? It's called 'The Interference of Selina Smith.'"

"That's the humorous novel the publishers are trying to advertise by a new dodge. I got a postcard about it this morning. Didn't I show it you?"

"No, George!"

He produced the card. She read it through, and turned it over, as though it were something fresh to her.

"Imagine," he said, "a jealous wife waylaying a document like that! I thought of trying you by way of a joke, Milly, but I knew it wouldn't work. You are far too sensible."

"Perhaps I'm not all you think me, George."

"Nonsense! You trust me too completely ever to have feelings of jealousy, don't you, dear?"

And Milly, the hypocrite, could only turn up her face for a kiss

Herbert Jamieson.

Digitized by Google

OUR SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister, maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

"That Name was Moira."

MOIRA bent her gaze upon the distant barque. To her experienced eye—the eye of one accustomed to the sea and shipping from childhood—the nearness of the vessel's departure was apparent. Laden to her shapely water-line, all taut and well-found alow and aloft, a crack modern vessel on the eve of departure is like a pretty woman lingering before her glass while her maid stands ready to open the door. Her delay may seem long, but it is almost to be counted by seconds, and then she has stepped forth out of her chamber, her toilet a thing of the past.

Although Moira did not stop to make so poetical a comparison, she felt to the full the importance of the little while that remained before the barque should weigh anchor and carry off among her crew—perhaps to death in some far quarter of the globe—the man who, according to Dennis Hartigan, knew the secret of her birth and identity.

The ex-steward studied his companion acutely. Then he shielded his eyes with his hollowed palm

"They're manning the capstan," he said; "no, only fitting the bars. But she'll be off inside the half-hour."

Moira glanced back into the house—the skilful stimulus he had given to her anxiety decided her.

"I—I must speak to nurse about going out," she answered, "and put on my hat. I won't be a minute." And, a strange excitement blotting out her instinctive dislike of the ex-steward, all remembrance of the questions that, but an instant earlier, had been springing to her lips, she darted upstairs with feverish speed.

Dennis Hartigan looked after her and his face set in a sinister mask. He opened his blue serge jacket and dived into an inner pocket, to produce a small flask of spirits, and put it to his mouth.

The fluid was neat, yet he gulped half of the bottle's contents. He had scarcely returned it to his pocket when Moira came downstairs, cloaked and hatted.

The ex-steward went before her to the garden gate, drew it wide, and they passed out together.

"We can borrow a boat from any of these landings," he said, and strode across the quay, to descend to the level of the water.

Slipping the painter of a light gig, he sprang in and took the oars. Moira sat down in the stern-sheets and adjusted the rudder-lines over her shoulders.

"I expect the skipper will be a bit puzzled," remarked the ex-steward, "but we can put him off somehow. And if a sovereign or two should be necessary to grease our man's tongue, well, I'm not so hard up that I can't manage it."

"Thank you," said Moira, as they shot out of the harbour; "it is very kind of you to take so much trouble. I'm sure I don't——"

Dennis Hartigan laughed.

"Don't know why I should," he completed; "well, I'm not certain myself. But I owe John Davenal a good turn and it seems he's been bothering himself about you having no real relations. I expect he's been set thinking about it by the narrow escape he's had of leaving you alone in the world."

"I'm—I'm not sure that I want any relations," answered Moira, bringing the gig deftly round the breakwater as Dennis Hartigan swept it forward with long strokes, "but

Digitized by Google

I should like to know who I am, and what my real name is."

"Quite so," retorted the ex-steward; "so would any girl of spirit. Well, we'll do our best to get a pointer on the subject now."

He rowed fast and skilfully and the gig breasted the slight swell that met them as she cleared the shelter of the harbour. The afternoon was fading into a prematurely early twilight, the day had been heavy and clouded, a purple haze hung about the water, veiling the horizon irregularly.

"Hadn't we better keep to starboard?" asked Moira suggestively. She had been watching the motions of the ex-steward's oars, the right one was being pulled with much more vigour than the other; the gig was swerving even against the impulse of the rudder.

"The tide's running out," said Dennis Hartigan, "I want to come in on her lee."

"Y-yes," replied Moira nervously, "but there's a nasty current down the middle of the bay—the reefs do it—and we always keep wide of it."

"Nonsense!" rejoined the ex-steward; "I'm not afraid of a bit of current." And he rowed steadily on.

The light was failing and there was a sticky ripple on the water that portended storm, as did the occasional heavier swell that stole now and again under the keel of the gig, one minute lifting her nose at a startling angle, the next flinging up her heel on the crest of a glassy roller.

The ex-steward was a clever and a powerful oarsman, and he took the gig out on the course he had chosen for himself—a huge, semi-circular sweep.

Moira knitted her brows and tried to see by the position of familiar landmarks their exact proximity to the current of which she had spoken. But the purple ocean mist flung eddying swirls of vapour over them and she could not be sure.

As for Dennis Hartigan, he was still rowing with much apparent energy, but a shrewd observer might have seen that he was putting considerably less leg-work into his strokes. The gig was making a larger offing than was necessary to fetch the seaward side of the barque.

Suddenly Moira caught a glimpse of the shore and uttered an exclamation.

"We're in the current," she said; "the port oar, Mr. Hartigan, pull the port oar. Not too hard; we must get out of the current slowly or it will upset us."

For answer the ex-steward leant on his oars and looked at her. There was a fierce glimmer in his pupils and his ashen-fair moustache had bristled.

"That won't matter," he said, "I can swim back, if I'm not picked up."

Moira paled.

"What do you mean?" she faltered; "we are not in any very great danger. We shall get out of it; I have been caught before. Let me take the oars, Mr. Hartigan, I am more used to the bay than you are."

"Sit still!" Dennis Hartigan bade her harshly, and he dropped his oar-blades into the water again. Bracing his feet on the next thwart, he gave, not the stroke she had directed, but a true swivelling stroke, one oar hard-pulled and the other backed. The boat came round broadside on, a wave lapped into her and she rocked heavily.

Dennis Hartigan let an oar slip, as the veriest tyro might have done, and grabbed at it, with assumed eagerness, throwing his body out over the gunwale. The gig tilted, filled, and sank.

Moira, abruptly immersed in the cold waves, turned instinctively upon her back, and loosed the fastening that held her cloak about her neck. The garment fell from her and she changed her position to tread water, rising with the rollers to scan the surface for the ex-steward.

Perfectly at home in the water herself, her first thought was for her companion's safety. His obstinate clumsiness had produced the accident, yet considerations of humanity outweighed all else. Besides, was it not to do her a service that he had come out in the gig?

(*Continued overleaf.*)

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

Lack of food causes half our ailments and dangerous diseases. Not that we do not *eat* when we are hungry, or do not get *enough* to eat, but we do not *digest* what we do eat, that is the trouble. We call this indigestion, it is, in fact, "starvation," for starving means lack of food, and food is not food until it is digested. Undigested food passes through the body without doing any good, or worse, it remains and sets up fermentation in the stomach, poisoning the blood and nerves, dulling the brain, and clogging all the vital organs of the body with the vile products of indigestion.

FOR DYSPEPTICS

Thorough digestion is essential to sound health. Mother Seigel's Syrup ensures digestion. It contains digestive ferments and root and herb extracts that give tone and vitality to the stomach, liver and kidneys, enabling them to perform their functions perfectly, that is the secret of its great success. It builds health on good digestion, gives you the power to gain strength from food—the only way it can be gained.

AFTER DINNER.

"About three years ago," writes Mrs. S. A. Richards, Brynhaf Villa, Mountain Ash, Glam., "I began to suffer from sick headaches and depression. I lost my appetite completely; was frequently attacked by giddiness followed by vomiting; could get no sleep, and became too weak to walk. *My stomach was unable to retain nourishment.*

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

Doctors all failed in their treatment of me and I sank into a state of helplessness. But about eighteen months ago a friend advised me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup, and to my intense surprise, it acted on my system like a charm. Before I had finished the second bottle my recovery was complete." Mother Seigel's Syrup cures where everything else fails, because it acts on nature's rule that food is the origin of health and strength.

AIDS DIGESTION

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

Without warning she felt a clasp of iron about her waist. It girdled her from behind—over her arms. She guessed that the author of the grasp was the ex-steward, and deemed that, being overtaken by a spasm of terror, he had clutched at her, as a drowning man would do.

Had he clasped her from the front she could have dealt with him and with what she took to be that desperate frenzy which so often drowns the victim and the would-be rescuer. But the vice-like clutch behind was dragging her down, down, down. She threw herself on her back and swam backwards with desperate strokes, forcing him under the water.

Dennis Hartigan's grasp shifted and one hand moved to her throat. She twisted her head quickly and the hand dropped on her lips. She parted her white teeth and fixed them in the other's flesh—one must not hesitate over expedients when not a single life but a couple are at stake.

With a bubbling oath Dennis Hartigan loosed his clasp and she forced herself round. An instant more and they were face to face in the water. Her red-gold hair had broken from its pins and streamed wetly over her shoulders and in her blue eyes, making her look like some startled mermaiden.

The ex-steward spat the salt water out of his mouth and shook the brine from his coarse locks. Moira thrilled with horror. The visage of the ex-steward was alight, not with madness, but with hate and fury.

"You jade!" he snarled; "I'll do for you this time!"

He flung himself towards her, but she struck out powerfully in the long, racing side-stroke and put half-a-dozen lengths between them. He followed her with so swift an alternate right and left stroke that he seemed to be leaping after her.

She did not wait for the attack that she perceived was imminent, but dived, mermaid-like, on the instant. He could scarcely have told where she had been.

Treading water, he tried to peer over the tops of the waves. But in vain did he strive to pierce the mists of the brooding afternoon; Moira had disappeared from his sight. He could not see that, far off, a wet, golden head had emerged, to be borne steadily seaward in the relentless grip of the current.

TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"The Clue Must Be Followed Up."

"Mr. Ussher anywhere about?"

Paul Jerome put the question at a dingy counter in a large, bare room whose rough paint and distempered plaster were those of the severely sanitary public office. A young constable, unhelmeted and in a short jacket, came towards him with a stern air.

"Whom did you wish to see, sir," he asked, "and on what business?"

The war-correspondent regarded his inquisitor with tolerant amusement—he was used to the ways of police functionaries, high and low. He put a card on the counter; there was a half-crown on the strip of pasteboard.

"Oh, that's all right," he said cheerfully; "Ussher and I are old friends. If he's in the building have him hunted up for me, there's a good fellow."

The constable picked up the card, the half-crown disappearing mysteriously as part of the same process.

"Certainly, sir," he said, unbending, and went out into the adjacent corridor to dispatch a subordinate upon the desired mission. "I'll let you know in a moment, sir," he added, returning.

Paul Jerome nodded his thanks and strolled up and down in the confined space between the counter and the partition that divided it from the neighbouring corridor.. The stormy light of the cloudy afternoon gleamed lividly in at the big windows of the place, accentuating its stiff, harsh formality. The young constable had gone back to his work, and his pen squeaked loudly in the silent office.

The war-correspondent had not long to wait—the person for whom he had inquired emerged from a suddenly opened door in the passage hard by. He stepped across to Paul Jerome, raising his hand and inclining his head in a compromise between a bow and a salute.

"Good afternoon, sir," he said, and paused, expectant yet non-committal.

The war-correspondent drew a folded sheet of paper from his pocket and trifled with it.

"My dear Ussher," he observed, "I am, as I think you know, a well-wisher of yours. As a professional crime-investigator, I was, necessarily, at times, a critic of you and your work. That painful necessity exists no more and I can afford to be disinterested."

The detective coughed gruffly.

"I'm afraid, sir," he rejoined, "I must ask you to be more precise." But his eyes wandered to the document in his visitor's fingers.

"I propose, Ussher," he was told imperturbably, "to make you a present of some valuable information. In acknowledgment of which you will gratify my curiosity upon a point concerning which you will be no less curious than myself."

"Indeed," began the detective, but he glanced at the war-correspondent, and the supercilious, patronising note died out of his tone.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Jerome," he said, with an effort, "a hint from you, sir, is not to be despised. As for anything I can tell you—legitimately, sir—you are very welcome."

Paul Jerome gave him the paper. It was that upon which the war-correspondent had taken the impress of the finger-prints from the cupboard door on the top storey of the Tower—the paper to which he had attached, for purposes of comparison, a certain newspaper illustration.

Mr. Ussher studied them.

"This—this ought to be very important, sir," he commenced. "I'm not an expert on such things myself, but the prints are near, very near alike, if not the same. May I ask who——"

He interrupted his sentence to step out into the corridor; the expression in his bilious eyes took the war-correspondent with him. Mr. Ussher piloted his companion into a small ante-room and shut the door. Then he contemplated once more the parallel prints.

"You got these yourself, sir," he said questioningly, as if by way of repeating, less bluntly, his incompleted query.

Paul Jerome shook his head.

"Not directly from a human hand," he responded, "they are from the inside of a painted door-frame on the same floor of the Tower as that on which Hannah Davenal was found dead. The door is that of a disused and dusty cupboard, there are partially-dusted-over finger-marks on the shelves and the door has apparently been drawn to by soiled fingers."

Mr. Ussher frowned.

"And how does that help us?" he demanded.

The war-correspondent lifted his brows.

"Does it not suggest," he replied, "that the murderer had hidden in the cupboard, soiled his hands on the dusty shelves, marked the door-frame in pulling it to for greater concealment, and ultimately gone out, to do his deadly work and leave the finger-prints found on the pillow?"

"Y-yes," allowed the detective, "but that affords no clue to the identity of the murderer."

"No positive one, perhaps," admitted Paul Jerome, "but it has been a theory of yours that the uncleanness of the murderer's hands showed him to be a person of the lower classes. Now if his hands were soiled by accident, that theory is disposed of. Besides, what does his having hidden in an out-of-the-way and disused cupboard suggest?"

Mr. Ussher's forehead wrinkled, but there was no comprehension in his face.

Jerome took pity on him.

"Why," he said, "that the murderer knew his way about the house."

Digitized by Google

The detective started. "It does," he owned. "And do you know, Mr. Jerome, it squares with my investigations into that gamekeeper's story. It is evident that he did see Davenal walking in the park, near that burial-place there is there, with an elderly female. I made some experiments at the spot last night and am satisfied that he could, in the moonlight, distinguish features at the distance he indicates."

"The point of which is——" interpolated the war-correspondent.

"Why," pursued Mr. Ussher, "thanks to his mistaking the female in question for Lady Tarleton, I have an excellent guide to the person's appearance. The clue must be followed up. The woman may have been a former fellow-servant of Davenal's, and the meeting may have been due to some obscure intrigue, possibly with a criminal element. A quarrel may have sprung up and the other plotted revenge. There must be many ways of gaining surreptitious access to the Tower at night."

"Many," said Jerome, "and now, Ussher, to gratify my curiosity and test the value of my 'hint,' have you here the fingermarked pillow?"

The detective replied in the affirmative.

"The chief has it," he explained, "that and the rest of the 'pieces of conviction' as the French say. But I can get it, I've no doubt. Just a moment, sir."

He hastened out of the room, to reappear shortly with a large, flat parcel. Unfolding the wrappings, he revealed a couple of sheets of glass, laid together. Between them there reposed an oblong of linen—the soiled pillow-case. Each side could be studied through the protecting glass, yet the finger-marks were secure from modification or injury.

"Here we are," he said, "you see how the chief has had it done up. What did you think of testing?"

Paul Jerome put a thumb and finger in a vest-pocket and extracted a small metal cylinder. It contained a small lens of rare quality. He carried the glass plates to the window and examined the sandwiched linen minutely, trying the lens upon it at various distances. At last he looked up.

"Yes," he decided, "it is dust. Not earth, or grease, or soot, but dry, flocculent dust. Ussher, you had better come up to the Tower and inspect the cupboard officially."

"I will, sir," said the detective, "immediately—or I can meet you there at any time you will find convenient. You can then point out the particular cupboard and no one need suspect my interest in it."

The war-correspondent consulted his watch. "We will go upstairs together," he answered; "I have nothing better to do at the moment."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," declared Mr. Ussher, rewrapping the glass panes. He bore them off and returned. His hat was on and he was buttoning his cutaway coat of stiff pepper-and-salt tweed.

"Seems like rain, sir," he observed, as they passed out into the street and went round to gain the sea-front, *en route* for Groudle Tower. Paul Jerome inspected the overcast sky and the drifting purple mists that veiled the retreating tide. He marked intelligently the glassy roll of the breakers on the beach.

"Yes," he said, "the weather has been too fine for the time of year; our English climate cannot stand three fine days in Spring without getting up a thunderstorm on the strength of it."

"True, sir," agreed the other, "and I don't think the bursting of the storm is far off either."

They walked on in silence for a while and then the war-correspondent broke the silence.

"Ussher," he exclaimed, "tell me frankly, have you quite given up your suspicions of the man Hartigan?—in connection with the murder of his wife, that is."

Mr. Ussher weighed the question. "Yes, sir," he said, "your finger-print test, to my mind, was conclusive. Also, as we are aware, her ladyship's promise of a monetary gift to Davenal on the latter's leaving her service was known to Hartigan—why should he, as he asks, do anything to deprive

(*Continued overleaf.*)

Liver Complaint Vanquished.

Another Bile Bean Success.
Dizziness, Debility, and Headache Ended.

It is surprising how many apparently wide-apart functions are affected by disorder of the liver. There seems no connection between a person's temper and the colour of that person's eyes and skin! Yet the state of the liver affects both!

In the case of Mrs. Kelly, of Garbally, Birr (Ireland), the results of liver complaint were very serious. Here is her own story:—

"Up to July, 1901, I hardly ever had a day's sickness, but in that month I became unwell owing to getting wet. The ailment settled on my liver, so the doctor said, and for three weeks I was in bed. I trembled violently all over from liver chill, and had acute headaches. I was subject to violent retching, and vomited up everything I took. I was much affected with giddiness and often fainted away. The doctor was in attendance upon me for nearly three months, but long after he ceased to attend me I was subject to fainting fits. The fact was, I never got properly well.

The slightest shock would send me into a fainting fit, and I have fainted nearly a dozen times a day. At night I could get no sleep. I got so ill that I could do no work, and the children—I am the mother of eleven—had to do it all.

"One night my daughter Mary read about Bile Beans in the *Weekly Freeman*. The account told of a woman who had been cured of ailments similar to mine, so I decided to take a course of Bile Beans. I very soon found that they were doing me good, and without going through much uninteresting detail, I can say that they have now made me strong and healthy again. I strongly recommend them to all who suffer as I did."

You may not have become so much reduced by liver complaint as was Mrs. Kelly, but remember, *if you suffer at all from it*, you're not safe. For every form and result of liver disorder (including such results as indigestion, constipation, female disorders, constant headache, piles and liver chill), Bile Beans are a safe and certain remedy. They cure the effects of liver disorder by removing the cause. You'll get them from any medicine vendor. Don't accept substitutes.

Miss MARIE TEMPEST says:—

"I have used your EUGOL TOOTH POWDER for some time, and consider it the most delightful preparation ever brought before the public." A bottle of Eugol Liquid Dentifrice, also box of powder or paste, post free for 2s. 6d., with plan for return of your 2s. 6d. for four minutes' easy work.

EUGOL CO., 52 Berwick Street, LONDON, W.

Daily Express

It is undoubtedly London's Best, Brightest and Newsiest Halfpenny Morning Paper.

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

himself of a share in his wife's forthcoming good luck? 'Seek whom the crime profits'—eh, sir?"

"Quite so," responded Paul Jerome. "I cannot deny your logic, Ussher; to a certain extent, it is my own. But for all that, Hartigan is a villain. I know that."

"You *know* it, sir?" queried the detective significantly.

"You mean can I produce proof?" said Jerome thoughtfully; "yes, and no. More no, I fancy, than yes—let it be no altogether."

He strolled on by his companion's side, his hands linked idly behind his back.

"I feel, Ussher," he added, "as if I had most of the letters that go to make up the word necessary to solve the problem in which you are professionally, I philosophically, interested. Change them about as I may they will not spell a word—and yet they are suggestive of one."

"And the word suggested," queried Mr. Ussher, "is?"

Paul Jerome looked up. The sky about them had suddenly grown dark, a muffled peal of thunder had punctuated the detective's sentence and a few huge raindrops spattered the dust of the lane. The detective and the war-correspondent were ascending the narrow hedged thoroughfare that led over the level crossing to the inland highway.

"By Jove!" said Paul Jerome, "here is the storm. We shall have to find shelter. I know these Cumberland deluges. There is an inn on the high road, just past the end of the lane."

They hurried on in the increasing downpour. The gates of the level crossing were closed, and by them waited a tall brown hack, with a habited figure in the saddle. A groom, in a familiar livery of blue and orange, was in attendance. The war-correspondent recognised the feminine rider as Irene Tarleton.

While they neared her, the train for whose transit the gates had been closed, dashed by, the gates reopened, and she urged her horse forward. A flash of lightning split the gloom around. The hack swerved from it, and Paul Jerome came into Irene's field of vision. The rain was descending with growing violence, but she checked her horse and greeted him gaily.

"Am I not nicely caught?" she said, laughing down at him between the raindrops; "and you are in no better case. We shall all be beautifully soaked."

Paul Jerome hesitated. "If I might make a recommendation," he answered, "there is an inn within a stone's throw where Ussher and I were about to take refuge. No doubt they have some sort of parlour or other private apartment where you might wait till the storm has passed off, or at least moderated."

"That will do famously," said Irene; "mamma will be shocked, but that is nothing new. And I shall be able to go home dry."

"You won't if you stop here another minute," objected the war-correspondent; "the flood-gates of Heaven are about to be opened. Please gallop on and I will follow—the place is on the roadside round the right of the lane end, the Half Brick Inn."

"I know it," rejoined Irene, and shook her hack into a smart canter.

Paul Jerome motioned to the detective, who had retreated into the shelter of a hedge.

"Come on, Ussher," he adjured him; "we shall be drowned if we don't get under cover. Can you sprint?"

Mr. Ussher smiled grimly, and broke into a trot. Jerome kept at his side, and the two men, so different in bulk and stature, dashed off through the rain. But when they reached the Half Brick and leapt into the hall of the inn, past the ostler who was leading away the brown hack and its companion, the detective's face was poppy-coloured and his eyes starting. The war-correspondent chuckled

"You haven't kept as fit as I have, Ussher," he said; "well, have something to help your wind back while I see that Miss Tarleton is comfortable."

"Humph," observed Mr. Ussher, "I thought that was Miss Tarleton—I've seen her out with you before. All right, you will find me in the bar parlour; it's a favourite haunt of mine—the entire gossip of Groudle comes to the bar parlour of the Half Brick."

Paul Jerome nodded absently. Irene Tarleton was beckoning to him from the door that flanked the bar.

He entered it and found himself in a little old-fashioned sitting-room, with a faded yet gaudy Brussels on the floor, and furnished by a very shiny suite of "burr" walnut, indistinguishable oil paintings in tarnished gilt frames, and a yellow-keyed piano. The landlady, a portly, flustered dame, was doing the honours of this stately apartment.

"Oh, please, Mr. Jerome," said Irene, "do convince these good people that I don't want any refreshment, and that I am not a scrap frightened of thunder."

"As to that," declared the war-correspondent, "I am sure Miss Tarleton is far too sensible to be alarmed at the storm. But with respect to the refreshment, I believe we may have to wait some while, or even send over to the Tower for a carriage, and I should humbly suggest to Miss Tarleton that a cup of tea would serve to while away the time."

Irene considered. "If you will share it with me," she said. "Yes."

Jerome threw his hat upon a chair.

"I shall be delighted," he answered, and turned to their buxom attendant. "A real country tea," he ordered, "with bread and butter and honey—or jam, strawberry jam for choice."

"Yes, sir," said the mistress of the Half Brick; "but won't the young lady take her hat off? It is very wet."

"Perhaps I will," assented Irene, and she felt for the pins, and took off her stiff headgear. In her severely plain, yet sweeping garments, she was a graceful, distinguished figure; her mother was not without judgment in insisting that she should wear only long gowns.

Jerome placed a chair for her, and she sat down as the landlady departed.

"I—I trust," he said quizzically, "that you are not thinking of your aunt in Yorkshire."

Irene laughed outright—and sighed.

"I'm afraid," she responded, "that these unconventional proceedings would bring me distinctly nearer that species of banishment—at all events, if mamma were to hear of them—were it not that she has already decided to whisk me off to London. We go back any day now."

The war-correspondent stood looking at her.

"Do you know," he said, "I am more than ever obliged to the storm?"

"Indeed," returned Irene; "why?"

Jerome leant on the back of her chair. "I am going to take a mental photograph," he answered; "a photograph that I shall treasure all my life, and that nothing will be able to rob me of—the picture of you, presiding in a modest little room, over a tea-tray."

Irene was pulling off her riding gloves. "And underneath," she added, flippantly, "the motto: 'One lump, or two?'"

The war-correspondent stepped quickly away—the knob of the door had been twisted, and a smart serving maid appeared with a damask-covered tray. She had bold black eyes and red lips and her skirts were coquettishly short.

With many side glances at the unusual patrons of the Half Brick, she set out the impromptu meal and withdrew.

Irene lifted her chair to the table and began to wield the heavy Queen Anne teapot of silver which had been pressed into service to do them honour.

The war-correspondent took the cup of tea she offered him and himself sat down. A momentary silence fell upon them as they addressed themselves to the simple food before them.

Jerome was watching Irene, and she was aware of it; the rain lashed the little casemented bay of the room, the place

(*Continued on page* 636.)

Digitized by Google

The Dangers of Catarrh.

The great danger in catarrh rests in the fact that most people look upon the trouble as a chronic cold. In a way, this is correct; for the onset of nasal catarrh can generally be traced to a beginning in an obstinate cold, or succession of colds, in the head. The error comes in the tendency to neglect the disease, on the supposition that it is only a cold, and will disappear in time. The neglected cold becomes a chronic catarrh, which, according to the predisposition of the sufferer, may destroy the sense of taste, smell, and hearing, and may attack the throat, lungs, or stomach. The most interesting question to the catarrh patient, however, is how to get rid of the disease. Operations and cauterizations of the nose are generally advised; but the Editor of the "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases," shows that there is another method of cure (painless and capable of home application) and publishes, with the April "Review," a "Supplement," containing full details of a large number of cases cured by this new method. A free copy of the "Review," with "Supplement," can be obtained by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. Another special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged, if given by correspondence. The Editor advises patients, however, when possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are—in the morning, 10 to 12; and in the afternoon, 2 to 4; week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultation.

SEAWEED AS A MEDICINE

Its Marvellous Effect upon the

STOMACH, LIVER, KIDNEYS AND BLOOD

SEAWEED possesses a natural strengthening, healing, and purifying power, infinitely greater than ordinary medicines. This is now regarded as conclusive by eminent authorities, who recommend it daily, since Veno's Seaweed Tonic was first introduced.

A pure palatable extract of Seaweed is one of the principal ingredients of Veno's Seaweed Tonic. This remedy excels in the cure of INDIGESTION, WIND, HEADACHE, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS, KIDNEY TROUBLES, WEAK AND PAINFUL BACK, TORPID LIVER, FEMALE TROUBLES, POORNESS OF BLOOD, and "HABITUAL CONSTIPATION." Its most brilliant effect is produced in Stomach, Liver, and Kidney Troubles. The remarkable cures Veno's Seaweed Tonic effects even in the worst cases is positive proof of its great therapeutic value.

Ask for VENO'S SEAWEED TONIC, 1/1½ and 2/9 per bottle, at Chemists and Drug Stores.

FREE TRIAL BOTTLES. A free trial bottle of either Veno's Seaweed Tonic or Veno's Lightning Cough Cure, and a free copy of "**The People's Medical Instructor**," an indispensable treatise on diseases for the household, a complete family doctor in itself, will be sent to any address on receipt of 3d. for postage from

THE VENO DRUG CO., Hulme, Manchester, Eng.

IMPORTANT TO WOMEN.

A WONDERFUL BEAUTIFIER.

A SHORT time since our readers were informed about that wonderful preparation for the complexion, Peralia, and strongly advised to try it for blackheads, acne, wrinkles, crow's feet, pimples, &c. Now listen to what a recent user has got to say about it: "In reply to your kind letter, I have taken your advice and have procured a bottle of Henderson's Peralia from Boot's Drug Stores. Well! I must say I was astonished at the result. I have spent large amounts on so-called remedies, but with indifferent success; but one bottle of Peralia entirely removed the scurvy from which I was suffering from my face, and the unnatural redness from my nose. I am now using it on my hands and arms, which it has made lovely and white, and also find it excellent for chapped hands. I am in a large milliner's shop, and all the girls in our establishment use Peralia, and think it is lovely.—Yours faithfully, Ada Fleming, Station Street, Nottingham." That ought to be a sufficient testimonial for any reader, and we hope any of them that are suffering from such disfiguring humours will act on our advice, and at once give Peralia a trial. The Peralia Company is a very enterprising firm, and they are now making a present of a dainty little book, called "Beauty's Boudoir," to every purchaser of Peralia who asks for it. We are of the opinion that none of our lady readers should be without it. By the way, the prices of Peralia, post free, in plain wrapper, are 1s. 3d., 1s. 9d., and 2s. 9d.

Many of our readers, we are sure, would like to know of a really reliable hair curler. When we say reliable, we mean one that is not affected by rain, or the heat of a ballroom. To those who are interested, and are anxious to possess neat, curly locks, we recommend "Crimpoline." It is nothing short of marvellous the manner in which this fluid sets about its business. All you have got to do is simply to apply a little to your hair for a few nights and you soon become the owner of lovely wavy ringlets. No! you need no tongs, pins nor curlers. Sounds almost to good to be true, doesn't it? Well, try it and see for yourself. Several who have used it tell us that once you get the hair properly in curl with it, you need only use it once in the week. Its price is so very moderate, too, that none of our readers need be hindered from sending for it on that account. If you write to the proprietors, enclosing 2s. or 2s. 9d., either in stamps, or a postal order, they will send you a bottle, post free, and secretly packed. Their address is the Peralia Perfumery Co., Dept. 14, Camden Street, North Shields.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%
repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

smelt of lavender and furniture polish. Irene noticed the latter, Jerome the former. He was in a more romantic mood than the mischievous good temper of his companion allowed her to be.

"I feel," said the war-correspondent at last, "that if I were to look out of that window I should see a post-chaise with fresh horses, and postillions drinking confusion to the pursuers—our pursuers!—while we snatch a little refreshment to fortify us against the final stage to—Gretna Green."

Irene coloured.

"You have a powerful imagination, Mr. Jerome," she observed; "I can see nothing outside but rain." And she gazed out at the April deluge that was pouring in a continuous torrent from the sullen heavens.

"Have some bread and honey," said Paul Jerome; "the queen of the nursery rhyme, you know, was in the parlour, eating bread and honey, though we are not told that it was an April storm that kept her from going out. Or do you prefer jam—strawberry jam?"

Irene Tarleton laughed at his boyish gaiety, and took some of the latter. It was typical country preserve, with whole fruit swimming in a sea of crimson syrup. Jerome drank his tea gravely.

Suddenly he put the cup down and quoted—with great deliberation—some famous lines.

> "*A loaf of bread, a cup of wine, and Thou*
> *Beside me singing in the Wilderness—*
> *Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow.*"

"Not in the least appropriate," exclaimed Irene saucily, but her voice trembled; "tea is not wine, and I am not singing, and Cumberland is not a wilderness."

The war correspondent's fingers sought and closed over her hand.

"No," he said, "but it will be when you are gone. London was and Nice was, and as for Turkey, it was a howling desert."

He leant across the tea-tray and looked into her face.

"Irene," he faltered, "I'm a fool to hope to win you—a mad fool. I think it's the thunder in the air. I love, you, dear, and I'm a selfish brute—seeing that I can only offer you a middle-class home and income. But I can't bear to lose you, even to a better man. I don't seem able to think of anything but how much I want you."

Irene's hand turned in his, and clasped it, and her eyes lifted themselves to his own.

"I'm glad you're *not* able to," she murmured. And her tones were thrilled by the daring tenderness with which a woman unveils her heart.

Paul Jerome stooped over her hand and kissed it. But Irene drew it away and leant towards him, a scarlet spot burning on each of her cheeks.

The war-correspondent laid his own hands unsteadily on her soft shoulders and put his lips to hers. And then, for a long time, neither of them heeded the lessening splash of the rain on the window or the failing lightning that showed more and more wanly in the clearing sky.

A tap on the door roused them, and the serving-maid entered.

"Please, sir," she said, "but will you want anything more. And Mr. Ussher says can he have a word with you."

The war-correspondent sipped carelessly at a cup of cold tea, and, with an air of great indifference, rose. Irene rose too, and picked up her hat. Jerome stepped out into the bar. Mr. Ussher was contemplating, from the door of the Half Brick, the diminishing rain.

The war-correspondent went across to him. But ere he could reach the detective a dripping fly, coming from the direction of Groudle Town, drove on to the cobblestone plateau before the inn, and halting at the door, disgorged into its sanded interior a group of fisher folk

There were some two or three of the rough, familiar figures that were used to lounge about the quays and beach of Groudle, and they sustained the uneven steps of no less a person than Mr. Dennis Hartigan.

The ex-steward—wrapped in an oilskin coat that covered imperfectly a suit of clothes obviously not his own—leant heavily on his supporters. It was evident from his demeanour, and that of his companions, that something unusual and momentous had happened.

"Hullo, what's up?" exclaimed the landlord of the Half Brick, craning his neck over his beer pump handles.

One of the fishermen answered. "Mr. Hartigan will be all right," the landlord was told, "especially after a night's rest—he swims like a fish. But it's a black day for John Davenal."

"John Davenal," repeated Mr. Ussher. He had stridden forward and was inspecting the little group with a curious eye.

"Aye," retorted the speaker. "Moira, his daughter, and Mr. Hartigan were out in a small boat, got into the Middle Current, and were capsized. We got Mr. Hartigan out—but the poor lass was swept away. Rare bad luck John Davenal's had of late, and no mistake. Well, we must put Mr. Hartigan to bed and give him something hot."

"One moment," said a voice, breaking sternly into the colloquy, and Paul Jerome came to the detective's side. He had heard all.

(To be continued.)

A NEW SERIAL, by Blanche Eardley, who is writing the series of articles, called "Tinsel Triumphs," now appearing in Pearson's Weekly, *will commence the week after next. Order your copy of SHORT STORIES for that date (May 30th) to be reserved for you.*

"But why do your parents object so to Mr. Larkins?" "Mamma objects to his shortcomings and papa to his long-stayings."

A.: "I see that you have shut off the gas in your house and are using nothing but candles. What is that for?" B.: "Merely out of curiosity, just for three months. I want to see if it will make any difference in my gas bill."

Sixpenny Editions of Famous Novels.

DAVID HARUM. By E. N. Westcott.
A LOYAL LOVER. By Mrs. Lovett Cameron.
STRANGE WOOING OF MARY BOWLER. By Richard Marsh.
LADY JEZEBEL. By Fergus Hume.
QUEEN OF THE JESTERS. By Max Pemberton.
THE PARASITE. By Conan Doyle.
A PATCHED-UP AFFAIR. By Florence Warden.
A HONEYMOON IN SPACE. By George Griffith.
ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. By C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne.
FURTHER ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. By C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne.
THE ADVENTURES OF NELL GWYN. By Frankfort Moore.
BECKY. By Helen Mathers.
THE WOMAN OF DEATH. By Guy Boothby.

At all Railway Bookstalls and Booksellers.

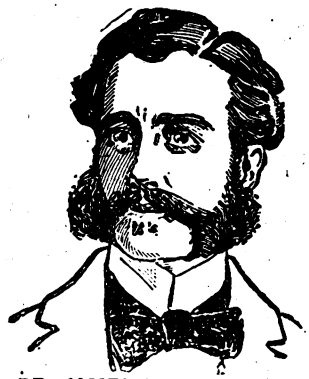
Digitized by Google

CURES ANY DISEASE.

A New and Wonderfully Successful Method of Curing all Chronic and Lingering Afflictions.

A Free Trial Package of this Remarkable Discovery will be Mailed to All who Write.

Anyone who suffers from a weak disordered condition of the heart, lungs, kidneys, stomach, blood, liver, skin, muscles or nervous system should write at once for a free trial treatment of a new method that is rapidly displacing the old ways of curing disease.



DR. JAMES WILLIAM KIDD.

Gout, partial paralysis, dropsy, locomotor ataxia, rheumatism, neuralgia or any other disease resulting from high living quickly and permanently removed by the new method.

Weakness or debility in any form whether in man or woman entirely eradicated from the system by the new treatment.

Consumption, bronchitis, asthma, catarrh, impure blood, heart disease, kidney and bladder trouble and liver complaint cured to stay cured by the doctor's wonderful remedies.

If you are the victim of any malady or sickness which you have long wanted to get rid of, try one of Dr. Kidd's free treatments and see how easy it is to be cured when the proper means are employed.

If you have aches or pains, don't feel well at times, if you are despondent and discouraged, tired out, it is because you have some terrible disease lurking in your system.

Why not write to Dr. Kidd, get a free trial treatment, and let him show you how quickly you can be cured by his new method. It makes no difference what your peculiar ailment may be, Dr. Kidd will send you a trial treatment entirely free of charge to prove to you that he can do as he claims.

Write to-day, telling the doctor what you wish to be cured of, and receive the free treatment for it by return mail. There are no conditions whatever. Dr. Kidd's generous offer is meant for everybody who suffers from disease in any of its various forms. Address Dr. J. W. KIDD Co., 522 Baltes Building, Ft. Wayne, Ind., U.S.A. No one should miss this grand opportunity of securing the benefits of the doctor's latest discovery, since it costs you nothing.

SONGS COPIED

Legible as print, 5d. page; transposed correctly, 6d. page.

Mrs. CONYERS,

Morchard Bishop, Devon.

Recommended by the Marchioness of Waterford, Lady Arthur Hill, Miss Ellen Terry, etc.

10,000 RUGS GIVEN AWAY

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

This Phenomenal Offer is made to the readers of *Short Stories* (16/5/1903) only. On receipt of Postal Order for **5/-**, or **62** stamps, we will forward, DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS,** suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, &c., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns, and **large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an Advertisement for our goods, *below the Actual Cost of production.* They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained direct from our Looms, thus saving the purchasers all middle profits.

OFFERED THIS WEEK. 16/5/1903.

SALE PRICE **3/6** Postage 4d. extra.

Free Gifts. Sizes:—38, 40, 42.

F. HODGSON & SONS, City of Leeds, will forward, carriage paid, on the following conditions, namely, on receipt of Postal Order for **3/6**, with stamps 4d. extra for postage, a Ladies' Beautiful Tailor-made Cloth Serge Dress Costume Skirt, richly trimmed in black or navy, with three rows of mercerised silkette braiding (as illustration), we shall include free with each skirt a pretty hem-stitched Fancy Lawn Handkerchief. MONEY willingly RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED. Galaxy Bargain Sale Catalogues of Carpets, Hearthrugs, Curtains, &c., post free. Address:

F. HODGSON & SONS
(Dept. S.T.S.), Manufacturers and Merchants,
Woodsley Rd., Leeds.

With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very Handsome Rug to match, or we will send Two Carpets and Two Rugs for **9/6.**

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED. THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

GALAXY ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, ETC., POST FREE,

if mentioning *Short Stories* (16/5/1903) while writing.
Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SONS (Dept. S.T.S.) Manufacturers, Importers and Merchants,
WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

"Worth a Guinea a Box."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Wind and Pains in Stomach,

Impaired Digestion.

Disordered Liver, and

Female Ailments.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions

CONTAINING 56 AND 168 PILLS RESPECTIVELY.

Digitized by Google

GIVEN AWAY with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 487),

A Paper Pattern of this Charming New Season's

BLOUSE,

With full instructions by ISOBEL.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

TRIUMPH Cycles

£10 10 to £19 19

or by Deferred Payment System.

"The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce."

CATALOGUES GRATIS.

TRIUMPH CYCLE CO. Ltd., COVENTRY.

4 and 5, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.

30 Deansgate Arcade, Manchester. 4 King Edward St. Leeds

SENT ON APPROVAL

Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory. 1903 Models

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44c,

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S NERVINE

Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented.

Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

"As a specific for Toothache it has no equal. I have used it successfully for years."—Prof. W. WILSON, M.D.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE

KAYE'S WORSDELL'S PILLS

Are a certain Cure for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dyspepsia, Constipation, Liver and Kidney Complaints etc. For Ladies of all ages they are invaluable.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d and 4s. 6d. per box.

SPECIAL BARGAINS

ANY SENT ON APPROVAL WILLINGLY.

SAVE

£ d s

GENT'S 18-ct. Gold-cased **KEYLESS HUNTER,** jewelled movement, lever balance, exact timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

POWERFUL FIELD GLASSES by celebrated optician (Le Gautier, Paris); 30 miles range; 8 achromatic lenses (guaranteed), nickel silver eyeshades, in leather sling case; sacrifice **10/6**.

GLADSTONE BAG, 24in., superior quality, real brown cowhide, strong leather straps, nickel silver fittings, &c.; in perfect condition; unsoiled; cost 4 guineas; accept **25/-**; approval.

LADY'S pretty 18-carat gold-cased **KEYLESS WATCH,** extra fine quality, jewelled movement, beautifully ornamented dial; perfect timekeeper, 10 years' warranty; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval before payment.

FASHIONABLE LONG NECK-CHAIN, genuine 18-carat rolled gold (stamped), beautifully finished elegant West End design; sacrifice, **9/6**.

MAGNIFICENT 5-ROW PEARL COLLARETTE; finest quality; mounted with four bars of lustrous Orient diamonds, in velvet-lined case, complete; sacrifice, **12/6**; approval willingly.

LADY'S lustrous **DIAMOND & RUBY RING,** 5 large, matchless double rubies and 8 real diamonds, solid gold, hall-marked setting; sacrifice, **12/6**.

CURB CHAIN BRACELET, with paddock and safety chain; 18-carat, rolled gold (stamped and guaranteed), in velvet case; sacrifice, **7/6**; approval.

MANDOLINE, genuine Italian (Stridente, Naples); very fine tone, real rosewood, pearl inlaid, in saddler-made case; sacrifice, **19/6**; approval willingly.

ORGAN-TONE MELODEON, magnificent **26/-** instrument, 12-fold bellows (metal bound), 3 sets steel bronze reeds, 4 acting stops, powerful tone; perfect order, sacrifice, **10/6**; approval willingly.

HANDSOME REAL MARBLE CLOCK, highly finished lever movement, 9in. high, in perfect order, guaranteed 10 years; sacrifice, **10/6**; approval.

FEATHER BOAS; bankrupt stock, special bargains, real Ostrich Feather Boas, beautifully curly, perfectly new, in box colours, grey and white, black and white, and natural. Prices **10/6** and **12/6**. Original price 30/- and 42/-; each approval willingly.

LADY'S 6-guinea solid gold (stamped) **KEYLESS WATCH,** jewelled in 10 rubies, richly engraved case, splendid timekeeper; 10 years' warranty; week's free trial; sacrifice, **21/-**.

A full list of **Special Bargains,** New and Second-hand, can be had free on application.

R. H. DAVIS, Pawnbroker and Jeweller,
284 Brixton Road, London, S.W.

"No Better Food."—*Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.*

Fry's PURE CONCENTRATED Cocoa

"Strongest and Best."—*Health.*

Not a stimulant merely for the moment; but a Permanent and Agreeable Form of Nourishment

The Miss with the Mission.

"What sort of a girl is she?" "Oh, she is a miss with a mission!" "Ah!" "Her mission is seeking a man with a mansion."

A Natural Supposition.

Mrs. Sweet: "Isn't it strange that Henry will never permit Edith to open his watch?" Mr. Sweet: "Humph! There must be another girl in the case."

He'd Left it at Home.

Miss Towney (in search of the idyllic, at last meets a real, live shepherd): "Pray tell me, gentle shepherd, where is thy pipe?" The Gentle Shepherd: "I left it at oom, mum, 'cause I ain't got no baccy."

Could Go On Wanting.

"No, Harry, I am sorry; but I am sure that we could not be happy together. You know I always want my own way in everything." "But, my dear girl, you could go on wanting it after we were married."

That Stupid Post Office.

"Dear me, what a silly blunder of the Post-office people to have made," said the young wife. "What's the matter?" "Why, I've just got a letter from Harry, who is working hard in London, and it's post-marked Brighton."

His Most Valuable Possession.

Amelia: "Swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon." Augustus: "Then what shall I swear by?" Amelia: "Swear by that which you hold invaluable; something that you cannot live without." Augustus: "Then, Amelia, I love you! I swear it by my bicycle!"

Wanted His Money's Worth.

Miss Jumpuppe (to Ellerton, who is taking her out for a ride, and whose horse has turned round and refused to move): "Don't be annoyed, Mr. Ellerton. Have patience, and he will move on presently." Mr. Ellerton: "Patience, Miss Jumpuppe! Why, I am paying for the animal by the hour!"

Quoted Ancient History.

"You were a long time in the far corner of the conservatory with Mr. Willing last evening," suggested the mother. "What was going on?" "Do you remember the occasion on which you became engaged to papa?" inquired the daughter, by way of reply. "Of course I do!" "Then it ought not to be necessary for you to ask any questions." Thus gently the news was broken that they were to have a son-in-law.

A Cordial Invitation.

"I trust, Mr. Borum," said Miss Cutting, as the young man was about to depart, "that you will spend one more evening with us before we move into our new house." "Delighted, I assure you, Miss Cutting," replied Borum. "By the way, when do you expect to move?" "I'm not positive as to the exact date," she answered, "but the workmen began excavating for the foundation yesterday, and papa expects the house to be finished in about eighteen months."

He Couldn't Help it.

"Blusher is the most bashful man I ever knew." "How on earth, then, did he come to get married?" "He was too bashful to refuse."

Some Use for Her.

Crabshaw: "A jealous wife is of no use in this world." Mrs. Crabshaw: "I don't agree with you, my dear. She enables the plain typine to get a job."

Why She Coaxed Him.

Cholly: "Why did you coax me on to tell you that I loved you?" Dolly: "Because Madge told me you looked so funny when you proposed. And she's right."

He Was Affected That Way.

Chollie: "Are you fond of the water?" Elsie: "Very! At the mere thought of sailing over the bounding waves I can scarcely contain myself." Chollie: "Yes, that's the way it affects me too."

English Better than American.

He: "I am rather in favour of the English than the American mode of spelling." She: "Yes?" He: "Yes, indeed! Take 'parlour,' for instance. Having 'u' in it makes all the difference in the world."

Unsentimental.

Mr. Poeticus (entering cheerfully): "My love is like the red, red rose!" Mrs. Poeticus (looking up from the stove): "You'd look red, too, you lazy scribbler, if you'd been bending over a frying-pan for twenty minutes."

She'd Had Enough Sitting.

"Won't you take this seat?" said the gentleman in the tramcar, rising and lifting his hat. "No, thank you," said the girl with the skates over her arm. "I've been skating at the ice palace, and I'm tired of sitting down."

Billing and Cooing.

"I suppose you get a lot of honeymoon couples billing and cooing about here?" asked the inquisitive stranger of the landlord of a favourite week-end resort. "Well, ye—es," replied the man of experience, "plenty of cooing. I manage the rest."

Size Made a Difference.

Miss Clara: "You say, Ethel, that you only paid sixpence for having your gloves cleaned? Why, only the other day I was actually asked ninepence!" Miss Ethel (with a slight, but not dangerous cough): "Indeed, dear, but I suppose the size is considered?"

She Liked Being Hugged.

Gertie: "I have not seen Mr. Niccfello with you lately." Maud: "He is practising on the river." "I did not know he cared for rowing." "He doesn't, but he joined a club to please me." "To please you?" "Yes. I thought rowing would strengthen his arms."

Must Get a Better Excuse.

"Nobody can learn all there is worth knowing in this lifetime," said Mr. Meekton wisely. "And a man ought never to assume that his education is finished. I'm going to keep ahead with mine; I'm going to study astronomy." His wife looked at him sharply, and then, in a cold, hard tone exclaimed: "Leonidas, you'll have to think up some better excuse than that for staying out all night."

His Love for Her.

George had been holding his girl on his lap for over two hours, and as she weighed 190 odd pounds he was feeling a little bit tired, but he was too much of a gentleman to tell her so. "George, dear," she murmured softly, "are you having a pleasant call?" "Delightful, darling," he responded faintly. "And are you not sorry that we are to be married so soon?" "No, indeed." "And you think I am a nice girl?" she continued lovingly. "Nice girl?" repeated George enthusiastically. "Nice doesn't express it. I think you are immense."

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

What Should He Do?

"E. R." writes—"If you were in love with a girl and she told you not to write to her or see her till a certain day, what would be the best thing to do, do you think? We live at a distance of thirteen miles apart, but she comes in this district every day."

* * * * *

It all depends on the length of time during which she has forbidden you to see her. If it's only a little while, and you are sure she is fond of you, I should respect her wishes, and leave her alone for that time. Perhaps she has some family difficulty or embarrassment to which she wishes to attend quietly, in which case I am sure you would not wish to intrude on her. The whole question is: Does she reciprocate your love? If so, the first thing you should do to prove your own devotion should be to trust her. Write to her and tell her you do trust her, and feel sure she is true to you.

❦❦❦

The Deserted Lover.

"H. A. E." is twenty-three and has been keeping company with a man two years older since she was sixteen. They have quarrelled many times, but generally made it up at short intervals. Recently they had a sort of grand opera squabble which threatened to keep them apart for the rest of time, but the man, as usual, came up repenting, and things went on as before.

* * * * *

However, when he did turn up it was to tell "H. A. E." that he had got a passing passion for another girl—a barmaid—and he wished to postpone further intimacy with "H. A. E." until he had lived it down. "H. A. E." asks my opinion on his conduct, as she fears he is going to the bad. He spends all his time at the bar behind which works the maid of his new fancy.

* * * * *

This, "H. A. E.," is often the outcome of boy and girl friendships. I do not doubt that you are thoroughly well suited to each other, since you have been more or less inseparables for seven years. But I should think you have been more chums than lovers. He has suddenly awakened to the thought that a man can have feelings stronger than friendship, or even devotion, and the barmaid is at present reaping the fruits of his awakening.

* * * * *

I advise you to leave him severely alone. Tell him that, until he has made up his mind as to yourself, that you wish to sever all communications. Probably after a little while his infatuation will have run its course, and that over he will return to his old love, all the better for the temporary breach.

A Forward Miss.

"BASHFUL MAN."—Young ladies who ask strange young men for primroses in railway carriages are not usually to be recommended. Give the primroses, by all means, if the young lady wants them, but do so in such a way that she will see that you have nothing else to offer her.

❦❦❦

Engaged at Eighteen.

"UNCERTAIN" wants to know whether eighteen is too young for a girl to become engaged. A friend of hers who is this age is just engaged to a man of twenty.

* * * * *

It all depends on the persons concerned, "UNCERTAIN." Some persons are much older at eighteen than others of even a much more mature age, and in their case, of course, it is not too young. Ordinarily, twenty or twenty-one is quite early enough. Before that neither a girl nor a man really knows their own mind, so far as the state of matrimony is concerned.

❦❦❦

A Widower in the Way.

"JACK."—Yes, I am always glad to hear from the "boys." You are in love with a girl who professes to return your love. But she carries on relations with a widower much older than herself, and cannot keep appointments with you because of engagements with him. All the time she professes to be fonder of you than of anyone else.

* * * * *

It is certain that you cannot play second fiddle to the widower. Besides, he would most probably drown your music. These widowers have wonderful ways with women. Be frank with her, and make her take her choice. If she loves you, she must give up the widower.

❦❦❦

False Accusations.

"G. T. L." has been keeping company with a young lady for several years. She now accuses him of certain things which she has heard, but they are not true. She also tells him he is not straightforward, but fails to explain in what way. She wants to continue friendship with him. What is he to do?

* * * * *

There is only one solution to this problem, "G. T. L.," and that is to tell the young lady that, unless she will explain herself, and so enable you to contradict the false charges made against you, you do not see what advantage is gained by continuing to be friends. If she really cares for you she will do this; if not, I think you will be happier apart.

❦❦❦

A Complex Affair.

"ANXIOUS" is one of those young men who, in the words of the song, "must love someone." At first he took a great fancy to a friend of a lady friend of his, and they walked out together. Then this girl found she could not keep any more appointments with "ANXIOUS." He promptly asked his lady friend to find him someone else, which she did. "ANXIOUS" walked with this young lady, but disliked her.

* * * * *

Then the first young lady and the second one quarrelled over "ANXIOUS." He, however, remains devoted to the first one. How should he approach her to resume the intimacy? He says she lives a long way from him, and he does not wish to write to her at present.

* * * * *

How you are to get intimate with a girl if you cannot go and see her, and don't wish to write to her, is more than I can say, unless you get Marconi to fit you both up with wireless telegraphy. You had better devote your Sundays—which I suppose are free—to meeting the girl. I cannot see any other way out of it.

Cynthia.

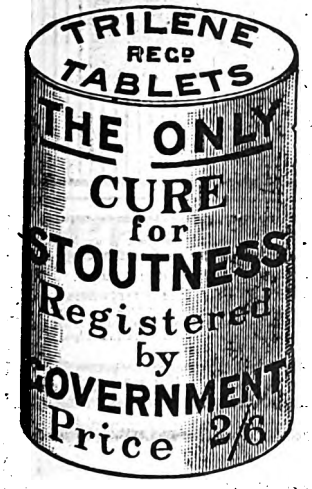
Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ALL FAT PEOPLE

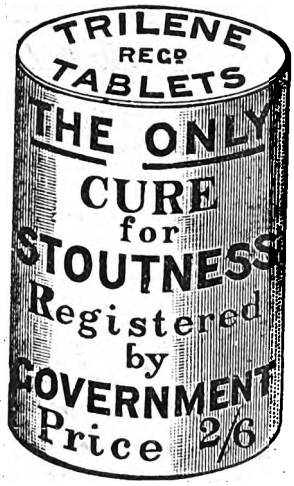
Can be CURED by taking

TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."



Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagilt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablet has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest valu I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

Digitized by Google

ASK YOUR BUTCHER FOR

Swift's

AMERICAN BEEF

Choice and Tender.

Patent Dry Cleaning

What is it? A novel system of cleaning by means of scientifically distilled Spirit, without in any way affecting the material, altering the colour, or affecting the shape of it.

What will it clean? Dresses, Jackets, Blouses, Dressing Gowns, Overcoats, Suits & Trousers, Tapestry, Cloth, and Chenille Curtains, Table Covers, Carpets & Rugs.

Where is it done? at JOHNSON BROS., BOOTLE DYE WORKS, LIVERPOOL.

SEND POST-CARD, and address of nearest branch will be sent you. 150 *Branches in London and Provinces.*

MACKINTOSH'S

IS DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS! DELICIOUS!
PUREST OF THE PURE. Sold Everywhere.
A very large Sample Packet sent post free for eight penny stamps. J. MACKINTOSH Ltd., The Toffee Mills, HALIFAX. *Wholesale dealers should stock this Toffee as it sells at sight.*

EXTRA CREAM TOFFEE

EVERY BRITISH HOUSE-WIFE

should polish all metals with it too. Most foreign polishes set up acid and are *sticky* in use, and require hard work. "MATCHLESS" Metal Polish spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is made wholly in England, and its sale supports British Labour.

Manufrs.: The "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH CO., LTD., LIVERPOOL.

SPLENDID SERIES STARTS INSIDE.

SHORT STORIES

No. 751.] Week ending May 23rd, 1903. [Price One Penny.

HE RAISED HIS EYES AND SAW—PROJECTING THROUGH A HOLE IN THE BLANK WALL—A HAND AND ARM!

Digitized by Google

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 BROWNIE is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2½ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

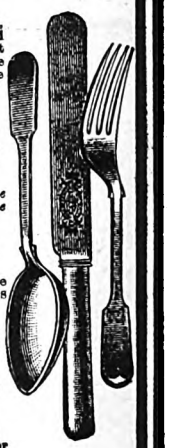
KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Cutlery

THE "ENTERPRISE" . PARCEL . 25/-

Household Cutlery & Plate.



Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white "Ivorette" Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of 'Columbian' Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.

HOW TO PAY.

Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if the Goods are not perfectly satisfactory in every respect.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms and particulars. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

Ten Days Free Trial

is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way. 1903 Models, fully warranted,

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample cycle at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 4 D

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.

TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with

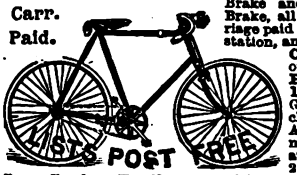
"KEATING'S POWDER,"

unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model C is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for **Cash is £8 8 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 15/10 each.** Gentleman's machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns

Carr. Paid.



Juno Cycles. Trailers from £5 5 0, or 10/6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—**JUNO CYCLE Co.** (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

E·P P S'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness: it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 23 Watmall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

FROM FACTORY DIRECT TO RIDER,

HANDSOMEST, RELIABLE, BRITISH MADE CYCLES.

£4 10s., £5 15s. 6d., £6 10s.

Cash.

Prices by 15s. monthly payments quoted. Write D Dept. for Catalogue and Lists. WILLIAMS' DIRECT SUPPLY MANUFACTURING CO. 12 Approach, London Bridge, London

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

Of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 751.] Week Ending May 23rd, 1903. [One Penny.

The Arm in the Wall.

The Story of a Strange Deliverance.

Containing the Incident depicted on the Cover.

"I CAN'T take this, sir; it's bad!" said the landlady of the inn, her usually jolly face becoming very grave.

"Bad?" echoed Quinton Chalmers in surprise. He picked up the half-crown and looked at it doubtfully. "Do you mean to say that this is a counterfeit?"

"Certainly!" responded the landlady, unbending and looking sympathetic. She perceived that his astonishment was genuine, and that he was not knowingly uttering base coin. "There's a lot about, sir!"

"There's one too many about for me!" declared Quinton sorrowfully. "Misfortunes never come alone. I'm down on my luck, and, to make matters worse, half a crown out of the ten and six I possess proves to be spurious. Well, nail it to the counter!"

He tendered another coin in payment of the frugal meal which he had ordered, and departed.

"I am not against making money," he reflected, as he sauntered along, "but I wouldn't stoop to make it out of poor beggars like Quinton Chalmers! Yes, I remember; there has been an outcry about the amount of spurious money in circulation. H'm, I should like to have the pleasure of seeing the coiners in the dock, confound them! What's the next move?"

This last remark applied to his own movements; the answer was soon forthcoming.

"To Bilstone. I shall get there by the evening along these country roads and lanes. Put up there for the night, then search about for work."

In pursuance of this plan he pushed on for some time, meeting very few people, and absorbed in his own reflections. He pulled himself up suddenly and uttered an exclamation of wonder.

"Surely I must have been mistaken! Yet it seemed real enough as I lifted my eyes. Let me get a little nearer!"

He quickened his steps in the direction of a long, blank wall, probably the surrounding wall of a country mansion. He kept his eyes on one particular spot in the wall as he hurried towards it.

He was close to the spot now, and he waited for the reappearance of the object. Presently he saw something emerging from the apparently solid mass, and he involuntarily clenched his fist in his excitement. A hand projecting from the masonry! It moved, and there gradually appeared a bare arm! It raised itself and its fingers were ready to touch or clutch at something.

An uncanny sensation crept over Quinton's body, causing a tingling from his head to his feet. His eyes were fixed on this strange object, projecting from the long, high, blank wall, and he could not have moved to save his life. The spell was removed only when the arm shrank into the masonry, as it seemed, drawing the hand with it.

"Heavens!" gasped Quinton Chalmers, recovering the power of speech. "What is the meaning of that? I am not dreaming; it's real enough; but is it a warning or is someone imprisoned there?"

The easiest way to discover something of the truth was to clamber to the spot, where, as he could now see, a hole had been made in the wall. If some joke-loving individual were on the other side—— But no! How could a practical joker have been sure that he would see the arm when it first appeared, while Quinton was at a distance? It was not a difficult matter to reach that hole by digging his penknife into the mortar and making footholds. In two minutes he was on a level with the hole and was peering through.

It was no mere surrounding wall, with path or grass on the other side, for it was dark within and he could distinguish nothing. He was lifting himself up an inch or two higher, in his endeavour to get a better view, if possible, when he saw two gleaming eyes, and the next instant the arm was thrust out and the fingers gripped his throat in an iron clutch.

Quinton vainly tried to wriggle himself free; he could not retain his hold and yet do something to liberate himself, and it was that thought which suggested a successful device. He simply let go all hold, so that the whole weight of his body was thrown on the mysterious arm, dragging it against the jagged hole. Quinton fancied that he heard a cry, the grip was loosened, and he fell to the ground in a heap, fortunately with no more serious injury than a bruise or two.

"I'm going to get to the bottom of this!" muttered Quinton determinedly and angrily. "I must see what this means, and if anyone has been playing with me, why that someone is going to catch it!"

It was a fair climb, and a somewhat risky one, to reach the top of the wall, but Quinton essayed it with the help of his knife, and succeeded. He discovered that the wall formed, for a considerable length, one side of some irregular buildings, like sheds made of brick instead of planks.

At the spot where he had seen the arm the shed was higher than the rest, and possibly consisted of two storeys. From the top of the wall to the roof of that building was not much of a drop, so Quinton edged along the wall, schoolboy fashion, till he reached this shed and then let himself drop as gently as he could to the roof.

There were no skylights, but some small holes, about an inch in diameter, which reminded Quinton of the air-holes in the boxes used for conveying live creatures.

He lay flat on this sloping roof, his head lower than his body, and peered over the farther side in search of windows, but there were none in the shed. There was a door for giving admission to the ground floor.

"This is mysterious! Have they got a wild man of the woods in this box? I'll call in at the holes!"

He turned himself about, and placing his mouth against one of the air-holes, he cried, "Hallo!"

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

Once more he thought he heard a cry. He placed his left ear flat over one hole and listened; he heard a cry which he recognised as "Help!"

Quinton's mind was made up immediately. This was not a private asylum, for no one would be allowed to keep lunatics confined in such a cage. There was foul play of some sort, and Quinton meant to unravel the mystery of the arm.

He saw that some slates could be removed, and he had them off in a very brief space of time. The opening thus made permitted more light to enter an apartment which had no other means of obtaining relief from its darkness and gloom.

"Nice place, that, to keep a human being!" muttered Quinton, as he thrust his head into the space and looked round. "Anyone there?" he called out. "Gracious!" he ejaculated hastily, drawing his head back. "What's that?"

He had at first taken the strange thing to be a wild animal, but as he surveyed it more closely he perceived that the creature was a human being.

It was a man, whose age it was not possible to guess with any degree of accuracy; his hair was long and hung about his shoulders like a mane, his beard and moustache were also long and unkempt, his eyebrows seemed at times to hide the small, frightened eyes. His face was brown and grimy.

Near him lay a ragged coat, which he had probably taken off in order to thrust his arm through the hole in the wall. If he wore a shirt, no part of it was visible now, and his arms were bare to the shoulder.

"Who are you, and why are you here?" queried Chalmers in bewilderment.

"So you have tracked me at last!" exclaimed the man submissively. "I thought I had killed you, long ago—I cannot remember how long, for I have lost count of the days and nights! Well, come in and take me! It will be a release from this place, at least! Then I did not kill you?"

"It isn't years ago," replied Chalmers easily, peering through the opening once more. "It isn't many minutes since you tried to throttle me! I say, I've come to help you! I'm coming down. No tricks, now!"

Reckless of the consequences, Quinton dropped through, feet first, and alighted on the floor close to the strange occupant of the prison, as the young man now called it. It was about twelve feet from the roof to the floor, so that it was not possible for the prisoner himself to get to the roof and escape, supposing that he desired to do so.

"Now!" said Quinton cheerfully. "What can I do for you? Tell me all about yourself."

"You are not afraid of me?" asked the man. "I tried to kill you years ago, you will remember! You know that I am Will Bristowe!"

"William Bristowe!" echoed Quinton, stepping back in surprise. "Ah, yes! I understand. You mistake me for my father, whom you struck in a quarrel five years ago. You disappeared, doubtless because you feared the arm of the law. But you didn't kill him, I am thankful to say, and he died of fever thirteen months ago. Do you understand?"

The man sat down on his rickety stool and passed his hand over his hairy face. He sat still, in deep reflection, for quite five minutes, but when he looked up at Quinton the young man saw the light of understanding in his eyes.

"Yes, I see it all now!" he said slowly. "I seem to have been dreaming. Then I am not a murderer, and my little girl—she must be a big girl now!—is not living under the stigma."

"My father tried to find you before he died, as he wished you to know that he felt that he had provoked you to the quarrel. Your daughter——"

"Tell me about her!" pleaded the man eagerly. "Millie was fourteen then. Where is she?"

"Oh—er—she's all right!" returned Quinton evasively. "But tell me about yourself. What have you been doing?"

"Making money!" laughed the man, and his laugh made Quinton's flesh creep. "Look!"

In the corner to which he pointed was a piece of sacking covering a heap. Bristowe threw aside the sacking, disclosing to the astonished gaze of the younger man a pile of new money—sovereigns, half sovereigns, and silver coins of all denominations. They were heaped together indiscriminately.

"Feel them!" cried Bristowe, with another hysterical laugh. "Catch!"

He dug his hands into the heap and threw the contents into the air just above Quinton, so that a golden and silvern shower fell about him.

"Money, all money!" laughed Bristowe. "Money for fools to get hold of—made on the premises. Ha, ha!"

"Stop it!" cried Quinton authoritatively. "Sit down and explain!"

The man was strange, but certainly not mad; probably he would become insane if left to brood over his supposed misdeed and confined in that prison. He seated himself as quietly as a child, and, after further urging, told his story in broad lines.

"So I did not kill him! Thank Heaven! I ran away, leaving my daughter to the mercy of strangers, because I feared the hangman's noose! My sole care was to hide! I secreted myself by day and travelled by night, eating what I could pick up on the roads, till I fainted by the wayside.

"When I came to, I was in a room. A man said to me: 'I know you! You are a die sinker and metal engraver; your name is Bristowe; you are the very man!' I begged him to save me, not to give me up for the murder. He listened to me; then he smiled and said he would help me to hide if I would help him.

"I agreed to do what he wanted if he would only save me. He brought me here by night, as the hunt was hot after me for murder, he said. Then I found that he wanted me to make dies for coining counterfeit money, and to help in touching up the coins after they had been taken from the moulds. I refused, but he threatened to hand me over to justice and I agreed."

"They deceived you!" cried Quinton. "They took advantage of your fears and your nervousness, and I've no doubt that they threatened to disgrace your daughter and all that sort of thing, so you fell into their trap. In reality, you had nothing to be afraid of. That man had seen you before, of course?"

"Yes," replied Bristowe sadly. "I made the dies and they coined the money. For a long time I worked, not in this room, and I cared nothing for the robbery in which I was assisting. Then I rebelled; they threatened me, but I said that I would face the charge.

"I was getting tired of it, my conscience would not let me rest. But they would not let me go! They kept me in this room, without light, neglected and with scanty food. Sometimes they beat me until I do some work here by the aid of a lamp!"

"The brutes!" cried Quinton indignantly. "Then you made a hole in the wall?"

"Yes, with a blunt knife, and I covered it artfully from inside! You would never detect where it is! I put my arm out as a signal when I think they will not see it. I saw you peering through there, and I thought that the dead had come to life. How you resemble your father! In an agony of terror, I clutched at your throat!"

"It was a tight grip!" exclaimed Quinton, feeling his throat. "Well, I should help you to get out in any case, but I have other incentives than pure humanity!" To himself he added: "How can I tell him now that I am in love with his daughter, but that I am too poor to ask her hand in marriage and that I have lost trace of her since leaving home? I wonder where she went to? Perhaps she will write to me and the letter will be sent on soon as I have an address!"

"You will never get me away from here," sighed Bristowe. "There is no door!"

"Then we will go through the roof!" was the prompt response. "But how do you get out if there is no door?"

"They move the floor!" returned Bristowe grimly.

"Move the floor! Well, we'll attend to those rascals later; I owe them something for that half-crown, for I'll be bound they made it! Now, I'll get on your shoulders and so spring up and grab at the woodwork and scramble through.

Digitized by Google

You stand on that stool and make a spring for my hand, which I will hold down as far as I can. It will be a wrench, but I'm strong and I think we can manage to get you high enough to clutch the woodwork also. Stand here!"

Bristowe was all excitement. He trembled so violently that Quinton had to tell him to "brace up!" The young man got him in position and was soon in a kneeling attitude on Bristowe's shoulders. Another effort, and he was standing upright, ready to spring and relieve the trembling Bristowe of a weight that was making him shake.

"It's moving!" suddenly screamed Bristowe.

Quinton realised the situation when he felt Bristowe staggering. He made a tremendous effort and leapt towards the ceiling, but he was too late; the movement of the floor had upset Bristowe and taken him from the required position just a second before the leap was made. Quinton missed his mark and came down, face undermost, horizontally, and below him he saw, in a rapid glance, a spectacle that would have chilled the heart of the bravest.

The floor was rolling away, like a sliding door. Bristowe was retreating to the farther end, waiting till the ground should be taken from under his feet and precipitate him into the depths into which Quinton Chalmers was falling.

Below them was a furnace and a huge crucible or melting pot, filled with molten metal, and round about were several presses and machines. Quinton was falling straight over the seething mass of metal, which seemed waiting to receive him and enfold him in its boiling embrace. A horrible death! Small wonder that even so brave a man as Quinton Chalmers should cry aloud for help!

But simultaneously with the cry that was wrenched from him, the young man tried a trick which he had performed at the gymnasium; he gave himself a quick jerk, turned a half somersault, and came to the ground on his feet right by the side of the cauldron of death.

The force of the impact when he touched the ground threw him forward into the arms of one of the three men who had stood below, calmly watching the impending destruction of a fellow-creature—watching calmly because they had deliberately planned it.

"Settle him!" cried another. "He knows too much, and if he goes we shall all be lagged!"

The three of them seized Quinton, who struggled powerfully with them, so that they could not keep him under control.

"Knock him on the head!" cried one with an oath, and the man addressed released his hold of Quinton in order to obey the order.

He raised a bar of lead and swung it over his head, but it was caught from behind by someone who swung on it and thus tumbled the ruffian over. Then a girl ran forward and rained blows on the faces of Quinton's assailants with her small fists.

"Let him go!" she cried. "Oh, Quinton, they will kill you!"

"I'm coming!" screamed a strident voice from above.

Bristowe had been saved because the floor did not roll away entirely. He had walked along a very narrow ridge of wood with the agility of a cat and had reached an upright ladder, which he was now descending in double quick time.

"You here, Millie!" cried Quinton in the midst of his struggles, and he redoubled his efforts to get rid of his opponents.

Bristowe was on the scene a moment later, and the third ruffian rejoined the fray. He found that it took him all his time to deal with Millie, who clung to him in order to prevent him from taking part in the fight between the four men.

Bristowe was not strong enough to do much more than create a diversion.

He was soon toppled over, but the diversion gave Quinton Chalmers his chance. He contrived to get free for a few seconds, just in time enough to seize a bar of metal. He dealt one ruffian a severe blow, stretching him senseless at the moment that the other struck Bristowe to the ground.

With a cry of rage, Chalmers went for this fellow, who turned tail and ran. Millie's opponent also considered it good policy to run, and the lovers were left to themselves, for Bristowe was dazed and lay motionless.

"Millie, dear," exclaimed Quinton, folding her in his arms and kissing her.

"We must not stay, Quinton! They will kill us! I know that they intended to kill that poor man this evening, but I could not get away to secure help. Then they found that someone had got into the room above, and they resolved to kill both. Oh, Quinton, I did not dream that it was you! But come, come! Oh, how shall we get out!"

Bristowe was struggling to his feet; he had not recognised his daughter and she did not know him.

"What a strange reunion!" Quinton Chalmers, notwithstanding the peril of their position, could not help uttering this remark. "If we venture through that door," he added, "we may be shot down! Can we get through that hole in the roof?"

"Easily!" exclaimed Bristowe joyfully, much to Quinton's surprise. "See this ladder straight against the wall? I came down it, you know. It's a double one; half will slide up above the other and that will take us to the roof!"

"Hurrah!" cried Chalmers. "We can use their own appliances for our convenience. Up with it!"

He pushed the movable half upwards, mounting the rungs of the fixed half for that purpose. He got on the roof and made the hole larger, after which Millie ascended, followed by Bristowe, who had secured the lower door.

It was comparatively easy to get to the top of the wall, but the difficulty came in getting down to the ground. Chalmers went first, clinging to almost nothing till he had only a twelve feet drop and then he let go.

He held out his arms to catch Millie, who bravely trusted herself to her lover and was caught in his arms. It was a rude shock for both, but no injuries were sustained. Bristowe followed, and Chalmers contrived to break his fall, but this exploit resulted in a sprained ankle.

"You go and leave me!" he said resignedly. "You must not be caught!"

"You must hobble along on one foot till we get away!" declared Chalmers. "Once near a habitation, we can send for a force of men to trap those scoundrels."

"I will run for help!" said Millie decisively. "I cannot fight, so I must act as messenger. I hope, though, that I shan't meet them on my way."

The coiners were heard coming just then, but before they arrived Millie reappeared with a small rescue party, and the coiners knew that their game was up.

The rescuers considered that they were not strong enough to attack the citadel of the coiners, so they helped our three friends to find a refuge and then sent for a strong force of police and labourers.

While they were doing their wholesome work, Millie was telling why she had gone off so suddenly.

"I had the offer of a good situation," she explained, "and I was to go at once. I packed hastily and went with the lady, intending to write you. I have written since, but I now know that my letters were intercepted. I found that I was being made a dupe in various ways for passing bad money and I decided to leave. The lady would not let me go; I was kept in the grounds, and only this morning I found that coining was being carried on down there in an extensive manner. How cruel they have been to that poor man! I wonder who he is?"

It was on the following morning that Quinton took his sweetheart to see the late prisoner; he had been bathed, his hair and beard cut, and a general transformation effected.

The reunion was a touching one, and Chalmers left father and daughter to themselves.

"The ways of Fate are not to be fathomed!" observed Chalmers that evening. "I was down on my luck and came this way, guided—who shall say?—by the Divinity that shapes our ends! And we three, separated and lost to one another, are brought together by the strange appearance of an arm in the wall!"

H. Bramley.

(*Turn on now to page 656.*)

Digitized by Google

Angela's Way.

Telling of a Soldier's Wooing.

The Spring sun shone brightly on the silver of Dr. Hayward's well-furnished breakfast table in his house at the Naval Hospital at Haslar, where he sat with his wife, daughter, and a friend of the latter.

The doctor himself, an elderly man with a grey, torpedo-cut naval beard was engrossed in the newspaper; his wife, a timid-looking woman, with traces of a delicate style of beauty, sat opposite him dispensing the tea and coffee; his daughter Kitty, a lively and decidedly pretty girl, was on one side, and her friend Angela Middleton, in half mourning, was on the other.

Angela Middleton was tall, with a perfectly-proportioned figure, a dark, oval face, clear cut features, and the dreamy eyes of an enthusiast, which, however, only served to soften the look of decision about her mouth and chin.

She had reached the age of twenty-five, was the possessor of a considerable fortune, and had been her own mistress since girlhood, for her mother had always been more or less of an invalid.

At nine the doctor threw down his newspaper.

"Would you girls like to go round the hospital with me this afternoon? I shall not be very busy, and could show you round the most interesting parts."

"What do you say, Angela?" said Kitty. "Would you like to go?"

"Thank you very much, Dr. Hayward," answered Angela. "I am very interested in everything that is being done for our soldiers and sailors. I wish I had been free to do some nursing when the war began."

"Some of the soldiers we have here have been pretty well knocked about," said the doctor. "It is wonderful what they go through and yet often recover. In some cases though, where it seems they have only a living death before them, one would almost wish that the shot had done for them at once. Well, good-bye, I'll see you later," and the good doctor left the room.

Kitty looked sober for once, and then said:

"I know Dad was thinking of that poor Captain Graham, of the Blue Marines. It is dreadfully sad for him. He lies so still and patient, Dad says; never complaining, though surely death would be preferable to the life that is before him."

"What is the matter with him?" asked Angela.

"Oh, I don't understand it properly, but I believe he got a shot in his back—or perhaps it was a shell; at any rate a splinter or something is pressing on the spinal cord, and he is paralysed, besides suffering horribly at times."

"But can't they get it out?"

"You see, my dear," said Mrs. Hayward, "the poor young man is badly off, and seems to have no relations, and he has got into such a weak state, my husband thinks he would sink under an operation. My husband always says it halves a man's chances of recovery if he has no object for which to live."

"The moral of which is," said Kitty, "'provide yourself with an object' in case of accident. I have several, so if Dad has to perform an operation on me I shall have at least double the chances of recovery of the ordinary staid and proper person like you, my dear Angela."

Early in the afternoon the doctor took the two girls round to view the most interesting features of the hospital, and lastly he said, "Now come along, and see one of my patients. It will cheer him up to see someone—I have got him out here in a sunny corner in his wheeled chair"—and he whisked them out of the building across the square piece of green to the officers' quarters.

"Miss Middleton, this is Captain Graham, of whom you have heard me speak. You know my daughter, Graham?"

"Excuse my rising," said a pleasant voice, "but circumstances over which I have no control make it impossible."

With a heart aching with pity, Angela looked at this wreck of a once strong and healthy man. The finely-modelled head covered with close-cropped, fair, curly hair, the bright blue eyes with the wistfulness of pain in their depths, the pale, sunken cheeks, the broad shoulders made for strength, but now only suggesting a massive frame, and, worst of all, the motionless legs, which even under the rug gave a suggestion of death rather than repose.

"And but for that shot," she thought to herself, "he would be walking about like other men, full of the joy of living with which the Springtime fills one's veins."

However, feeling instinctively that pity if shown too openly would gall him, she fell into a discussion of ordinary subjects.

She found him a well-read man, evidently of a thoughtful disposition, and the time passed very quickly as they discovered many points in common.

"Well," said the doctor at last, "I must be off. If you young ladies, however, like to stay and chat a bit I will come and fetch you in time for tea."

So they stayed, and kept up a lively three-cornered conversation for half an hour, at the end of which time Dr. Hayward appeared and bore them off.

"Thank you so much," said the invalid, with a bright smile, "you can't think what good it has done me to see you. It is a bit dull lying here day after day," though, he added quickly, "the doctor is awfully good to me, and often runs in for a little chat."

"Good-bye," said Kitty, with a bright smile and a tender glance of pity which belied her light manner.

"Don't let your temperature go up, and then perhaps Dad will let us come again soon."

"Good-bye," said Angela, giving her hand in her turn. "I am going to look out all the most interesting books I can find and send them to you."

"Not too much of that, young lady," said the doctor. "He is only allowed a little reading because of the strain on his eyes."

At this statement a passion of pity suffused Angela's eyes and they met Graham's for a moment. Then almost hating herself for moving so freely, she turned and went.

Alec Graham had been startled by the look he had seen in her eyes. It seemed to him that for that moment he had seen into her soul, and for the time he forgot his own pain in sympathy for the mental agony he knew she was enduring. He remembered he had felt like that when he witnessed the dumb sufferings of the horses and oxen after a battle.

That night Angela resolved many things in her mind. She had bitterly felt her inaction when war was declared. Her mother was in a dying condition, and could not be left, so she was debarred from going, as so many others did, to care for the wounded and suffering.

She had no brother but one many years older than herself, a bachelor, in the Foreign Office, so she could not even feel she was sending out her dearest to risk his life for his country. She had subscribed largely to all the subscription lists, and felt it was a poor thing compared with what others were doing.

Now for the first time she had come face to face with the sufferings of those who had done what she had longed to do,

Digitized by Google

who had fought as she would have done, had she been a man, and all her feelings of pride and grief for the Army in general centered on these cases with which she had personally come in contact.

She determined to remain inactive no longer, and announced her resolution at breakfast next day.

"Doctor, can't I do anything for the poor fellows in your hospital?"

The doctor looked up, and asked abruptly:

"What d'you think you *could* do?"

She faltered a little—

"Could I not read to them? Or write letters for them? Anything to cheer them and make the time pass less heavily."

"Certainly you could, the sick-bay men have not much time for that kind of thing."

"But Joseph, dear," interposed Mrs. Hayward. "Would it be quite right for her—proper, I mean."

"Right—proper," thundered the doctor; "of course it is! It is more—it is a duty. A service that should be offered willingly and not commanded!"

"That's a hit at me," said Kitty in an aside.

"But look here, young woman," said the doctor, drawing his bushy brows together; "if you take it up you must stick to it, at least for the three months you are here, and you must be regular if you are to be any real use. No flying off to tennis parties and entertainments and forgetting all about the poor blue-jackets who are expecting you."

"Indeed I quite understand that," answered Angela, delighted that the doctor took up her idea so readily. "I would rather do that than go about amusing myself."

The doctor was a man of determination and liked to go straight ahead once a course had been adopted.

"Well, suppose you come to-day at three. You can then spend two hours in the hospital—or you can come in the morning if you wish, any time after ten."

"Very well," said Angela; "I will begin with the morning, and as I make more friends, I shall be glad to increase my hours."

"Better so than the other way," and the doctor nodded approval.

"I will come too, Dad," said Kitty.

"Don't you think, doctor," said Angela, who was pursuing her own train of thought, "instead of sending Captain Graham those books I might take them and read to him? You said he must spare his eyes."

"Certainly, my dear, an excellent idea!"

"But, Joseph," put in Mrs. Hayward timidly.

"My dear woman, Captain Graham is completely paralysed in the lower half of his body, and if he goes on as he is doing now, he has not six months to live," said the doctor emphatically. "Anything that can be done to alleviate the suffering of those six months ought to be done, let Mrs. Grundy say what she will."

At this announcement of the fate in store for the poor young fellow, silence fell on the group until the doctor had found his cap and prepared to depart.

"Then Kitty and I will come over at eleven, and perhaps we may ask for you, if you can spare the time to introduce us to some of your patients.

"Certainly ask for me; I shall be somewhere about—Good-bye for the present," and he was off.

The morning visit was fairly successful though Angela found it a little difficult to shake off her shyness in spite of her earnestness, but there was no shyness about Kitty who knew many of them already, and could ask after their mothers, sweethearts, and wives in a way which soon put them at their ease also.

The visit to Captain Graham was an unmixed success, he was so unfeignedly glad to see them and looked so much brighter and better when they left, that Dr. Hayward congratulated them in his gruff manner when he came in later to take them back with him.

This was the beginning of many happy days for Angela, who at last had found an outlet for the love and sympathy with which she was always overflowing for the weak and suffering.

Day by day, however, the hour spent with Captain Graham became more precious to her, as they grew more intimate and she learnt more of him and his life.

She learnt how alone he was in the world and her heart went out for his loneliness all the more that her own mother's recent death had left her in similar condition. The loneliness that has no one whose thought answers your thought, whose heart responds to your heart.

He was the only child of an only child; his mother's relations, who were highly connected, had been offended at her marriage to a penniless young officer and had ceased to have any communication with her for some time before her husband died and left her virtually friendless.

All this he told her by degrees and then as they grew more intimate she learnt how his mother had pinched and saved that he might follow his father's profession; and how she had bravely sent him from her with her blessing though her heart was breaking.

How it had only needed for her to see his name, placed by mistake among the killed at Graspan, for her frail body, weakened by much suffering and actual privation, to sink under the shock. Now when he was brought home the wreck that he was, feeling she at least would rejoice over him, it was only to learn that she was already buried.

"I ought really to have been killed, Miss Middleton. It is always a mistake for a dead man to come to life, and when it is to such a life as this, why, it was hardly worth the trouble, was it?" he said rather bitterly.

"Don't talk like that, Captain Graham," said Angela brokenly; "I can't bear it."

"Pardon me," he said with a look of distress; "I am a brute. I forgot how much you feel for all the poor fellows who have been hit. Let us read and forget this miserable personality."

Angela took up the book they had been reading and continued reading aloud and discussing the points that arose until it was time for her to go back for tea.

Two months of Angela's stay with the Haywards passed in this manner and her visits to the hospital were continued with the greatest regularity. Kitty was somewhat spasmodic in her attendance but Angela never missed a day.

One evening Mrs. Hayward remarked.

"I think my dear Angela, it would be as well if you did not go to visit Captain Graham any more, at least for the present."

"Why?" asked Angela in a low tone.

"People are—people are talking."

Angela flushed the slow, painful flush of a dark complexion, and then turned very pale.

"What do they say?"

"Oh," answered Mrs. Hayward awkwardly. "You know the kind of things people say—when—whenever they have a chance——"

"Yes, of course," broke in Kitty tempestuously; "we know the kind of thing—Goes every day to read to Captain Graham—How very extraordinary. It is not even as though she were a relative—only the merest acquaintance—still, he is a handsome young man, my dear, in spite of his being a cripple, and some girls—Faugh! I know them! They make me sick. The horrid cats!" And the last word was brought out with extraordinary emphasis.

"Kitty, my dear!" cried her mother in gentle reproof.

"I mean it!" she continued. "Not one of them would cross the road to do a kindness to anyone. So anxious are they not to have to say—'We have done the things we ought not to have done,' that their whole lives consist in leaving 'undone the things they ought to have done.'"

Kitty was the more vehement that she had been aware of these rumours long before they had reached her mother's ears, and had loyally combated them and refused even to speak of them to her friend.

Angela had regained her control and made up her mind.

"I am very sorry," she said quietly; "that people should misjudge me, but I think I am old enough to decide for myself

Digitized by Google

and I shall make no difference in my conduct on account of what 'they' say."

"Bravo!" cried Kitty.

"My dear Angela, really! Of course, I cannot insist, but I am sure you are wrong."

"One can only do what one thinks right. It is useless to try to act according to another person's idea of right more especially those of whom one knows nothing."

"It is more useless, Angela," said Mrs. Hayward impatiently, "to attempt to fight against the opinion of the world."

"There can be no wrong in that I have endeavoured to bring a little pleasure into the life of a fellow creature, that I have tried to give him courage to face his life such as it is, and to learn the lesson of his suffering. I know I am a better woman for it," she added in a low tone.

"Of course, we know there is no wrong in it, but still, if it makes people talk—it is not even as if you could marry him—situated as he is, it is an impossibility."

"Mother, how can you!" cried Kitty.

Once more Angela flushed slowly.

"Why?" was all she found strength to utter.

"Why? Of course he would not marry, cripple as he is, and likely to remain an invalid all his life, if he lives at all."

This was the first time the possibility of marrying Captain Graham had presented itself to her mind, and now she saw suddenly where all this intercourse with him had led her.

She knew him as she knew no other person on earth; life, apart from him, would henceforth be of no value and life devoted to his service would be the highest happiness for which she could hope.

Even as this flashed into her mind she said:

"I shall do as I think right."

It was of no use for Mrs. Hayward to argue, Angela was a person of determination and could not be moved. That night Mrs. Hayward told her husband of the matter, and he promised to speak to Angela.

Accordingly the next day he spoke to Angela, but did not succeed in altering her resolution, in fact, he was so pleased with her determination that he found himself forgetting his *rôle* of mentor and agreeing with her instead of lecturing. However, he saw the best course would be, to plainly put the case to Capt. Graham, and leave him to act as his honour bade him.

"You see, my dear fellow, it's like this. She, for all she thinks she knows the world, does not understand how scandal grows out of nothing, and feeling secure in her innocence, wishes to persist in the course she feels sure is right, but we know, don't we, that not all the righteousness in the world can make up to a woman for a breath of scandal on her good name?"

Poor Capt. Graham was suffering tortures, beads of perspiration stood on his brow, but there was not the slightest doubt in his mind how he ought to act.

"Her brother is her only near relation. I will write to him and put it all before him. I ought to have foreseen this, but it has been Heaven while it lasted."

"My poor fellow," said the compassionate doctor, "I cannot help telling you that I think that there is just a chance of your recovery if you could get strong enough to undergo an operation by Sir William Graves—but it would be kill or cure."

"Don't doctor, it is only bearable if I do not allow myself to think there is any possibility, I dare not let myself imagine for one instant I should be justified in asking such a sacrifice of her."

"No! No! You are right," said the doctor, and wringing his hand with almost painful intensity, he left him.

Alec Graham suffered worse that night than he had ever suffered before, but by the morning light he had steadfastly put from him the temptation of taking advantage of her pity, and the next day he wrote at some length to her brother. The latter part of his letter ran as follows:

"*It cannot be necessary for me to tell you that if I were a whole man, there is no Heaven I should desire beyond winning her love; but as it is, I, a dying—I may say half-dead—man dare not allow myself to consider it.*

"*That she, in her divine pity and nobleness of heart, should have laid herself open to vulgar gossip, does not bear thinking about. Will you put it plainly before her and tell her, as no one not having your authority can do, that her good name is worth more than my broken life, that she must cease her visits to the cripple; tell her, moreover, that he has learnt the lesson she has striven to teach him, he will no longer be content to slip away into death, he will take up his burden and try to bear it.*"

Hugh Middleton was a man of sense and discernment, he knew this was a man to be trusted, and he sighed at the irony of Fate that had put such a brother in-law out of reach.

It was a sensible, but kind and affectionate letter, that reached the wilful Angela, and perhaps she wept over it a little, but reflection had only shown her more plainly the state of her heart and her course of action was decided on.

What she wrote to her brother need not be told. Suffice it that one day Alec Graham received the following from Hugh Middleton:

"My Dear Capt. Graham,—*My sister is of age, and has every right to decide her life for herself. I have, as you asked me, put the case plainly before her, from her reply I gather that she intends to do as she pleases, which, as I have made it a rule never to impose my will upon hers and as I have no legal authority over her, she is quite at liberty to do.*

"*I have learnt at the same time that there is a good chance of your recovery by an operation, and I sincerely hope this may prove to be the case. Anyhow, I have complete confidence in my sister's judgment, and I think she knows best wherein lies her own happiness.*

"*You may rest assured that I shall welcome you as a brother-in-law should you have gained her love.*

"*Yours sincerely,*

"Hugh Middleton."

This last sentence completely took away Alec's breath. He might tell her he loved her! And certainly the letter hinted at the possibility she might not refuse him. With such happiness within his grasp he could conquer any illness—nay, death itself.

An hour or two more and it was all over, he had poured out before her the love of his heart, and she had confessed her happiness was bound up in him. Together they began to talk of the future, and seriously discussed the operation.

"You are not fit for it yet," she said. "I am going to make you strong first. Never before have I thanked God that I have money. My life, my love, and it, are all to combine to make you well, and then after the operation I shall nurse you so carefully that you will soon be quite yourself again."

"My darling! It is not right that you should give so much and I only receive."

"You return it to me a thousand-fold in your love; and, besides, you will be a strong man again in a few years, and then you can do everything for me."

In a day or two her plans were made, and, as usual, she bore down all opposition.

The hospital chaplain married them quietly one day in the presence of her brother and the doctor and his family, and then together they left for the Isle of Wight.

From there she wrote letters radiant with happiness to her brother and her friends, telling of her husband's rapid improvement in health.

At the end of six months Dr. Hayward paid them a visit, and declared Alec fit to bear the journey and undergo the operation. The operation was completely successful, but for some weeks they passed through a very anxious time, though Angela never once lost hope.

It seemed to her that love would give him strength to win through. And so it turned out in the end, for he regained the use of his limbs and in a few years was able to walk about like other men.

Every one says that the perfect love and trust between them is beautiful to behold, and certainly they are completely happy.

L. Hughes.

Digitized by Google

THE LAST CONFESSION.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.) } Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE. } Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

All Comes Right in the End.

October 27th.

Yes, Nellie Mateson did know. She guessed it that day at the garden party.

Last night she came and talked to me about it, and I shall always love her for speaking out as she did. It seems she has been waiting her opportunity for some time, but was always afraid I was not well enough, or would be offended. I have been suffering terribly from headaches, and last night, when St. Aubyn went out after sitting with me all the afternoon, I suddenly felt desperate and said to her:

"Don't let him come back. I can bear it best alone."

"Very well, dear," she said; "I will get Fred to persuade him to play billiards, and stay with you myself."

I did not open my eyes when she came back, as I wanted her to think I was asleep. I was too wretched to talk, or to listen to sympathy. I felt vaguely things could not go on as they were, and yet I felt too ill to act.

When I looked up presently, she was sitting on the low window-sill watching me with grave, questioning eyes. She came forward at once, and asked me if my head was any easier, and I was obliged to confess that it was.

"I'm so glad," she said, "because I want to talk to you," and then she seated herself close beside me.

"You know, Maud," she began; "you are not making any satisfactory progress at all, and I, for one, can't help thinking some external cause is keeping you back. I have been with you a great deal during these five weeks, and it did not take me long to discover you were not happy."

"Did I rave?" I asked anxiously.

"Yes, dear, but you need not be anxious—you did not tell any secrets. Only you are not happy, and I think I know why."

I waited for her to go on, and looking up at me with her clear eyes she said:

"You do not love St. Aubyn."

I closed my eyes and made no reply.

"If I am right, Maud," she said; "I will not let you marry him."

She paused, then ran on in a slightly strained voice:

"I have grown very fond of you since you came to stay with us here, and I am not going to let you make the mistake I made if I can help it."

I opened my eyes again, and looked at her curiously.

"I'll tell you my story, Maud, and then you'll understand. I was only a governess when I met Colonel Mateson, and I was practically engaged to a young estate-agent I had known a long time. There was nothing actually settled, because he was so poor, but we were very much in love with each other and meant to marry some day.

"Then Colonel Mateson came to stay at the house where I was governess, and fell in love with me. I would not listen to him at first for Harry's sake, but—well—I hated teaching, and in the end he talked me round.

"I had an awful struggle, because I knew I loved Harry the best—but there were the years of waiting, when I should have to teach all the time, and feel my best days slipping past. Colonel Mateson was rich, and could give me a position as well as a good home—and when you have been snubbed as a governess, you think that is worth so much more than it is."

She walked to the window, and stood looking out before she went on:

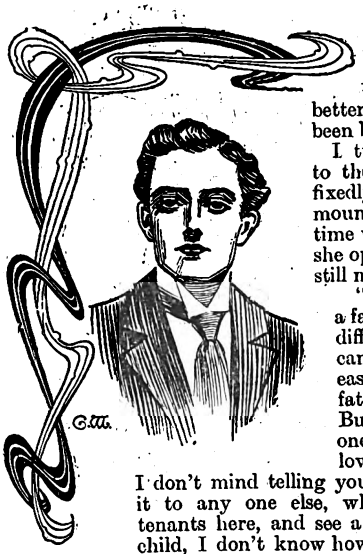
"I daresay I should have been all right if it hadn't been for Harry," she said, "because then I should have loved Colonel Mateson more, but as it was, it just made all the difference.

"I enjoyed the novelty and the freedom, and the gaiety for a year or two, and then I began to tire of it. One cannot realise beforehand how it can grow to pall. It gets so stale after a time, if there is nothing besides; unless you happen to be born with a consuming desire to dress better, and entertain better than your next-door neighbour.

"I am not like that, neither are you. I daresay you have been a little dazzled at the idea of being a duchess, but, believe me, Maud, the game isn't worth the candle if you don't love the Duke."

She looked at me strangely a moment.

Digitized by Google



"If you love someone else better," she finished; "it will probably be better that you had never been born."

I turned my eyes away to the window, and gazed fixedly on the distant mountains, and for a long time we were silent. Then she opened her heart to me still more.

"Of course, if one has a family it may make a difference," she said; "I can imagine one could easily give the best to the father of one's children. But if there are none, one needs all the more love to make up for it. I don't mind telling you, but I wouldn't own it to any one else, when I go among the tenants here, and see a mother with her first child, I don't know how to bear it. I'd be a governess again to-morrow, if I could end in marrying Harry, and being a mother."

I liked her to talk to me, so I said "Go on" faintly, and lay listening.

"It isn't much after all, is it, to be gay and fashionable, when the novelty has worn off? I remember when I was teaching, how I used to envy the Society women who came to the house. Of course, I only saw the surface then—I've seen further now, and I know what it is worth.

"You must have something more if you're going to be happy as well. And while I've been sitting here, I've thought so strongly about you not marrying the Duke if you don't love him. I know it will be horrid to tell him, but it won't be half so bad for either of you, as it may be later on if you marry."

"I don't feel equal to telling him yet," I said at last; "and he is so good to me."

"But you would like to break it off?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered; "I want to."

It was the first time I had confessed it frankly even to myself, but when I had once said it I felt easier.

"Then don't waste time, Maud," she urged. "Tell him this evening. You cannot possibly get any better while you have so much on your mind."

"I don't want to get better," I cried. "I want to die and get away from it all."

"Ah, don't talk like that," she broke in. "You are so young, and there is nothing done that cannot be undone yet. I always think it is rather poor to want to die when one has made a mistake."

"Oh, it's not just that," I ran on; "it's everything. You don't know what a failure I seem to have made of it all."

"Failure?" she echoed. "You, a failure! You are one of the most successful women of the day, and many think the most beautiful."

I lay back with closed eyes. I could not tell her how it all seemed nothing without Di. With him, but so much the more to give.

She went on talking to me, however, and in the end I promised to speak the next morning.

And to-day we had it all out together. I never want such another half hour in my life!

He took it badly—I was afraid he would—and I felt one of the most loathesome creatures on earth. Of course, I deserved it all—I know I did, and yet, I never meant to hurt him. I seem to be always causing someone pain, and yet it isn't that I don't care—I never seem to find it out until it is too late.

Well, it is over now, and he is going to his big game—Oh, I do hope he will soon forget.

January 20th.

What a strange world it is!

Here am I, taking advantage of the bright winter sunshine and a cosy nook, although it is January, actually writing my journal in the very same old keep of the ruined castle, where Bobbie and Di first found me.

Really! I can scarcely believe my own senses.

What is more Bobbie and Di are here, too, at least, close at hand, only there is a lot to relate before I get to that, and I am religiously determined to go on just where I left off.

Well, after St. Aubyn first left me I was rather worse for a time, but I soon began to pick up again, and ten days later Nellie Mateson took me up to London to see a specialist. He tried a fresh treatment altogether for my back, which proved very successful, and I am now nearly all right again.

For some time I did not see or hear anything of Di, which was not very surprising, as I learnt soon afterwards he had gone over to the West of Ireland to spend a few months on a cousin's estate, and try to help him manage his refractory tenants.

Bobbie, meanwhile, was in the South of France with his people, and I missed him very much. One day, however, he came rushing in, in his usual fashion, nearly upsetting Mrs. Mateson altogether in his haste to get to me.

"News, Queenie," he cried. "News! I've been tearing madly about London all the morning looking for you. When I found your flat locked up, I rushed out into the street and asked the first policeman I came across if he knew where Queenie was. He smiled at me indulgently, and murmured something about Colney Hatch.

"Don't tell me she is there!" I cried; "that is too much!" I flew back and asked the porter. He gave me your address, but with the wrong number. He is a fool. I wonder I haven't burst with having to keep my news so long."

"Aren't you going to say 'how d'ye do' to the pretty lady, Bobbie?" I asked him, laughing across to Nellie, who fortunately enjoyed Bobbie's eccentricities quite as much as I did.

"My dear Mrs. Mateson," he exclaimed apologetically; "I—I really didn't see you," and in another minute he was literally hugging her. "It's all this news," he ran on. "It's sizzling inside like—like—well, anything that sizzles."

"You shall have Maud all to yourself at once," Nellie laughed; "and tell her quickly, for I don't want the ceiling off my drawing-room."

The moment we were alone he came and sat on the arm of my chair, and positively gurgling with happiness exclaimed:

"By Jove, Queenie!—she's a clipper."

"Is it a lady or a horse?" I asked.

"A horse!" he repeated scathingly; "I should think not. There, what do you think of that?"—and he produced a large portrait from his breast pocket, and handed it to me.

It was a picture of a charming young girl in a sailor hat and a yachting costume, with a frank, winsome face, and a twinkle in her eyes that looked wholly irresistible. The sight of it seemed to lift an anxiety from my mind, for I had always felt afraid for Bobbie's future.

"She's perfectly charming!" I said. "Do tell me all about it?"

"She's going to be the Honourable Mrs. Robert Alexander Lestrange," he answered proudly. "And that's all that matters."

"I am delighted," I said warmly, "in fact, too glad for words."

For about an hour he entertained me with a detailed account of his courtship from the very beginning, and then broke off suddenly to speak of my affairs.

"I only heard about your engagement being off when I got to London," he said. "What did you do it for?"

"Don't talk about it, Bobbie," I said persuasively, "I've had a bad time in more ways than one, and I want to forget all about it while you are here."

"I wonder if Di knows?" he remarked unheeding.

"Of course he does. It is known all over London!"

"But he doesn't happen to be in London. He's somewhere

Digitized by Google

in the wilds of Ireland, fighting tenants with shillalahs, and rotten eggs."

This was news to me, and I could not help showing my interest.

"He cancelled a lot of engagements and went off very suddenly," Bobbie continued, "and no one could imagine what had possessed him. I saw him just before he started and he said he didn't know when he should come back, but possibly not for a long time. He was jolly well down on his luck!" and Bobbie suddenly became very thoughtful.

"You look very seedy," he said presently. "I thought you would have been quite all right by now."

"So I am," I asserted. "I only want a little change to my native air, and then I shall soon be as well as ever I was in my life."

"Do you mean you are going home?" he asked incredulously.

"Yes," I told him, "I'm going to drop Miss Maud Cardew of newspaper fame, and go back to the farm as if I had never been away. I shall probably reappear about March."

"Well, I'm glad you're not going for good," he said. "You've got to help Joan and me to set up an establishment, you know. A sort of doll's house affair, with a docile cook, and a butler I dare ask to hand the bread."

The next week he brought his Joan to see me, and it is no small thing to say I was not in the least disappointed. He came again in the evening to ask me what I thought of her, and I was glad to be able to sing her praises to his heart's content.

But I was very tired and very sad, and after a time Bobbie discovered it, in spite of my efforts.

"Look here, Queenie," he said, in just his old boyish way. "Things have all gone wrong with you, somehow. What's the matter? You're got to tell me all about it."

I tried to prevaricate, but he would have none of it. He came and sat on the arm of my chair, and said:

"You've got to tell me, Queenie. I'm as good as an old married man now, and you can talk to me like a father."

His very sweetness made the tears start to my eyes, and such a lump came in my throat I could not trust myself to speak.

He played with my hair in silence for some time, and then I began again to persuade him that I was only depressed through weakness.

But he would not believe it.

"You are altogether different," he said. "And I'm going to find out what's the matter. Why, there's Di, too, with a face as long as a fiddle, quite forgetting to be sarcastic. I can't make him out any more than you.

"He says good-bye to me, and goes off to Scotland for six weeks, then turns up again in a fortnight for no apparent reason whatever. I asked him a lot of questions about you and the Duke, and he wouldn't tell me anything. Kept changing the subject at once. I never saw Di in such an odd mood before."

He got up and strolled round the room.

"Tell you what!" he exclaimed presently. "I believe he's in love with you all the time, and not Lady Danestone, only why he didn't go in and carry you off when he had the chance, I'm hanged if I know."

"Nonsense, Bobbie!" I asserted. "Di is not a marrying man. He only paid all that attention to Lady Danestone because her husband was such a great friend of his."

"I guess there's more in Di than is dreamt of in our philosophy," he remarked. "Which shows I didn't go to school for nothing," and then he stood looking at me, evidently with some new idea working in his mind.

I did not see him again before I came down here, but I have learnt since, that in the wilds of Galway, Di received the following characteristic letter:

"DEAR OLD CHAP,—*Are you a blind bat, or a blithering idiot, or what? Here's his Grace shown the door, and on his way to play skittles with elephants and natives in some foul swamp, while the queen, after languishing in London for a few weeks, departs for her native air, talking of failures, and life purposes, and all that kind of stuff.*

"*Meanwhile you, the only man in the least likely to hold the key to the riddle, waste time breaking shillalahs over Irish tenants' heads, which don't concern you in the least.*

"*If you've a grain of sense, you'll take my tip and cross to-night—catch the* 10.50 *from Waterloo, and arrive at the farm in time to fix the day before bedtime.*—*Yours,* BOBBIE.

"P.S.—*If you've time to think of anyone else's affairs during the journey, I would suggest the fact that I am going to be married to the best girl in the world* (*bar one, of course*) *next month.*"

Well, Di took Bobbie's tip, and crossed to England that evening, caught the ten-fifty at Waterloo, and walked up to the farm about six o'clock.

It was a glorious moonlight evening, and I was out on the cliffs, enjoying my beloved scenery, and there he sought me.

I saw him coming in the moonlight, recognising his walk instantly, and I stood still amazed, scarcely able to believe my own senses.

Before Di reached me I knew what he had come for, and stood silently while the hour of my joy drew near. There was no need for words or explanation—he looked into my eyes and held out his hands, and I laid mine in them. Then he raised them to his lips.

What followed I have written upon "tablets of stone," and placed them in the "Holy of Holies" of memory, safe guarded for ever from the prying eyes of the world, from all defilement, and from all decay.

It was not until he got Bobbie's letter that he knew my engagement with the Duke had been broken off, and even then he felt he had no reason to suppose I should ever care for him. But he had got to that stage when action of any kind is better than waiting, so he threw caution to the winds and came to try his luck. He told me that directly he got into Cornwall he felt that I was his.

He has been staying at the farm ever since, and we are going to be married very quietly to-morrow at the little church on the cliff. Bobbie has come down to be best man, and, as he puts it, give us a fatherly blessing.

He maintains unblushingly that we owe everything to him, and that but for his marvellous insight, we should both of us have messed up our lives into the most horrible jumble imaginable. Of that I am not able to judge, but I do not in the least mind being indebted to Bobbie for everything. I am quite sure that all my life I shall only love him a little less than Di.

But, looking out over the peace of the waters this morning, I am thinking perhaps there is indeed a kindly hand in Providence, that saves us from ship-wreck in spite of ourselves, and gives us our heart's desire, however little we have deserved it.

Finally, though I shall probably be always envied by the world as the successful actress first, and Society beauty afterwards, to my own heart for evermore my proudest title will be, "Di's Wife."

THE END.

NEXT WEEK

the first instalment of our new serial story will appear. It will be written by

BLANCHE EARDLEY,

whose life story is now appearing in *Pearson's Weekly* in a series of articles called "Tinsel Triumphs."

The title of the new serial will be

"THE BOND BETWEEN,"

and it will hold the attention of readers from start to finish. To prevent disappointment in not being able to get a copy of next week's *Short Stories* when you go for it, tell your newsagent to reserve one for you.

Digitized by Google

The Decoy.

How a Girl Broke a Bargain and Won Love.

THE room in which Frank Braund worked, and which he called his "laboratory," though it was in fact sitting-room, bed-room, kitchen and all, occupied the whole of the second floor of the premises owned by Ishmael Isaacs, pawnbroker, money-lender, and—anything you please.

Frank found the place convenient in many ways. A young inventor whose inventions will not sell is often in want of a little ready cash, and in such an emergency a friend close at hand is a convenience. Also there had, until lately, come from below never a sound to disturb his thoughts, for Isaacs himself occupied on the first floor that room that had not been turned into a storehouse for all sorts and conditions of unredeemed pledges.

Now, however, there came through the floor the sound of a violin. Frank knit his brows, and threw down his pen impatiently.

How was it possible for any man to make important calculations while that wretched instrument wailed in his ears? That evening made the fourth time within a week that his work had been disturbed. He paced the room angrily.

"It's too bad of Isaacs," he muttered. "I've been here for over a year now, and he has never found it necessary to play that thing before—why should he begin now, just when I am on the point of completing what should be a really good thing? He knows, too, that I am hard at work. Perhaps if I go down and ask him he will leave off."

Frank made for the staircase and was quickly standing outside Isaacs' door.

The playing was really not bad, in fact it was good. Strange that the Jew should not have mentioned that he was master of such a difficult instrument as the violin.

Often when Frank could not work he looked in by special invitation at his landlord's room and spent an hour or so chatting with him. The man could talk, and though he could never like him, this in Frank's eyes covered a multitude of sins, for, like many another hermit, he sometimes found his loneliness more than he could bear.

He listened a little while with his hand on the lock, for when it did not disturb his working hours, he was genuinely fond of music. Then, with a short knock, he entered.

To his intense surprise the occupant of the room was not Isaacs at all, but a tall, dark, handsome girl, apparently about twenty-two years of age.

She had stopped playing as he opened the door and stood, her violin under her chin, and the bow straight down by her side, looking at him questioningly.

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered Frank, "I thought——"

The girl smiled a friendly welcome at him.

"You must be Mr. Braund!" she cried. "Oh, I've disturbed your work! I am so sorry. I will leave off at once."

"No, no, don't do that," answered Frank. "I've done for to-night, really."

"That's not true," said the girl, laying her fiddle and bow in their case. "I am very, very sorry. I tried to play softly because my uncle told me it might disturb you."

"Your uncle?"

"Yes—Mr. Isaacs. I call him that, though we are really not related. I am his sister's step-daughter." She snapped the clasp of the violin-case with a click. "There, Mr. Braund," she cried, "I will worry you no more."

Within Frank's mind there waged a tremendous conflict. He thought of his work, then of the music and of the beautiful girl before him. Then he thought of his work again. That, however, was a long way off, upstairs, whilst the girl and the music were close at hand.

"If I stay," he asked, "will you play for me, Miss——?"

"My name is Ruth—Ruth Mabbe. I don't know if it would be right to take you from your work, you know." There was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"My work can wait for to-night," said Frank. "Play, Miss Mabbe, please."

Without more ado the girl took her violin from its case again, and, giving a quick glance at the man who sat expectantly watching her, she drew her bow across the strings and began to play some sweet, simple air of Schumann.

Frank listened entranced. Whilst his ears drank in the music his eyes delighted in the graceful, swaying figure of the tall girl in front of him, the long sweep of her bowing arm, and, above all, the beautiful poise of her neck and head bent to cuddle the fiddle deliciously between her bosom and her rounded chin.

Never before in a life given to science had Frank known such pleasure, and when the music ceased he remained quite still watching the girl.

"Well?" she asked at last, returning his gaze with no fear, and yet no suggestion of boldness in her glance.

Frank rose slowly, and came towards her, holding out his hand.

"You play beautifully, beautifully, Miss Mabbe," he said. "May I come and hear you again—soon?"

"Why, yes, of course," she answered. "But you must be sure to let me know if at any time my playing annoys you."

"It will never do that," said Frank earnestly. "Good-night!"

Could Frank have looked through the door that closed behind him, he would have seen the girl dancing quickly round the room with a look of glee in her eyes.

"Caught!" she whispered joyfully. "Caught! Now we will spoil the Egyptians. I wonder what it is that my very dear uncle wants me to find out from this extremely impressionable young man." She sat down and thought.

"It must be of great importance," she continued, "or he would never have so far overcome his miserly ways as to invite me to his house. When he asked me I guessed I was to be used for some purpose, and now I find that I am to be the decoy that is to draw a secret from this poor, handsome fool. Oh, well, it will be fun!"

Ruth was not really heartless, nor was she dishonest,

Digitized by Google

but she had always been brought up to consider that money should be gained in the easiest way. Her better feelings had never been educated, and so it was that she regarded her uncle's proposal that she should draw Frank into confidence, and so get at his secret, merely with amusement.

The next evening Frank found himself anxiously awaiting the sound of the playing. Directly the first tones rose to him he stopped his work and went, as he had done the night before, to the room below.

Music did not occupy all their time, for Frank found his new friend a ready listener, and was soon confiding to her his hopes and fears. He told her of his many failures and few small successes in the past, and how much depended on his new invention—an invention that would be a blessing to mankind and at the same time bring him fame and fortune.

The next night and the next, for a week, did Frank stop his experiments and calculations at the first sound of the violin, and taste the pleasures of the companionship which for so many years he had denied himself.

Though Ruth Mabbe always seemed as glad to see him as he to see her, after a while Frank, though unused to reading the moods of the opposite sex, thought he discerned a change in her.

No longer did she appear eager to listen to his talk of his work, but repeatedly tried to draw him from the subject, particularly when he spoke of the invention he was then engaged in perfecting. She was less bright and vivacious than she had been, and once he thought she looked as though she had been crying.

Then there came an evening when the music did not break in upon Frank's study. He tried to continue his work, but found it impossible, for every fibre of his body was strained and expectant of the melody which would summon him to the side of his love.

"His love!" He paced the room, thinking, thinking, thinking.

"Yes, I love her!" he cried to himself. "I, who have nothing in the wide world to offer her." He turned and gazed at the table on which stood the models of his invention. "Yet, if she loves me, she will wait a little, and these, the work of my brain and hands, should count for something."

As his eyes wandered over the many pieces of ingenious mechanism a great purpose took shape in Frank's mind. He determined to tell this girl every detail of this great secret he had guarded and cherished for so long.

She already knew a little, but she must know all—all! Love and absolute trust were all he could give her, and of these he would withhold nothing. When she knew all, he would ask for her love in exchange.

Still there came no sound from the room below, and Frank, burning to make trial of his fate, was quickly outside the door that had so often of late opened to admit him to happiness.

He knocked, and there came no answer.

He knocked again, and bent his ear closer to the panel.

Was that a sob? Yes! Swiftly Frank flung open the door, and there, full length on the couch, her face buried among the cushions, lay Ruth, sobbing as though her heart would break.

Two strides carried Frank across the room, and, kneeling by her side, he attempted to pacify her.

"Ruth, Ruth!" he cried. "What is the matter? Tell me?"

The girl raised her head, and he saw the utter misery in her eyes. Then, with a despairing gesture, she motioned him away.

"What is the matter, Ruth?" asked Frank again.

"You must go away—you must never see me any more," she moaned.

Frank could hide his love no longer. One hand stole up and caressed her hair, and the other covered her tiny hands so tightly clasped in the agony of her grief.

"Ruth, little Ruth, tell me. I love you," he pleaded.

At his words a new fear seemed to add itself to the misery in her eyes. She stared at him for what seemed an eternity. Then she whispered, so low that he could hardly catch the words—

"You—love—me?"

Frank's hand sought hers again.

"With all my heart," he said earnestly. The girl sprang to her feet.

"Ah, no, no, no!" she cried. "You must not! You must not! Go! Go away! You must never see me again?"

"Ruth——"

"No, no! You say you love me. Go, then. You do not know what this means to me."

Frank gazed perplexedly at the girl standing before him with fingers interlaced appealingly. Then he turned slowly on his heel, and went from the room.

Upstairs he tried to reason out Ruth's trouble by going over in his mind all he knew of her; but no satisfactory conclusion could he arrive at. All that was certain was that when he would have told her his love she had implored him to leave her in tones so imperative that he had no choice but to obey, though it had cost him sore.

For an hour he puzzled over her change from happiness to sorrow, and remembered many incidents that told him it had been by no means sudden.

Though she seemed like a companion of years, he had known her but a fortnight, and he was now certain that during at least a week of that time she had been fighting against the sorrow that had at last overwhelmed her.

He saw her again in his mind's eye as she had lain sobbing, and with the vision came a nearly over-mastering desire to go to her and bear her away from her unhappiness.

Downstairs he went under the influence of this desire, and it was only when his hand was on the latch of her door that remembrance of how she had besought him to leave her came to him.

Instead of entering, he turned and went out into the street.

As he walked the grief for her sorrow that had come to him first gradually gave place to a great despair because he had lost her.

"You must never see me again," she had said. Did she mean that? Yes, he could not doubt the dreadful words. Yet see her he must. This strong love so newly born in his heart could not be killed quickly. He would win her yet.

On and on he went, and plan after plan he made and discarded. He had no means of knowing the least way in which he could aid her, and his hope grew less and less as he walked Yet he remained determined.

"No matter at what sacrifice, I will gain her heart," he said at length. "Yes, even though in the gaining I abandon it—my triumph!"

Night fell, and he was still tramping. Weary and footsore he returned to his room.

There on his desk lay a long, fat, blue envelope.

"From Ruth!" he cried, and tore it open. Rapidly he scanned the note that fell out.

"Good-bye," it ran without any greeting. "I shall have gone out of your life when you read these lines. Though I could not tell you to your face, yet it is due to you to know that I am an infamous creature not worth your lightest thought. My presence in the house was a trick, and my behaviour was

Digitized by Google

the carrying out of a trick, to win from you for my uncle's benefit the secret of your invention.

"From your talk I gleaned but little, but the little you did tell me has enabled me by the aid of stolen visits to your room to piece together the whole of that which you think is known to no one save yourself. If you doubt me, read the inclosed notes which, had I held to my bargain and kept faith with my uncle, would now be in his hands, and not in yours, their rightful owner.

"If you would know why I have done this thing, say it is because association with you has made me a little better than I was when we first met. Forgive me if you can, and rest assured that your secret is as safe now as ever it was. Again, good-bye."

With an exclamation of mingled horror and surprise Frank seized the sheets of notes and read through them wonderingly. Save for a few unimportant details, Ruth had indeed learnt his secret from A to Z, and the evidence was in his hands.

In his hands. Safe! It had been a narrow escape, though, and he would certainly settle with Isaacs for his villainy. Meanwhile he must find Ruth, for all he desired was that she should love him as he did her, and until he could be sure of that even the safety of his invention was as nothing to him. What did it matter that she had been the tool of a thief? She had repented, and love is very forgiving.

Somehow or other this note, so full of a girl's despair, seemed like a messenger of great hope to him.

Frank dashed downstairs. Isaacs must know where his niece had fled. He sought him in the warehouse and the shop. He was in neither place.

The cellar door stood open. There was a chance that the pawnbroker might be there, and downstairs went the seeking, impatient lover.

The cellar staircase led to a passage which ended at another door. Frank was just about to open this when he heard voices and paused.

"Will you tell?" asked a man gruffly. It was Isaacs.

There was no answer, but the listener heard a metallic click and the turning of a rusty screw.

Then came the brutal voice again.

"Will you tell now?"

Again no answer, and again the click and squeaking of the steel screw, followed this time by a low groan—a woman's groan.

With a shout Frank burst open the door.

At the far end of the dimly-lighted cellar he saw Ruth tightly bound to what appeared to be a merchant's copying press. Her thumbs were between the steel plates. By her side, holding the pressure screw, stood Isaacs.

Frank dashed at him, and, with one clean blow, sent him spinning into a corner, where he fell and lay.

Quick as thought he gave the screw a mighty twist and released the tension. Then he tenderly unbound the fainting girl and carried her to her room.

Luckily he had visited the cellar in time, and, though the pain must have been terrible, he could see that the girl had not been seriously injured by the fiend who, had he not been stopped, would doubtless have maimed her for life, or perhaps killed her in his maddened endeavour to wring from her the secret she had determined to hold.

As Frank laid her gently down he kissed her lips, and then her closed eyes. Slowly she opened them.

"My darling, my darling, why did you do this thing for me?" he cried.

"Because I love you, Frank," whispered Ruth. Then, as she felt his strong arms tighten around her, she gave a little sigh of content.

Ernest Herbert.

Little Mary was discovered one day by her mother vigorously applying the oil-can to the kitten's mouth. On being reproved, she replied: "Why, mamma, kitty squeaks so awful when I pull her tail!"

Your Editor Chats.

In reply to readers who have been inquiring whether the first six sentences of the competition, which appeared in *Pearson's Weekly* and *Home Notes*, are as eligible as the lists which have been published in Short Stories, I would say that it was distinctly stated at the time of their appearance that they could be used. The ninth list of sentences will be found on page 655.

This week sees the close of the "Confessions of a Self-made Girl." All who have enjoyed reading them will, I am sure, be interested to hear that Maud Cardew, after all, obtained her heart's desire—to become a duchess. Shortly after her marriage with Di his ducal relative died, and leaving no nearer kinsman than Di, the latter succeeded to the dukedom.

The first story in the series by Winifred Graham appears on page 656. Each of these stories is complete in itself, and I shall be glad to hear from readers whether they prefer a series consisting of complete stories, or one with two or three characters running through it. Send your opinion on a postcard marked "Series."

Next week our new serial will commence. As I told you in our last issue, it is from the pen of Blanche Eardley, the writer of "Tinsel Triumphs" in *Pearson's Weekly*. The title of the story is "**THE BOND BETWEEN.**" The writing will be very fresh and crisp, the plot novel, and readers will be impatient to learn the movements of the characters each week.

There is sure to be a run on next Tuesday's Short Stories, so you should give your newsagent early instructions to reserve a copy for you.

Ninepence is not a very large sum to most people, but it is wonderful what a great deal it will do if sent to the Fresh Air Fund. It will pay for a whole day's outing, with plenty to eat and drink, for a city child who has no other opportunity of breathing the fresh country atmosphere. For £8 2s. a party of 200 children, together with the necessary attendants, can go away for a day.

Don't look at the list of subscriptions acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly* and think that it is growing quite big enough without your help. If many other persons had the same thought it would be a bad look-out for the children Send along what you can afford *now* to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. All amounts received will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. Collecting forms will be gladly sent on application to those who prefer that method of helping along a good cause.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Cheating the Customs.

The Story of a Chivalrous Man and a Chinese Dog.

THE train looked very full, so full that at the first glance Vere Ashley despaired of finding a seat. After the manner of all Englishmen, it was an operation he liked to perform in leisurely fashion. Choosing his carriage with care, but with shrill-voiced officials screaming "*En voiture, monsieur*," in accents of indignant astonishment at his laggard steps, Vere had no choice but to select the first carriage that he came across, and he tumbled in headlong, in a confused mass of golf clubs, fishing rod, bag, and portmanteaux.

When his nerves had resumed their usual serenity, and his paraphernalia was disposed of in the rack, he had time to look about him. To his surprise he found that he had entered a compartment that contained only one passenger, a girl—fresh-faced, fair-haired, with an expression of almost beseeching timidity in the large, dark blue eyes that she fixed on him.

Vere returned the glance with interest; he was excessively impressionable, and the idea of this lovely girl as a companion till Calais was reached, was most welcome to him.

"A jolly sight nicer to look at that pretty face than at this rotten landscape," Vere reflected, as he unfolded his newspaper, and, seemingly absorbed in it, peeped over the edge now and again. "She's as pretty as a daisy; wonder why she looks so sad."

The girl, after glancing at him several times in furtive, nervous fashion, now retired behind a book, and Ashley grew interested in his paper. Suddenly, however, a sound smote upon his ear, that made him drop the *Times* in consternation. It was the sound of a sob, uttered by someone in pain; it was repeated again, and Vere looked in alarm at his companion, whose features were still hidden by the book.

"I beg your pardon," Vere said very gently, as a third sob, this time almost rising into a moan, broke the silence, "but—but what is the matter? Can I help you?"

The book fell to the floor; the girl's beautiful eyes gazed tragically into his.

"You—you won't *tell?*" she said in a low voice; "promise me you won't."

"Of course not," said Vere rashly, "I'll be as silent as the grave."

"Then—it's—it's not me, it's—it's—my dog!"

What matter that the grammar was faulty, and that the voice, though musical, betrayed a lack of breeding? Vere only knew that the lips that uttered the "me" were perfect, and that the soft tones had a note of pathos that was infinitely touching.

"Your dog," he said eagerly, "where is the poor little beggar? Don't hide him from me—I love 'em. Let's have it out."

And, with the prettiest of blushes, the girl produced from beneath the seat a small, string-tied hamper, unfastened it, and produced—in a state of indignant, panting, resentment—the ugliest little creature Vere could, with a clear conscience, say he had ever beheld in his life.

"It's one of the Chinese sacred dogs," said the girl with pride, hugging her treasure, who, unable to forget and forgive his imprisonment, showed a passionate desire for freedom. "*Isn't* he a beauty?"

Vere looked in silence at the little creature, who was the colour of castile soap, without a hair upon his body, and truthfulness struggled with the desire to please.

"He's—he's uncommon-looking," he said at length; "so he's a sacred dog, is he? I have a cousin, just back from Pekin, who declares she's got the only specimen in Europe. She'll be horribly disgusted when I tell her I met one on my travels. I was to have gone and seen her at Passy, when I was in Paris, but I had no time. What's the little beggar's name?"

"Chang," said the girl, as she stooped to place the dog beside her on the cushions; "he's a very clever little man, but, oh, I'm so frightened!"

"Why?" asked Vere almost tenderly, "of the dog?"

The fair incognita showed her pearly teeth in a lovely though fleeting smile.

"Oh, no," she answered, "but—one is not allowed to bring dogs into England, you know. There's a law against it, and—and if I'm parted from Chang, it will break my heart."

She threw her arms about the mottled object of her love, and hugged him passionately. Chang, who seemed impervious to affection, remonstrated with a fretful bark, and, wriggling away from her, trotted to the window, to look out with severe, appraising gaze upon the flat scenery.

"And what do you propose to do with him?" demanded Ashley. "You can't smuggle him in his basket through the customs, I'm afraid."

"N-no," said the girl ruefully, "but I must try. I can't stay in Calais."

"If you're found out, you'll be fined," said Vere lightly, "even imprisoned."

But he regretted his jocosity as he saw the look of terror that leapt into the lovely eyes at the last word, and the colour left the pretty face as the girl said falteringly:

"I think I should *die* if I had to leave Chang behind, and so would he, poor little fellow."

"Now I should have said affection was not his strong point," observed Ashley, looking at the dog who, tired of contemplating a landscape that offered so little variety, had left the window and was now facing Vere, "he doesn't seem to care for anyone but himself. He's thirsty, I think, poor little beastie, see how he's panting."

"I've some milk and water for him," said Chang's mistress, and she produced a small bottle of that refreshing liquid, and a doll's saucer; Chang drank with evident satisfaction, showed a disposition to be condescending and frolicsome with Vere when his thirst was assuaged, and then, curling himself into a tight ball, composed himself for sleep.

"He's a jolly little beggar," said Ashley, flattered, as are all true dog-lovers, by the animal's gracious advances, "and I hope most heartily you'll manage to smuggle him into England."

"If only," said the girl wistfully, "he did not hate his basket so. I had great trouble in getting him into this carriage without a guard seeing him, and I know he'll squeak on board if I take him down below, and I'm such a wretched sailor, I daren't stay on deck."

"It's very awkward," said Ashley sympathetically; "can't you hide him under your coat?"

The girl looked at him with an eager expression, opened her lips as though about to speak, hesitated for an instant, then:

"*My* coat isn't big enough," she said softly, "but—but

Digitized by Google

yours is, and—and such lovely large pockets; Chang could get into one of them, and be quite safe and happy."

"I daresay," replied Vere rather grimly, "but should I be either? That is a question that rather interests me, I confess."

"Oh," said his companion piteously, with a break as of fast-conquering tears in her voice, "if you would only help me in this, I'd never never, forget you. I could never thank you enough. You don't know what Chang is to me; it will break my heart if I am parted from him."

Tears won the day, filling the beautiful eyes and coursing down the rounded cheeks. Some women have the power of weeping without nose and eyes becoming pink and swollen. Chang's mistress was one of these fortunate beings. Tears only enhanced her loveliness, as they glittered on her long, thick eyelashes, and Vere's heart became as wax before a glowing fire. He hated saying no to anyone, to a woman it was positive torture for him to have to utter that crushing word.

He was silent for a little while, whilst the wet blue eyes gazed at him with feverish intreaty in their soft depths. Chang, cause of the emotion, slumbered peacefully, only now and again giving strange little falsetto barks, as he disputed a dream-bone with a dream-dog.

"You'll help me?" the girl said imploringly; "oh, it seems to me as—as though you had been sent to help me."

Her little ungloved hand fluttered towards him till it found a resting-place on his arm; the touch of those clinging, slender fingers did away with Vere's small stock of prudence.

"I'll do anything you like," he said hastily, "anything—if you won't cry any more."

"Cry," said the girl joyfully, "why I could laugh, I'm so relieved and happy. You know Chang is worth a thousand pounds. I don't dread arriving at Calais as I did; here we are"—as the train steamed into the station—"quick, take up Chang, and he'll be as good as gold under your coat. He'll sleep till London, I know, for once he gets to sleep he doesn't wake for hours."

Obediently Vere took the slumbering Chang, who "snuggled" in under his coat and was soon asleep once more—and followed the girl across the platform to the gangway. Her remark as to the dog's value puzzled him; he wondered vaguely if he looked as guilty as he felt, as he slunk to the most unfrequented spot of the deck, and wished, with deepest ardour, that Dover were already reached.

He saw nothing of Chang's mistress. As the boat at last reached Albion's shores, after what seemed an eternity to Ashley, who had wondered at men's ideas of time when he heard someone saying that the passage had been accomplished in fifty minutes, he looked anxiously around for the girl, but in the crowd it was impossible to distinguish anyone, and, with the slumbering dog beneath his arm, he stepped ashore.

It seemed to him that the most perilous part of his journey was accomplished; he drew a deep breath of relief, when, with awful suddenness, Fate overtook him in the shape of a small fox-terrier, who, though having been several times pressingly requested to retire by the busy porters and officials, kept darting in and out of the crowd with cheerful persistency, and in his skipping to and fro, came into collision with Vere.

The terrier's nose told him what contraband was being smuggled into England, and instantly he set up a shrill volley of protesting barks. Chang awoke from his slumbers and answered back valiantly, thrusting his head from beneath his protecting shield. Vere stood helpless—a convicted breaker of his country's laws.

After one last wild look around for Chang's owner, he resigned himself, and followed the official who took him in charge.

"It's the matter of a fine, I suppose," he said gloomily; "and—what's to become of the dog?"

"I think," answered the man in authority, glancing curiously at Chang; "it's more than that. We had a wire from Paris early this morning, saying that a dog worth a thousand pounds, answering exactly to this description, had disappeared yesterday, and it was thought that the thief would attempt to smuggle it into London. Only—we were told to look out for a woman, as the animal is thought to have been stolen by Mrs. Percy's maid."

In all his healthy life, Vere Ashley never came so near fainting as at that instant; his head swam, he seemed to hear the official's voice as it were from a long distance, and he desperately gripped the table by which he was standing for support.

"Mrs. Percy's my cousin," he said at length, "and—and will you wire to her—saying—the dog's safe—with me—Vere Ashley. That's my name; here's my card."

"How," said the official suspiciously, "did you find the dog?"

Vere was silent. He thought of the blue eyes, the pretty smile, the appealing ways, and he determined not to betray the owner of them. True, she had deceived him, but, still——

The official repeated his question, and Vere looked at him steadily.

"I can say nothing," he said; "only—wire to Mrs. Percy, 14, Avenue Lorraine, Passy, that the dog is found and ask her to come to Dover. I'll remain in custody till then."

And thus, for the first time in his life, did the heir of the house of Ashley become acquainted with a prison cell, and had ample time to ruminate on the cunning of the female sex, till his cousin arrived, tearful, jubilant, to take her recovered treasure back to France and interrogate her cousin.

"How on earth did you find the darling?" she demanded, as they sat in Mrs. Percy's private sitting-room at the Lord Warden—Chang in his adoring mistress' arms. "I didn't know you had ever seen my maid, Preston, who stole the treasure. I suppose you recognised Chang—but how could you—you hadn't seen him?"

"I—I carried him ashore for someone," said Vere slowly, "and—he was discovered."

"Ah," said Mrs. Percy suspiciously; "well, Preston was very pretty. I am in great hopes of finding and prosecuting her. You will be able to describe her as you carried Chang for her."

"But," said Vere, steadily gazing at his cousin, "it was *not* Preston whom I helped—it was——"

"Well?" cried his cousin impatiently.

"A—a man," said Vere, and blue eyes seemed to smile gratefully upon him once more.

Sybil Campbell Lethbridge.

Digitized by Google

Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The tenth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

←——CUT THROUGH HERE——→

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

NINTH LIST.

49. That long, dreary road leads to Saint Patrick's Well, the waters of which possess tonic properties.

50. Cards, wine and women stir up more strife than any six greater evils.

51. We are going for a long cruise on my yacht, the *Tal-y-Cafn;* sails will be rigged to save the expense of coal during any light gales.

52. The new coins of King Edward are still scarce, these of Queen Victoria being usually seen.

53. While he was threading a spool of silk he got his hands, for the twentieth time at least, caught in the loom.

54. Bring a penny quickly for the little milk boy; leave that spot on your coat until afterwards.

NAME ..... ADDRESS .....

Digitized by Google

Begin reading now.

The Curate's Love Affair.

Being the first of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Six men in a railway carriage—six friends.

A cold, cheerless evening, the yellow fog breathing on the window pane without, looking in like an ugly incarnation of influenza and bronchial affections.

"Business was dull to-day—everything flat," declared Mr. Carter, an elderly man with a red face.

"Yes," growled Harford, a rich stockbroker, peering through gold-rimmed pince-nez.

His tone caused Mr. Carter to smile. Harford, for one, had nothing of which to complain.

Stourbridge, a sporting man of emaciated appearance, with clear-cut features and clean-shaven lips and chin, which gave him a keen look as of a wiry greyhound, drew a pack of cards from his coat and began to shuffle them.

"What is it to be to-night?" asked Blount, a faultlessly-attired individual with a Napoleonic imperial—"poker or nap?"

Pitman, a cold-looking man in the far corner, shivered, and thrust his sealskin-gloved hands into the depths of two enormous overcoat pockets.

"Too chilly for cards," he said. "My fingers are nipped already. I couldn't stand it to-night."

Bremner, whose large, dreamy eyes were watering from the fog, placed his feet on a hot-water tin, inhaling the fumes from a gold-tipped cigarette.

"You are quite right, Pitman. It is a mistake this weather."

Mr. Carter agreed, lighting his well-coloured meerschaum; likewise Harford, the stockbroker, who handed Stourbridge one of his large cigars.

"Bremner shall give us a yarn instead," said Pitman. "We must do something to pass the time."

Bremner was celebrated for story-telling. He crossed his legs and folded his hands.

"Do you know the tale of the gipsy Miriam, a wild, unsophisticated creature, who lived in the open air chiefly, and knew not the meaning of the word 'conventionality'? No? Really? Well, it is rather odd."

He paused, and from the look in his eyes his listeners gathered that they were far away from his thoughts, which had wandered to the green lanes and rustic haunts of the gipsy Miriam.

"It was summer," he said at last, with a sigh. "My heroine is difficult to describe—you must have seen her to appreciate the strange loveliness of those sun-bronzed features. Picture a wealth of raven hair, the rich blood coursing through her cheeks; full red lips, exquisitely curved, the figure of a Trilby, unconfined by fashion's inartistic hand and barbarous incasements, eyes that would have set your soul on fire had they been lit with the light of intelligence. As it was they had more the mute appeal of a dumb animal, while her speaking voice was low and sweet enough to have made a fortune on the stage. Conjure up this personality if you can, and Miriam stands amongst us.

"Her home was a dilapidated caravan, sadly in need of a new roof and a fresh coat of paint. The lean horses that were her friends looked unkempt and weary with wayside dust.

"They were feeding on a bank of clover in a solitary spot outside the village of Rover-Ditton, while Miriam sat on the caravan steps, her long, slim hands, despeckled with brown kisses from old Sol, folded over her knees. There was a wistful, careworn look in her sad, dog-like eyes. It seemed to pierce the blue sky above, and see beyond, yet her mind was down on the earth, inside the caravan. Ignorant in the very midst of civilisation, reared by a coarse and brutal father, she lived a wandering, ignominious life.

"A man in shabby clothing, smoking a clay pipe, and lustily whistling the air of a popular street song, roused Miriam from her reverie.

"She looked down scornfully on the sordid features, pushing back her loose abundance of black hair. Then she held up a warning hand, shaking her head at her father.

"'Stop whistling,' she half hissed, through her crimson lips. 'The child seems worse—didn't I tell yer? I want her to sleep. Begone, and keep the men away. I'm watching.'

"The man gave a grunt of dissatisfaction, and continued, this time in a shriller key that jarred on Miriam, hurting her worse than a blow.

"What did he care if that frail infant lived or died?

"'*You* call yourself a man!' sneered Miriam, roused to indignation.

"'Well, yes, I bet I do. What do you take me for—a tumbler or a pot of gin?'

"He laughed coarsely at his own humour.

"'I believe you want her to die,' continued Miriam in a strained whisper, leaning forward with a fierce expression, her clenched fists hanging limply at her sides. 'You grudge the meat and the broth, the medicine, the milk. Bah! I believe you would rob the poor mite of her blanket if it wasn't so awful hot. But there! what is the good of talking when you're drunk? Ah! yes, I know—everybody knows—and we are not a drinking set, even Tomaso is sober half the year round.'

"The man was silent; he stared at her stupidly.

Digitized by Google

"'Who was the cove in a long black coat?' he asked at last. 'I saw you talkin' to 'im about an hour back.'

"'A clergyman,' replied Miriam, tossing her head proudly. 'I fetched the doctor, and he sent him.'

"'What do the parsons want with us?' growled the man. 'I knows 'em—a set of——'

"But something in Miriam's eyes cowed the man, and his sentence remained unfinished.

"Then, after a moment's silence, he muttered under his breath.

"'Well, see he doesn't come again.'

"Miriam glanced anxiously through the open door of the caravan, taking no notice of this remark.

"'D'you 'ear me?' questioned her father.

"'The gentleman was kind,' she replied; 'he is coming here to-night. He gave me some money.'

"'Money! How much, Miriam?'

"The man's eyes sparkled greedily, his face lit up with covetous enthusiasm; he rubbed his hands together and chuckled. He repeated the words eagerly.

"'How much?'

"'Oh, never mind; it's not for you. He thinks very badly of Betty. She has not been properly cared for, she is thin to the bone. It has all been brought on by your drink and my neglect. I wouldn't have her suffer for anything; but I thought her so strong — so hardy!'

"Tears welled into Miriam's dark eyes, but she dashed them aside hastily, as though ashamed of her emotion.

"'Go!' she cried, motioning the man away. 'You're not much credit to our encampment; and here comes the good clergyman. I'll see him alone.'

"Her father leered, and throwing a coin in the air, pointed to it insinuatingly. Then he turned on his heel, and walked away, whistling loudly.

"The sound grated horribly on Miriam's ears, as she strained them to catch a low moan from within and the feverish murmuring of the child in her sleep, as she tossed restlessly from side to side.

"Mr. Eversley, the curate, was a man of singular ideas. He had great resolution, and unlimited faith in his own capacities, without any apparent ostentation. He was eloquent and intellectual, one who would have inevitably become popular had he cared for Society and its shallow, meaningless practices. His romantic nature and love of all things strange or uncommon led him into many peculiar walks of life.

"Religion was his art, and the winning of souls his ambition; the study of human nature his amusement; mankind his pastime. The chief characters in his own little community afforded him, however, but small scope for research or zeal.

"They nearly all came to church; their wants were few, their requirements simple and easily supplied. The population being limited, he declared he knew his parishioners' bodies and souls in a day; thus it was he occasionally neglected the dull routine of district-visiting in Rover-Ditton, and sought out the inmates of the gipsy encampments. Among them the fire of genius, the inspiration of his holy calling, found a field for labour.

"Miriam was a new discovery, halting a moment in her tramp through life within reach of influence that might alter the train of her thoughts, the course of her actions.

"It just suited him, this picturesque caravan, with the wild, untutored girl. Her face was a poem, her soul a riddle, her personality bewildering in its mixture of simplicity and strength.

"She had a will to cow her sodden father, and keep him at bay when he would lay rough hands on the young child she guarded and protected. She was a creature of passion and impulse, knowing nothing of discipline, possessing an intellect as yet unawakened.

"She watched Mr. Eversley cross the broad green meadow over the way. His figure, erect and tall, stirred a thrill of admiration in Miriam's breast. His candid blue eyes awed her as he advanced; she noticed the setting sun cast a dying ray of light on his golden hair.

"'How is the child this evening?' he asked tenderly, kindly, in his mellow voice, as Miriam pushed back the door of the caravan.

"'Poor mite! how pale and wan she looks,' bending down to lay his broad, cool palm on the hot forehead. 'Are you nursing her alone? Have you no mother?'

"Miriam shook her head mournfully.

"'My mother is dead,' she replied. 'She died a month after Betty was born,' and Miriam crimsoned at the sudden remembrance of her mother's horrible death. The husband had beaten and bruised her in a fit of drunken rage, inflicting injuries from which she never recovered.

"'So you are left to tend the little one? It is a great responsibility.'

"'Yes, and I hardly know anything of children. It is real hard sometimes to do for the best.'

"The child had slumbered again as from sheer exhaustion, and Miriam crept silently out into the red light of the setting sun. Mr. Eversley followed. It was a still, calm evening.

"'You must pray to God, and He will guide you,' said the clergyman, who, doing all things from a spiritual standpoint, considered it his duty to see if this girl knew anything of Christianity.

"He might as well have broached the subject to a heathen.

"Miriam opened her lovely eyes wider, she looked him up and down in a way that might have made less self-conscious men feel awkward and uncomfortable.

She clutched his arms with both hands and stared into his eyes. "D'you mean it? Say, d'you really mean it?"

"'Oh!' she said, after a moment's hesitation; 'but, you see, we don't care about religion. Father says it's only for the gentry and such folks. I never go inside no churches. I guess there is a devil somewhere, and perhaps a God, just as we hear there's a Queen in England. It don't make any difference to us — we never see her; and if we did, she wouldn't take no notice of us, though she is in the world. And God isn't.'

"He laid his hand on her arm firmly, but not unkindly, though his lips were set, and a pained expression passed over his noble features. He pointed with outstretched fingers to the west.

"'Do you see that flood of glory—*there*—all red and gold and beautiful? Do you see the faint blue above it? Have you noticed the world—the trees and the flowers, that hawthorn on your right, those dog roses to your left, the buttercups at your feet? Now, *who* do you suppose made them all—who fashioned it? Did I? Did you?'

"'Lor', no!' laughed Miriam, as at a huge joke, showing her white teeth, while her eyes sparkled merrily. 'Oh! you are funny, sir!'

"This was the very last effect he had wished his words to have on the girl.

"'Fancy,' he thought, 'if people looked at my pulpit teachings in that light!'

"The sight of her amusement was a tragedy in itself. Here was a girl living sinfully, blindly. It was his duty to reform her.

"She read his disapproval at a glance, and turned to him appealingly, with a look of deep regret, wonderment, perplexity.

"I've said something what's wrong, something as didn't please you,' she cried, in evident distress, her smooth forehead wrinkling, her large eyes saddening.

"'It needed no miracle,' thought Dion Eversley, 'to enlighten her empty mind. She was an unbeliever—a lost sheep in the wilderness—and must be brought back—converted!'

"His imagination, quickened by the luminous resplendency of the summer evening, painted for Miriam's benefit the most vivid word picture. He brought forth before her the eternal presence of a living God, an Unseen Being of infinite mercy; whose Heaven was a land of cloudless day, where white angels dwelt, and crystal streams refreshed the traveller at last.

"Her liquid eyes drank in all he said, though sometimes the low laugh re-echoed again, and the flashing teeth were revealed in an incredulous smile.

"'It is aggravating to hear of Heaven,' Miriam exclaimed, 'when there's little or no chance of my ever getting there! What's t'other place like?'

"'It is the land of the lost,' he answered, and a strange shiver ran over her as he spoke. 'A purgatory of sharpest pain, where spirits are sadly vexed by the remembrance of past pleasure and the despair of future ease.'

"'You'll give me bad dreams to-night! Oh! 'ow father will swear when he gets there! No drink—no smoke—only pain! Ugh!'

"'You must not be alarmed. Perfect love casteth out fear, and you are going to be good.'

"'If it's only love that's wanted to make me better—oh! how I could love!'

"Her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm as she stretched out her hands towards the firmament, as though to grasp something, she knew not what.

"The last rays of scarlet illuminated her face before grey twilight reigned supreme. An artist would have fallen at her feet and kissed them; a poet would have dedicated an inspired lyric to her beauty; but the clergyman traced no copy in her seraphic expression—*he* only saw God!

"They were standing by the bank where the horses grazed.

"'You must come to church and learn to pray,' he said softly. 'The lowest may mingle with the greatest there.'

"'To church!' she cried disdainfully, with one of her ever-ready changes of mood that were characteristic of her. 'Do you think I would leave Betty to die while I went out to enjoy myself? No, I may be wicked, but I ain't bad enough for that; but Tomaso, he might watch her for me. Tomaso is Italian, and plays an organ. He has gone to the village now. They give him pence for the sake of his handsome face and bonny smile.'

"Mr. Eversley remembered at her words an organ man who had come to his house, and, not liking the look of the fellow, he ordered him roughly away. There was a fiendish gleam in the Italian's eyes, and something like command in the tone of his voice, loudly crying out for coppers.

"The clergyman felt deeply grieved for this wild, wayward ignoramus, with her lustrous, yet innocent eyes and sunburnt, oval face.

"He noticed her dark locks stirred by the evening breezes, as if the zephyrs lightly kissed them in passing, because they were beautiful, and she was so young, so tender. She was too lovely a daughter of Eve to spend long years in this godless manner, and being a man (very human), he felt sorry. All things to him were as dross in comparison with sanctity of heart and life. She awoke in him a sublime pity. Such a narrow gulf—a mere thread—divides right and wrong. And here she was, in the first bloom of womanhood, surrounded by temptations, with no one to guide or teach her, only rough men whose coarse tongues blasphemed.

"He shuddered for the girl's soul. 'She must be saved from this Hades,' he said to himself, as, departing, he left Miriam with a silver coin glistening in her hand.

"He meditated long and seriously upon the subject in the solitude of his study, and prayed for that frail craft on the seas of Life while Miriam slept in her caravan by the wayside hedge.

"Day by day the good man came, and she greeted him with gladness, till he told himself, after long converse and exhortation, he had opened the flood-gates of light—she was indeed developing into a Christian.

"It was odd to hear those lips that reviled outside the caravan, and defiled themselves with language picked up from her father, pleading in prayer a moment later over the bedside of the ailing child.

"Mr. Eversley's constant visits were remarked upon by various members of the congregation, for in Rover-Ditton his every movement was chronicled from house to house by the cackling tongues of village gossips.

"At first Mr. Eversley wondered why he went so frequently, and found it pleasant.

"'Miriam's little sister is ill,' he told himself; 'it is only right that I should go. Miriam is ignorant of divine truths; I am guiding her to grace.'

"But it was not till he believed that she had grasped the faith, and that the child had passed from the jaws of death to healthful life, that he dared confess the truth, even to himself.

"Miriam's extraordinary beauty robbed him of his senses. He had found in the lowly maid the goddess of his dreams.

"'She is an angel of loveliness,' he cried to the silent walls as he paced his study feverishly. 'Her very innocence is her charm.'

"If it was difficult to acknowledge his devotion even to himself, how far harder to declare it to the world!

"Had his secret already been whispered abroad, hinted by unguarded tongues, rumoured among his friends, to be scoffed at and derided? Did Miriam, with woman's instinct, guess it, too?

"Already he was attempting the work of moulding her character and fashioning it to his own. Yet those fatal words, which in his soul he most despised, rose to ring in his ears against his will

"'*What will the world say?*'

"Even the bells that chimed for service repeated them incessantly; they were holding him back from Miriam, forcing her from his grasp. Why should they make a coward of him? Why should he be ashamed? And yet—and yet he *was*.

"Surely the Divine Power above that rules all human hearts had destined him to love for some purpose!

Digitized by Google

"'What God has created,' he cried, while his voice thrilled with triumph, 'let not men call common or unclean.'

"The inward struggle and natural pride, the shrinking from contempt and ridicule had lasted for a while, and the supercilious curl of the world's lip threatened to wither his passion. But eventually the yearnings of his heart crushed that terror. 'Public opinion' urged him to face it boldly, and Dion Eversley became proud of his choice for its very daring.

"He would make the girl his wife at any cost. Uncultured, unrefined, reared like a wild flower by the roadside, yet to him more precious than the sweetest hothouse bloom.

"'She has fallen upon stony places,' he told himself. 'I will transplant her into an atmosphere of love and holiness. I will snatch this pure being in the innocency of her youth from a den of iniquity, and bear her unscathed from the jaws of sin.'

"His decision once made, Dion sought Miriam, his whole being on fire with the light of a great love, which enthralled and mastered him.

"He found her alone, beautiful and smiling as ever, stretched on the mossy grass like a tired child, carelessly plucking the daisies and clover. From the latter she sucked the honey. Her attitude was all idleness, for she knew not how to be diligent.

"To her lover she was an exquisite picture, the embodiment of all that was graceful and feminine. She had twined a wreath of green leaves and wild flowers playfully in her dark locks, perhaps with some natural instinct to enhance her comeliness, of which she must have been aware had she eyes in her head and ever so small a cracked mirror in the caravan. It would be a sorry and glum world but for these harmless little vanities. The spirit of the Beautiful predominates in poor humanity, raising it at times to the most elevating ecstasy.

"Dion Eversley contemplated Miriam with throbbing pulses and palpitating heart. She snatched at a butterfly as it fluttered past, bruising its fragile wings.

"The rich, sweet fulness of her voice rang out upon the air:

"'Betty, come here, I have caught you something.'

"'Don't call Betty,' he said advancing, and somewhat slyly taking her hand. 'Let it live. We have something better to think about than butterflies.'

"'I suppose you mean my soul,' she cried, looking daringly into his eyes with one of her merriest smiles.

"Something made her pause; it almost took her breath away; while a flush dyed her cheek and neck scarlet as the crimson handkerchief which formed her collar.

"'No, Miriam, dear. To-day I want to talk about your heart. I have taught you many things, and you have listened patiently—gladly. But there is something not gained through learning, but obtained of God. It is sweeter to the taste than honey; it enriches the mind; it is blessed—sublime! Can you tell me what it is?'

"She ceased to pluck the wild honeysuckle in the hedge, her eyes became awe-struck and wistful.

"'Love?' she answered faintly.

"'Yes, Miriam. The greatest thing in the world—love!'

"As he spoke he smoothed back the tossed locks, imprinting a kiss on her forehead, and the kiss finally travelled down till it lost itself in the rosy curves of full sweet lips.

"'Will you be mine—mine for always, darling?" he whispered tenderly.

"The air seemed to grow hot and heavy, the soft wind no longer murmured through the trees, her voice was choked by agitation.

"She clutched his arms with both hands, and stared into his eyes.

"'D'you mean it? Say, d'you really mean it?'

"No words were needed in reply, as he laid her soft cheek against his own, and gathered her to his breast. She remained there passive, on that sweet resting-place—content. A wonderful revelation had come to her. The wild gipsy life was to end, with its hunger and thirst, its dark hours and hardships. The weary traveller was to pass her days in the enjoyment of peace.

"'I am going to ask you, Miriam,' he said slowly, a slight tremble in his voice, 'something you must consider seriously before answering. Being mine means leaving home, friends, your present pursuits and pleasures. The old life must end, and a fresh one commence in a new world. It means a sacrifice for us both—the severing of old ties, old associations. I adore you heart and soul; love will compensate for all I leave. We will go to India together, where I have an opening for work with a mission, and you will grow to help me.'

"'What is India?' she asked simply. 'Is it a place near here where the heathens live?'

"He smiled at her lack of knowledge.

"'I will teach you all that,' he said. 'It is far, far away.'

"'Of course, I might have known. We'll have to get clear of this place. But must I leave *all?*"

"A yearning look of supplication crept into her eyes. For a moment she surveyed the caravan in silence, standing in an attitude of unconscious grace. An overwhelming tide of hot colour rushed into her face. Then she shook off the momentary depression. Dion waited for her to speak; she turned to him, but words failed. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, the girl burst into a fit of uncontrollable merriment.

"The echoes resounded with her hilarity. It was a strange, wild excitement.

"'Oh, it's well,' she cried, 'yes, it's well to be loved by the likes o' you!'

"He soothed her fondly. In a moment she became quiet and grave again.

"With quivering lips she repeated the question: 'Must I leave *all?*"

"'I am afraid, yes.'

"'Oh! but I cannot—I cannot! Won't you let Betty come too? She'll die without me.'

"Dion Eversley had forgotten the child. He was touched by this token of sisterly affection.

"'Will her father let her come with us?' he asked.

"'Lor' bless you, he cares no more for her than for me. You don't know him!'

"'Then we will take poor little Betty, and I will be a father to her, dear.'

"She rewarded him by a quick look of gratitude.

"'When shall we go?' she asked impetuously.

"'The sooner the better; but first we must get the consent of the child's father.'

"An expression of scorn passed over Miriam's features.

"'He will not trouble you,' she replied lightly. 'When Tomaso finds he has lost me, he'll be right glad to be rid of the little 'un too. You've nothing to fear from my husband.'

"As she spoke Dion Eversley's face fell. It was a terrible and ghastly change. The truth dawned upon him in all its hideous reality.

"Miriam had misinterpreted his intentions; *he* had misunderstood *her.*

"Something seemed to swell in his throat, half choking a sudden exclamation:

"'*Your husband!*'

"The tone of his voice, the look on his face, made her eyes swim, her temples throb.

"'Don't turn from me!' she intreated, seizing his hand, and pressing a burning kiss upon it. 'What have I said?'

"He tried to answer, but failed, the shock of this discovery rendering him stunned and speechless.

"Seeing Dion so altered, Miriam fell upon her knees, clenching her hands convulsively together as if in pain, and stifling an agonised sob.

"The gipsy's restless, tempest-tossed heart stood still in terror. Had it lost its prize? Yes. Dion Eversley went to India—alone!"

Bremner paused, the train was steaming into Brighton station.

"I've just hit it off," he said; "that is the end."

"It couldn't be anything else," said Stourbridge. "Poor fellow! I hope it is not true!"

"But it is," said Bremner.

[*Next week: A Narrow Escape.*]

Digitized by Google

LOVE'S CROSS-EXAMINATION.

Telling of a Declaration in the Court of Justice.

Mr. Charles Wallis, the rising "junior," walked pensively along Dr. Johnson's Buildings, Temple, till he came to No. 3. He entered, stepping up the stone stairs rather more briskly, and opened a door on the first floor.

This suite of rooms formed his chambers, but he shared them with others. He passed through to his own particular room and threw himself into a comfortable armchair with a sigh of weariness.

"I suppose I shall have to sport chambers entirely on my own if I get on as I appear to have been getting on during the past few months," he soliloquised. His tone was moody—for he had uttered the words half-aloud, and not at all like those of a man who is making a name. "However, that need not be yet, and I may have a drop shortly! But suppose I succeed? Of what use is success to a man when that success will not enable him to get what he wants?"

He glared at a pile of papers on his table and felt like pitching them on the floor.

"I may fairly say that I have earned success," he went on. "I have plodded and tried, but it is a big task to get your chance. My chance has come at last, but it's too late. It ought to have come eighteen months ago; *then* it would have helped me to win Marjorie Renton! Now she is gone, and I cannot enjoy my good fortune by myself and I don't want any other woman!"

There was no mistaking the emphasis with which the last remark was made; it indicated that Wallis had been wholly in love with the girl, and that his love was of that kind which endures, despite the fact that the object of the affection is removed.

The clerk who attended to the three barristers sharing these chambers entered at that moment to report, and while Wallis listened to what the young fellow had to say his thoughts were wandering and he only half understood.

Charles Wallis and Marjorie Renton had been playmates and schoolfellows together away in the home in the north country. At the age of seventeen and fifteen respectively their paths had separated, and Mr. Renton had forbidden any correspondence. He could see what was happening, and he was anxious that his daughter should not tie herself to anyone till she was old enough to know better what she was doing. Further, he wanted a son-in-law whose means were adequate, and that was not the case with Wallis.

"My daughter has been brought up in a certain style. She will want to continue in that style. Wallis can't do it unless he makes some sort of a name or position for himself during the next few years. So, no engagement!" That was the terse way in which Mr. Renton put it.

Charles Wallis was sufficiently well-to-do to enable him to study for the Bar, but he was not possessed of sufficient means to satisfy Mr. Renton; so the old intimacy was interrupted and Wallis set to work to study, first generally, and then specially, and so the years passed away. Wallis' affection for Marjorie increased rather than diminished, and he hoped and believed that it was so with her.

He was called to the Bar, and then came the heartbreaking period of waiting for a brief. It was in the midst of this waiting time that the blow came.

Accepting an invitation from a friend, he met Marjorie, and straightway fell more violently in love than ever. It seemed to him that he had hitherto only been dreaming that he loved this enchanting girl, and that he awoke to the reality.

He saw her courted by all, and a feverish excitement took possession of him. He might lose her if he did not make some move, so he took every opportunity of meeting her and he told her of his love.

Marjorie smiled sympathetically, but there was a commiserating expression on her lovely face which struck a chill in his heart.

"I am afraid it is no use talking like that, Char—Mr. Wallis!" she said lightly. "I have been brought up in luxury, and I should not be happy; that is, I should be an unsuitable wife for a poor man. I am sorry, but——"

He interrupted her vehemently; he never remembered exactly what he said—it was something about love being better than all else, and about his making progress one day in his profession. He remembered well enough, however, the look which she gave him, and that she turned from him with a haughty gesture and left him.

Marjorie Renton had altered; her father's constant preaching about the value of money had warped her mind till she had placed that above all things. She would marry for money, even at the sacrifice of love. Those were the thoughts that ran through Wallis' mind, yet his love for her endured.

"In her own self she is good; this is a veneer which her father has laid upon her true nature!" he had said to himself. "She is lost to me and I fear that she will not be happy in a marriage of that kind, but I shall continue to love the real Marjorie Renton!"

Then he lost sight of her entirely. Mr. Renton, he heard, had sold his estate and gone abroad with his daughter, who was engaged to a wealthy somebody. Thus she was lost to him.

Wallis came back to himself with a start, to find the clerk gone and the packets of papers still on his table. He drew his chair nearer and prepared to study them.

"What did he say?" Wallis asked himself. "Oh, yes Owen and Roberts have sent me a retainer for the plaintiff in—— By Jove! a breach of promise case! Clements *v.* Barton. The plaintiff is a man, and he sues the girl; rather less common that Woman *v.* Man!

"Perhaps he has heard that I was thrown over and thinks that I can take up his case with more feeling! Nonsense! Yet why should Owen and Roberts specially retain me? They have never so honoured me, and Jackson is their favourite junior!"

Wallis did not spend much time in speculating; he would have the brief in due time.

He settled down to the work in front of him and forgot Clements *v.* Barton; but he could not help thinking about it when he had leisure to reflect. Two days later he learnt that he was to conduct the case; there would be no senior counsel, and, as he would doubtless have a bigwig against him, here was another chance for him!

The case promised to be a good one, with plenty of scope for Wallis, and the juniors who shared the chambers with him were envious.

"You're a lucky beggar, Wallis!" declared one. "It would have been better for you if you had been championing the lady, as in that event she would certainly fall in love with you and marry you!"

Digitized by Google

"Perhaps she will do that all the same!" growled the other. "It would be just his luck!"

"Get out of this!" cried Wallis irritably. Their envious banter jarred upon his nerves; they did not know his past.

There did not seem to be very much in the case when Wallis came to take it up, but the opportunity it afforded him consisted chiefly in the fact that he would have a good case in opposition to a noted counsel.

Miss Barton was a young woman acting as companion to a wealthy lady. A visitor to the house was Mr. Clements, a middle-aged man of means; he was attracted by the beautiful and charming companion, fell in love with her, and made a proposal, which, as plaintiff alleged, was accepted.

The engagement was to be kept secret for a time, as Miss Barton had agreed to stay with the family for a certain period and did not care to break faith.

Mr. Clements said that the defendant was fond of money, and although she was in love with him, he felt positive of it, yet it must have been really his money that she wanted. This was proved by the fact, which he had since heard, that she was coming into a large sum.

Her coolness towards him coincided with the time when she heard of her good fortune. Plaintiff was heartbroken, and asked for £5,000 damages, more as a punishment for Miss Barton than as a solatium for his own outraged feelings.

It was with these instructions that Wallis went into court on the day of the trial and prepared to open the case for his client. He had not seen Mr. Clements before that time; the plaintiff was a man of rather striking appearance—such a man as might captivate a young and inexperienced woman—but Wallis did not like the face.

It seemed to the barrister that there was cunning in it; other people might not notice it, or be less quick to detect it, but Wallis was a student of human nature.

A sort of fellow-feeling had actuated him till then; this man had been trifled with, as he himself had been, and he would fight his case with all the ability of which he was capable. Now, however, Wallis felt a change of sentiment; he did not like the man and—well, it was not Marjorie's fault that she had thrown him, the briefless barrister, over for a richer man!

"I shall do my best as a point of honour," murmured Wallis, "but I haven't the same heart in it!"

Wallis glanced about for the defendant, but he could not get a good look at her. He fixed upon a woman with a veiled face, who was half-turned from his direction. It was a cold day, the court was chilly, she was rather muffled up.

He opened his side with becoming eloquence, drawing a moving picture of the plaintiff's affection, his joy on being accepted and his grief at being jilted. In spite of himself, Wallis warmed to the work.

He looked defiantly, sternly, in the direction of the defendant—he was sure it was she—as he spoke of Clements having been heartlessly thrown over, about his feelings having been trifled with, and so on. His opening speech won the hearts of the jurymen, and it was with considerable satisfaction that he called the plaintiff and examined him.

When the opposite counsel took the plaintiff in hand for cross-examination the affair began to assume a different complexion. Clements found himself cornered with some awkward questions, for which neither he nor Wallis, especially the latter, was prepared. When that cross-examination was finished, it appeared pretty evident that Clements was an artful individual.

According to the questions and suggestions of the defendant's counsel, Clements was aware that Miss Barton possessed certain shares in a mine which had been regarded as valueless.

Clements learnt that the mine was proving itself to be a good one, and that the shares were likely to be worth a considerable sum; the information was secret—known only to a few "in the swim," like himself—and he determined to marry Miss Barton and gain possession of the scrip.

He haunted Miss Barton against her desire, but she could not get rid of his unwelcome attentions. The supposed proposal and acceptance were a plot. Mr. Clements pressed Miss Barton to marry him, and, on her refusing, he threatened to circulate various falsehoods concerning her.

Finally he brought this action against her; his object was to get money. He thought that she would pay a large sum rather than be dragged into publicity.

If she allowed the case to go to court Clements thought that he would get heavy damages. In short, he would gain money anyhow. As a matter of fact, instead of being a man of means, Clements was an adventurer.

Wallis' re-examination of his client, for the purpose of rehabilitating his character, was not successful. Two other witnesses for the plaintiff were pulled to pieces, and Wallis began to feel annoyed at having had this case handed over to him. Still, he had the chance of heckling the witnesses for the other side.

The defendant's case was opened with ability and assurance by her counsel, but the thunderbolt came when he explained that Barton was an assumed name. Wallis turned his face in the direction of the defendant, and saw that she had taken off her veil. It was just at that moment that her counsel said, "Her real name is Renton, Miss Marjorie Renton!"

With a face as white as death Wallis stared at his lost love, and she dropped her eyes before his gaze. He heard his "learned brother" telling the court how Mr. Renton had failed, and how Miss Renton's ultra-sensitive nature had prompted her, on the death of her father, soon after his failure, to take her mother's maiden name and take up a position as companion in England, her father having died abroad.

The shares were a parcel held by her father; they had not been disposed of for the simple reason that they were considered worse than worthless, as there was always a possibility of "reconstruction" with a call for further capital.

Wallis saw Marjorie rise as she was called by her counsel for examination. He aroused himself to listen to her evidence, but he was convinced that she was speaking the truth. It was his Marjorie, his playmate of old, yet with more grace and her character refined of its dross by the fire of sorrow and adversity.

It was his duty to cross-examine, and he arose unsteadily. He looked her clearly in the eyes, and he saw a frightened expression come into hers. Poor Marjorie! She thought that he would vent his own spite upon her, tearing open the past, revealing her love of money, and her readiness—apparent or real—to sacrifice herself for money. This was a great point in the plaintiff's case.

"Why did you adopt another name?" he asked. He made the inquiry more for his own satisfaction than in the interests of his client.

She looked at him sharply, defiantly; she believed herself in the hands of a man who would use his previous knowledge against her, and revel in the opportunity of humiliating her, if he could, but the look in his eyes sent a strange thrill through her. The defiant expression slowly disappeared, as she replied:

"Pride made me

DON'T MISS THE SERIES WHICH STARTS ON PAGE 656.

Digitized by Google

do it! I did not care for my old friends to know that I had become poor."

"You maintain that the plaintiff knew your identity all through—what grounds have you for that opinion?"

"I dropped an old letter addressed to me by my own name, almost the first time I saw him, and I believe he caught sight of the name. In fact, he tried to threaten me vaguely with deception, although he said nothing definite about my identity at any time."

"Is it not a fact," continued Wallis, obeying the dictates of his heart, "that you expressed preference for money rather than love?"

A spasm shook the frame of the defendant. Wallis interjected, with unlawyer-like haste:

"I have no wish to hurt your feelings, Miss Renton!"

"Wallis is ill!" declared a barrister at the table in a whisper to a learned friend. "He is going all to pieces on this case; he began so well, too!"

"I did feel so at one time," responded Marjorie Renton calmly, "but that was long ago, and I have learnt wisdom since then!"

She gazed steadfastly at him as she made this answer, and then her eyes dropped. He understood; it was a penitent confession, intended for him. She had boldly avowed her fault, so that he might believe her, and then humiliation and repentance made her lower her eyes and avoid his ardent look. The crowded court watched and listened with the keenest interest, but the inner meaning of it was lost to them.

"By whom was that old letter written?" asked Wallis, suddenly reverting to a previous reply. It was an inexplicable impulse.

"By an old schoolfellow!"

She shot a glance at him, a timid, appealing glance, and he knew who was meant. She had kept one of his old letters, and had re-read it not so long ago! Had she really discovered that she loved him, after all? He must know it!

"Then I understand that you did not care for the plaintiff, that you never gave him the least encouragement—to put it quite plainly, your affections were centred on someone else?"

He tried to speak calmly, but there was an undertone of pleading in his voice. He was asking the old, old question between man and woman, and asking it under strange, unique conditions. It was love's cross-examination; he waited breathlessly for her reply.

He forgot that she might hesitate to answer, that it was a crucial position for his beloved to be placed in; he thought only of his love, and the possibility of attaining the object of his ardent desires.

"That is all quite true!" declared Marjorie in a tone so low that the judge and jury could scarcely catch it. Just for a brief space she lifted her eyes.

Wallis was exultant; he had no further questions to ask Miss Barton or Renton. It was a marvel that he did not say something which would have benefited the counsel for the defendant rather than the advocate of the plaintiff's cause. He was brought to a sense of his doings by the solicitor acting for Mr. Clements, who during Wallis' cross-examination of the defendant, had been wondering what possessed him to conduct himself in such an extraordinary manner.

"Mr. Clements will go into the witness-box again and contradict some of those statements. Mr. Wallis! I think—er—you are not well — or something! Bother it, man!" he added, still in a whisper, but showing his annoyance very plainly, "you've made a hash of that!"

In any other circumstances Wallis would have retorted angrily at being spoken to in that manner, but he was conscious that there was some truth in it. Nevertheless, he replied with some spirit:

"Clements is a rascal, Mr. Roberts, and I wasn't well informed! I will call him again, but it will result in his getting it hotter than he did before! You say that he requested that I should be briefed for him, and I see why, now!" To himself he said, "He thought I should work against her for revenge; he has got hold of some of the past! Shall I throw the case up?"

Before he could decide on this point he had to listen to other evidence on Marjorie's behalf. He was able to cross-examine the next witnesses with some show of interest; their testimony was not of great importance, but he did his best to bring out the truth, regardless whether it aided Clements or not.

It was with something akin to relief that he heard the foreman of the jury say that they had heard enough. They considered that the plaintiff's case had signally failed, and they wished to return a verdict for the defendant.

The judge decisively concurred, and the plaintiff was mulcted in costs. The case was over.

Wallis went straight back to his chambers. It was likely enough that this case had damaged his reputation to some extent, but he cared little for that.

He was convinced that Marjorie Renton loved him; the scales had fallen from her eyes, and she knew that her heart had been reached by the devoted and enduring love of her old playmate.

As for his reputation, he would make all the circumstances known if need be! He had, perhaps, not done his duty by his client, but that client had tricked him into an action against the girl he loved.

A knock at the door was answered by Wallis himself, as the clerk and his partners were all out. Clements pushed his way in, and shut the door behind him.

"You ruined my case!" he shouted, "and I'll ruin you! I'll make it known that you accepted a brief for me, intending to help her all the time, and——"

In a twinkling the door was open and Clements felt himself gripped by the throat.

"You cur!" cried Wallis furiously. "You tricked me, and I'll throw you into the street!" There was a scuffle.

Three or four barristers, ascending the steps, crouched against the wall as two figures half tumbled down the steps, and then Clements shot from the last of the flight clean into the open, coming to rest on his back.

Certain facts leaked out which saved Wallis' reputation, but while his salvation was being worked out in that direction he was seeking happiness in another.

Finding out Marjorie's address from the solicitors who had been conducting her case, Wallis lost no time in paying her a visit. He was received with open arms and no mention was made of their previous parting.

After talking over old times Wallis put the question which he had for so long desired to put.

"Then you do love me, Marjorie?"

"Yes, Charlie!"

Then, with a happy laugh, "Didn't I tell you so in open court? Oh, Charlie, it was too bad—almost!"

"So it was, sweet, but, you see, I couldn't wait!"

G. Forrester.

Digitized by Google

OUR SERIAL.

HELD APART.

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER, author of "The Golden Dwarf," "The Daughter of Mystery," etc.

TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

"This is Very Important."

THE detective regarded the war-correspondent inquiringly. Paul Jerome had drawn himself up with a curious military stiffness and his brown features had set ominously.

"Mr. Ussher," he said, "half an hour ago I told you that this man Hartigan was a scoundrel. You asked me for proof, and I doubted whether I could furnish you with what would be considered such. After what we have just learnt, however, I cannot accept the responsibility of deciding upon the point—I fear I have already held my hand too long."

The knot of fishermen about the ex-steward gazed open-mouthed at the speaker. Dennis Hartigan ceased to lean upon them in affected fatigue, and met Paul Jerome's glance with a stare of alarmed ferocity.

"It is known to all of you," pursued the war-correspondent, directing himself to the whole of his auditory, "that on the night he was found stabbed John Davenal had gone out alone with this man. It may not be known to you that, also while out alone with him, his own sister, the blind girl Kit, had a narrow escape from being killed on the level-crossing. Thanks to a good horse, I was able to save her. My opinion at the time was that her brother's conduct could only be that either of a wilful murderer or a despicable coward."

A murmur ran through the listeners and some of them drew away from the ex-steward.

"You are aware, in any case," said Paul Jerome, "that for a time he was suspected in connection with the death of his wife, Lady Tarleton's maid, to whom for years he had been secretly married, and who, of course, was John Davenal's sister. Now, it seems, he goes out in a small boat, and though he is accustomed to the sea and a native of Groudle into the bargain, he upsets the boat in a current and the poor girl is drowned."

The war-correspondent turned to the detective.

"Mr. Ussher," he added, "I told you this fellow was a scoundrel, because, with my own eyes, I had seen him deliberately abandon his blind sister to be killed by an express that, at the minute, was a hundred yards off.

"In the light of his repeated connection with other accidents and violent deaths, I can conceive of but one alternative explanation, that he is a homicidal maniac. Whatever may be the explanation, these coincidences demand investigation, and I refuse to remain passive any longer."

Mr. Ussher stood irresolute. The landlord of the Half Brick had pressed forward, and together with his buxom partner, a potboy, and a maid or two, was paying an absorbed attention.

The fishermen, with Dennis Hartigan in their midst, were evidently awaiting some hint of the detective's attitude towards the dramatic issue raised by Paul Jerome. Irene Tarleton, attracted to the general centre of interest, was moving slowly out of the small sitting-room into the bar.

"Excuse me, sir," said Mr. Ussher, directing himself to the war-correspondent, and drawing meanwhile a surreptitious step nearer the ex-steward, "but do I understand that you accuse this—that you make a definite charge against Hartigan?"

Paul Jerome shrugged his shoulders.

"A private citizen, my dear Ussher," he answered, "does not prosecute in a murder case. That is the duty of the authorities. I content myself with pointing out to you that for the fourth time in a few weeks this fellow is intimately associated with a fatality or threatened fatality to some member of the Davenal family or household. I suppose you don't deny the singularity of the fact."

The detective shook his head and checked his stealthy progress towards the ex-steward.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Jerome," he said, "that I should scarcely be justified in acting as you suggest. Coincidence plays strange tricks; we professionals know that but too well."

Dennis Hartigan smothered a sigh of relief. His lowering, anxious countenance grew viciously insolent, and, elbowing his "rescuers" aside, he came close to the war-correspondent.

"Look here, my blooming amateur," he snarled, "I tumbled to your tricks a while back—I knew you were spying on me for your own purposes. Do you see what you've been doing? Bringing yourself within reach of the law against criminal libel; that's what you've been doing.

"Do you think I'm going to sit still and let you go about playing old Harry with my character? Not me! If Mr. Ussher—who's a clever man and a great London detective—says I've done nothing wrong, that's enough for a thousand pounds damages against you, my beauty."

The war-correspondent folded his arms and his eyes met steadily those of the ex-steward.

"Bring your action," he replied. "I will give Mr. Ussher the address of my solicitors, and you can have all the fight you want. I believe you to be a dangerous and hypocritical scoundrel, and I am willing to back my opinion. The result may help me to understand why this same Moira Davenal, dressed as a diver, should have been seen in an open boat off Groudle breakwater, two or three days ago at twilight."

The shot was a chance one—although the recollection of the strange event to which he had alluded had haunted Paul Jerome with remarkable obstinacy—but it produced a distinct effect upon Hartigan. He paled, and the bullying expression in his vulgar, bloated visage wavered slightly. Certain of the spectators exchanged glances. The ex-steward perceived it and altered his tactics.

"Oh, I've no time to waste on you and your crack-brained notions," he said, "I've barely enough got off with my own life, and it wasn't for want of a helping hand that Moira Davenal lost hers. But she turned silly with fright, and fought me like a tigress. I had to loose her or sink with her."

A little cry interrupted him. Irene Tarleton, standing doubtfully on the fringe of the group, had caught the full meaning of his words. The war-correspondent spun round; he had momentarily forgotten her. She was white and tremulous.

"A thousand pardons," he exclaimed, "I did not realise that you were waiting." She put a hand on his arm.

"How terrible!" she gasped in a whisper. "Moira Davenal drowned! Oh, what—what will Guy do?"

She saw Paul Jerome's bewilderment.

"He—Guy loved her," she added, in the same low, shaking tones; "they were secretly engaged, I think. I only guessed about it the other day. This—this will kill him!"

The war-correspondent drew a deep breath; the situation had gained a new and tragic complication. "I—I wish I had known," he murmured, "it might have saved this."

He bit his lip and passed his hand over his forehead—his

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

brain was in a whirl. The detective came up and spoke to him quietly—the bar was clearing of its occupants.

Mr. Ussher had motioned to the ex-steward, and Dennis Hartigan had vanished without reluctance into the adjoining bar-parlour. Some of the fishermen who had escorted him to the Half Brick entered with him, some hung back.

"Mr. Jerome, sir," observed the detective, with a half-respectful familiarity and touching the brim of his hat by way of a further salutation to Irene; "you made a mistake then. Why not have said all that to me privately, and left me to act?"

The war-correspondent ground his teeth.

"Because you wouldn't have acted, Ussher," he declared; "because I have remained inactive too long already. But enough of this for the present; I have to see Miss Tarleton home. If you will call at the Tower shortly, I will do as I promised regarding the other matter."

Mr. Ussher bowed.

"I am obliged, sir," he said, and with a second salutation to Irene, retreated into the bar-parlour.

The war-correspondent paid the bill for their tea, and ordered the horses.

When they were riding away from the Half Brick—Paul Jerome had mounted the groom's horse and dispatched that functionary home on foot—he drew near to Irene and bent to look ardently into her face.

"My darling," he told her, "I am little better than a bungler. I have been flattering myself upon taking my time in stalking my game, and all the while I have been making this tragedy possible. If I had only accused Hartigan openly of attempting to get the girl Kit killed by that express!"

"Kit!" said Irene, "the little blind girl whom you rescued. But it could not—it could not have been more than an accident."

The war-correspondent's fingers tightened on his rein.

"I saw him," he replied, "stop her upon the level-crossing, walk forward, and pass through the gates, leaving her directly in the path of the train. It was all horribly, diabolically deliberate!"

Irene shivered; Jerome went on with a grim reflectiveness.

"Hartigan pleaded," said the war-correspondent, "that he had lost his nerve, and was prematurely alarmed by the approaching train. But he bore none of the marks of fear, and his anger against me was only too apparent. Some instinct warned me that I had averted a crime. If I had accused him openly it might have prevented this last fatality. Single coincidences are frequently the work of chance, double coincidences are more often the result of a common cause. A genuinely accidental fourfold coincidence is impossible."

"A fourfold coincidence," repeated Irene.

"Fourfold and ghastly," said Jerome; "and its significance is unmistakable. Hartigan has drowned Moira Davenal as he stabbed her father, as he tried to kill his sister, as conceivably, in spite of all that appears to the contrary, he murdered, or was party to the murder of his wife.

"The man is either a calculating fiend with motives to be explained by some fact as yet hidden from us, or he is a homicidal maniac. The murder of his niece shall be the last, as it is the worst of his crimes. I can only hope that you are wrong about Vanbrugh loving the poor girl."

Irene's head drooped.

"We must not deceive ourselves," she answered; "I know Guy well—we have been playmates and companions since childhood. I read his secret as soon as he mentioned her name. He wished me to make friends with her; he praised her to me as a man only praises one woman, the woman he is in love with."

Paul Jerome sighed profoundly.

"Poor—poor fellow!" he exclaimed, and he brought his horse so near to her hack that he could touch her hand that held the reins.

In presence of the shadow that had fallen on their friend he could not speak in words of their own new-found love and happiness. When he did break a long silence it was to refer once more to Guy Vanbrugh.

"Who—who will tell him?" he said. "How will he learn?"

Irene Tarleton started.

"How awful!" she cried. "He will hear of it abruptly and by chance, the shock will be cruel—cruel!"

She checked her hack. "We must ride round by the Close," she added with pathetic resolution. "I will tell him myself. I would give worlds not to have to, but I can do it better than anyone else. I will do it—I must do it."

The war-correspondent assented tenderly. "You shall, my brave, kind darling," he said, and the horses were turned out of the high-road to gain the old manor-house, half shooting box, half modest country-seat, that sheltered Guy Vanbrugh's bachelor establishment.

The storm had ceased, but the sky was still overcast and frowning, and the accumulating raindrops dripped wetly upon them from the trees in the dank avenue as they rode up the ivied and straggling front of the Close.

Together they alighted, and Paul Jerome had raised his hand to pull at the twisted iron bell-handle that hung, a relic of bygone days, at the side of the entrance, when the doors in the cool, flagged porch opened, and Guy Vanbrugh himself appeared. His Norfolk jacket and tweed cap showed that he was sallying forth on foot.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "Seeking shelter? But no, the storm is over, and you are dry. Come in, you are welcome, whatever brings you?"

He stopped, something in their faces chilling him.

"What's wrong," he continued, "you look very glum, and—Irene, you are crying; in Heaven's name what has happened?"

Irene put her arm in his.

"Guy," she said, "I want to speak to you. Mr. Jerome will wait."

The war-correspondent bent his head, looped over his shoulder the reins of the horses, and got out his cigarette-case ostentatiously. But a servant relieved him of his charge, and he was left without the tactful pretext.

Guy Vanbrugh gazed at him troublously.

"Well," he observed, "you are a pair of sphinxes. However, since you will excuse us, Jerome, perhaps Irene will explain in her own fashion."

With a final searching glance at the war-correspondent, he led his cousin out of the hall into a small ante-chamber that gave upon it. Paul Jerome watched them go, then lit a cigarette hastily and began to walk up and down the hall.

The moments passed, and unconsciously he lengthened the extent of his mechanical sentry-go, until one extremity of it carried him near the unclosed door of the ante-chamber into which Guy Vanbrugh and his cousin had retired.

At last, as he reached its threshold, he looked up, and turned swiftly away. He had seen a pathetic picture. Irene stood by a low table, her hand resting on it, her face pale and drawn, and great tears trembling on her lashes. By it sat Guy Vanbrugh, his head hidden on his arms, a hand clasping mutely a hand of hers. In his hour of desolation—bereft as he was of love and happiness—a woman's friendship was sustaining him.

Paul Jerome moved away and sought the open terrace outside the Close. There, after he had smoked innumerable cigarettes, Irene joined him. Her eyes swam as they met his. The war-correspondent helped her to the saddle, and they rode silently home to the Tower.

TWENTY-NINTH CHAPTER.

"So We Brought It Here."

"Uncle Edward!"

Edward Stormont paused on the threshold of his library, arrested by the call. It had come from the great staircase hard

Digitized by Google

by, and the voice was that of Irene Tarleton. While he hesitated, Irene herself ran down into the hall, darted up to him, thrust open the library door, pushed him gently into the apartment, and followed him, closing the door after her.

"Well, Miss Madcap," said the explorer, as he yielded good-humouredly to this manœuvre, "and what can I do for you this morning?"

Irene drew him to his big chair at the library-table and made him sit down in it.

"Oh, Uncle Edward!" she exclaimed; "do help me."

The explorer stroked his handsome grey beard and put on a judicial air. But his blue eyes twinkled.

"What do you mean by 'help'?" he inquired. "Moral support, advice, consolation, or a leaf out of my cheque-book? You shall have any or all of them, young lady, if they will satisfy you."

His niece flushed at the mention of money.

"You are a brick, uncle," she replied, "but it isn't £. s. d. or consolation we want, and I am afraid we are not in the mood to take advice. But moral support we badly need."

"Indeed!" said Edward Stormont. "And who is 'we'?"

Irene's pink grew red.

"Mr. Jerome and I," she answered.

The explorer laughed out jollily.

"That is how the wind blows, is it?" he retorted. "Well, to what end must I direct my moral support?"

Irene pointed upwards, through the ceiling of the library. The gesture indicated her mother's rooms.

"Mater," she said briefly, "she has always wanted me to marry Guy." At the mention of her cousin's name Irene broke off to sigh. "Of course," she added hastily, not choosing to complicate her own explanation by any reference to Guy Vanbrugh's ill-starred love affair, "Guy and I are good chums, but we have always known that neither of us loved the other, not love with a capital L."

"Yet you do not anticipate," observed Edward Stormont, "that your mother will hail with much enthusiasm the substitution of Jerome for Guy? To be candid, she allowed me recently to perceive that she would not, so you see she is not blind, any more than you. However, what am I to do? I suppose Jerome and you have had the inevitable romantic explanation, and come to a satisfactory understanding?"

"Y—yes," confessed Irene with sudden shyness.

Edward Stormont rose and took her hands in his.

"My heartiest congratulations!" he said. "Jerome is a splendid fellow! You could not have chosen more worthily. I prophesy for you both a rarely happy married life. Jerome is a man to whom I would have esteemed myself fortunate in marrying my own little daughter, had she lived."

Irene threw her arms round the speaker and kissed him frankly.

"Thank you, uncle dear!" she exclaimed.

The explorer returned the salutation with an affectionate gravity.

"And now about your mother?" he pursued. "Does she actually know the position of matters between Jerome and you?"

"That's the trouble," said his niece. "I wouldn't let Paul go and tell her, she would only have insulted him. So this morning I tried to tell her myself. But at the first word she flew into a passion, informed me that, as a prospective heiress and a minor, I was still under her absolute control, and locked me in my room."

"Yet," interpolated Edward Stormont cheerfully, for Irene's face had darkened, and her bosom heaved, "you are here?"

"That was easy enough," intimated Irene, "there is a little dressing-room out of mine, with a borrowed light that opens on to a back landing. I got out that way, found Paul, and held a council of war. Two alternatives presented themselves, to elope, or to appeal to you. I was in favour of eloping before mamma could shut me up more securely!"

She uttered this piece of information with much coolness.

(*Continued overleaf.*)

A Woman's Remarkable Test.

Tried 17 Medicines for Indigestion and Biliousness. Only Bile Beans did her any good.

Mothers and heads of families generally who like to know a remedy for various common ailments met with at times in every family, will be interested in the following facts, which were published by the *Norwich Mercury*, and gleaned by one of the representatives of that paper.

In the little village of Crostwight, in East Norfolk, lives a woman named Dixon. She has lived in her present house for twelve years, and for twenty-five years before that she lived in another cottage quite near her present home. During the whole of that long period—thirty-seven years—she was known to the villagers as an invalid. She had no physical deformity, but her digestion was so weak that illness seemed with her the normal condition. No matter what food she took sickness, more or less severe, followed, and often for days together no food would stay on her stomach. Palpitation, headache, and the long list of painful symptoms which accompany acute indigestion and biliousness were also present. Things which are generally considered as most harmless made her seriously ill, and her husband could not smoke his pipe indoors because the odour of the tobacco brought on violent attacks of retching and sickness. To the medical men Mrs. Dixon was an impossible case. She consulted and was treated by eight doctors in succession, and when they failed to give her any relief she began to "doctor herself," as she expresses it.

She carefully and patiently gave seventeen various remedies a prolonged trial. After taking the sixteenth for a long time she had to admit that she was as bad as when she started with the first. The seventeenth medicine to be tested, however, acted very differently. It was the vegetable preparation known as Bile Beans, and to her delight this well known specific quite cured her. Naturally, the result of the test created considerable discussion in local circles, and the matter reaching the ears of the *Mercury* man, he investigated the case.

Asked by him if her cure was complete, Mrs. Dixon said: "I am now quite free from the ailments which have troubled me all through life. It was my daughter who first persuaded me to try Bile Beans. I improved after the first few doses, and gradually but surely they have made this great change in me." Apparently Mrs. Dixon is now likely to continue the tenant of the same cottage for another twelve years.

Miss MARIE TEMPEST says:—

"I have used your EUGOL TOOTH POWDER for some time, and I consider it the most delightful preparation ever brought before the public." A bottle of Eugol Liquid Dentifrice, also box of powder or paste, post free for 2s. 6d., with plan for return of your 2s. 6d. for four minutes' easy work.

EUGOL CO., 52 Berwick Street, LONDON, W.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. **2½%**

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

nor did her uncle's fresh burst of laughter disconcert her in the least.

"However," she continued, "Paul persuaded me to give you a trial, and I consented, on condition that I saw you first alone. To tell you the truth, I wasn't sure that I shouldn't have to wheedle you a bit."

With which frank admission Irene went to the door of the library, and opening it, clicked sharply as if she were encouraging a horse. At this signal there was a step in the hall outside, and Paul Jerome entered. The explorer met him with a grim chuckle and an offered hand.

"You are a nice sort of guest, Jerome," he said, "disturbing the peace of a decorous household in this fashion."

The war-correspondent made an apologetic gesture. "I assure you, my dear Stormont," he responded, "that I feel—what I have no doubt I appear to you—a singularly selfish, tactless person. Indeed, I told Miss Tarleton as much when I confessed myself unable to conceal from her any longer the fact that I—— "

"I know," interrupted Edward Stormont, "hearts have a habit of proving stronger than the coolest of judgments, and they are often wiser in the result. Well, I will do what you want me to. I will go and talk to my sister-in-law. Perhaps, having blown off steam in a somewhat unconventional way, she may be more amenable to the sweet influences of diplomacy."

He lingered, studying them with a kindly interest.

"You lucky young beggars," he said, "how happy you must feel! Gather ye roses while ye may—my hands were full of such roses once. I do not complain; I loved and lost, as you may, for even true love does turn the dart of death. But it is something to have loved and been loved!"

The explorer's moved sentences stopped abruptly, and he went out of the library.

Paul Jerome sighed.

"There goes a noble, and a loyal heart, my darling," he exclaimed, "if a man can be said to have a heart who buried it in his wife's grave."

The war-correspondent caught her to him, and clasped her close. "Fate send us better luck than he had," murmured Paul Jerome, "and yet he is right. Nothing can take from us the happiness of having loved."

His arms closed almost convulsively about her; she uttered a little cry, and then smiled.

"What a bear's hug, you stupid darling," she said. "And, besides, you have scratched my hand."

"I am a clumsy fool!" declared the war-correspondent penitently, "but you see, I am not used to making love. I shall learn better manners, I suppose. Let me look at the hand."

He inspected her fingers, the skin had not been broken, but it was grazed in a narrow white streak. The hand had lain against his breast as he clasped her. He felt inquiringly about the pockets of his upper garments for some trifle that might have caused the scratch.

Something attracted his attention, and he searched a vest-pocket, to draw out a scrap of a thick, bent pin, apparently tortoise-shell, and studded on the bend with small stones that might have been turquoises. It had penetrated the rough tweed of his vest and projected in a sharp, irregular point.

"This must be the offender," said Paul Jerome; "now, how on earth did I come by that?"

Irene looked at the fragment. "That is a pretty keepsake," she told him banteringly—"part of a lady's hairpin. Mamma has a set just like it."

Her lover knitted his brows. "I—I seem to remember," he murmured, "picking that up somewhere haphazard. Now where was it?" He gazed dubiously at the broken tortoise-shell-coloured section, with its polished blue stones.

Irene took it from him.

"It is like mamma's," she decided; "I gave her the set myself. Afterwards I was sorry, so many cheap imitations came out."

The war-correspondent lost himself in contemplation. Suddenly he gave vent to a low whistle, and putting a finger and thumb in a vest-pocket, he fished out his match-box. Striking a vesta, he held the bit of pin in the flame. It singed and there was a smell of burning horn.

"It is," he said—"it is genuine; if it were a celluloid imitation it would blaze like tinder."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Irene, puzzled; "what good does it do to know that. What I should like to know is how you got it and why you carry it about with you."

Paul Jerome did not directly answer her. "I picked it up," he intimated slowly, "in Groudle Park and brought it absent-mindedly home. I suppose I must have slipped it into my pocket and forgotten it."

"In Groudle Park," said Irene. "Why, it might, it may be, one of mamma's. Possibly she has lost one."

"Quite possibly," agreed the war-correspondent, and he repossessed himself casually of the piece of pin and pocketed it unostentatiously. Irene had diverted her attention to a clock on the library mantel.

"I wonder how long Uncle Edward will be?" she observed; "the longer he is the more chance there is—if mamma will only listen and argue for a while she may grow sensible. If he stays ten minutes I shall begin to be hopeful."

The estimate was ominous; already the library door was opening to re-admit the explorer. He met their questioning glance with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Beaten in the first round," he reported ruefully; "Irene may both make her bed and lie on it. Her mother will have nothing more to do with her. The law of entail will not allow her actually to disinherit her daughter, but she announces her intention of living as long as she can, and meanwhile expresses the hope that you will, neither of you, under any circumstances, count upon her assistance or recognition."

Irene's lip curled, and she turned to Paul Jerome.

"I told you," she said, "that we might as well elope and have done with it. Uncle Edward," she added, "will you lend us a carriage and allow Mrs. Lintot to get some of my things together?"

The explorer twisted his moustache.

"My dear girl," he replied, "you can't leave us in that fashion. I was only giving you baldly the substance of your mother's views. I did not mean you to take me, or them, too literally. Flight of the sort you suggest might seriously compromise Jerome's reputation, to say nothing of your own."

He stepped a pace nearer Irene and glanced disarmingly into her rebellious countenance.

"If you must decide finally between your mother and your chosen husband," he pursued, "I will see if I cannot find you a suitable home and chaperon pending arrangements for a straightforward, if quiet, wedding. What do you say, Jerome?"

"What can I say, Stormont," answered the war-correspondent, shaking off a certain abstraction, "but that I am profoundly grateful for your kindness and deeply appreciative of your tact. But I may be pardoned for pointing out that Lady Tarleton has already attempted forcibly to restrain Irene's movements, and may do so again. I begin to think that she is a woman of a more unusual type than I had suspected."

Edward Stormont hesitated. "Upon my word, Jerome," he rejoined, "I scarcely know what to say, but I am very far from suggesting that you should withdraw your protection, even temporarily, from Irene. Yet, although my sister-in-law has a rarely strong character and an indomitable will, I should trust that——"

He was interrupted; a servant had entered the room.

"Well?" said the explorer.

The footman came forward into the apartment; he was carrying a flat, rather angular parcel, wrapped in brown paper.

"Two men, sir," he explained, "from Groudle—fishermen, sir, wish to see you with reference to this. I told them you

(*Continued on page* 668.)

Digitized by Google

ALFOSCO REGD

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

ALFOSCO REGD

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 898 **10/6**

Skirt alone **5/6** carr. 6d extra

Design No 898. 10/6.

Eton Coat and Skirt Costume, made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'S **Specialite Serge, Venetian Cloth,** or new **Zibeline Cloth.** Colours: Grey, Black, Blue, Green, Navy, Oxford, Fawn, Brown, Purple, &c. Stylish Coat, fashionable sleeve, lined throughout. Trimmed tailor stitching and metal buttons. Fashionable cut skirt. Price complete only **10/6,** carriage 6d. Send for one. Lace collar shown on this Costume 1/6½ ex.

When ordering Costumes, please give Bust measurement (under arms), size of waist, and length of skirt in front.

WRITE FOR OUR **NEW SKETCH BOOK** AND **Catalogue of Bargains** Containing hundreds of Illustrations of Latest Novelties for the Summer Season, Sent with Patterns, post free. Call or write.

4/11 **4/11**

Design No. 1019. 4/11.

Costume Skirt in good-wearing Black and Navy **Serge,** trimmed two flounces and braid; lined throughout linenette. Price only **4/11,** carriage 5d. In ordering, give length of skirt in front and size of waist. Post orders receive prompt attention. Every lady should see Allen Foster & Co.'s New Illustrated Catalogue of Skirts, Blouses, Corsets, Underskirts, &c., sent post free.

Design No. 456. 13/9.

Stylish Costume. Special value for 13/9. The bodice has a blouse front with tight-fitting back and is lined throughout; trimmed tucks, silk strappings and small buttons. Skirt also trimmed tucks, silk and buttons to match bodice. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new **Zibeline Cloth** (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect), or in their world-renowned **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth,** all colours. Patterns post free. Price only **13/9;** sent carriage paid 6d. extra. In sending order please give bust measurement under arms, length of sleeve, size of waist, and length of skirt in front.

PATTERNS POST FREE

Design No. 456 **13/9**

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

Worth a Guinea a Box.

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

No other medicine in the world can claim so many regular users. Thousands of families always keep a box of BEECHAM'S PILLS in the house, so that, on the first sign of any irregularity of the system, a timely dose may be administered, and further trouble and suffering averted. Nine-tenths of the BEECHAM'S PILLS sold are purchased by those who HAVE USED THEM BEFORE and have found them indispensable as

A FAMILY MEDICINE.

Sold everywhere in Boxes price 1s. 1½d. (56 pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 pills).

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

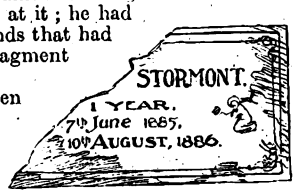
disliked being disturbed in the morning and they consented to allow me to bring it in."

"Put it down, then," directed his master irritably; "I will look at it later on."

"Yes, sir," said the servant; "and are they to have any remuneration, sir?—they spoke of the thing being, they thought, silver."

"Confound it!" exclaimed Edward Stormont; "open it and let us find out what all the fuss is about!"

The man obeyed, and tore off the wrappings. A flat, triangular section of damp wood was revealed. To it was attached a metal plate, also triangular but jagged along one edge. The plate was marked with a name and dates, and read:



The explorer stood looking at it; he had become very pale and the hands that had taken up the damp wooden fragment were twitching.

"June the seventh, eighteen eighty-five," he said; "my little girl's birthday; August the tenth eighty-six, the day she died. What—what is this and where did it come from?"

"I understood, sir," answered the servant, "the men to say that it had been found on the beach, and having your name on it they thought it might interest you."

Edward Stormont took a stride towards the door, but halted. "No," he said, "send the men in." And he waited impatiently till the order was carried out and two burly, bearded figures made their appearance.

The explorer went to meet them.

"Well, my men," he began, "this is a curious find of yours. Did you pick it up yourselves?"

One of the fishermen replied with a motion that indicated his companion.

"My mate did, sir," he said; "it blew heavyish in the night—the thunderstorm having freshened the air, you see—and we was strolling along the edge of the tide this morning, having a look at the drift, sir, when he spots something shiny. He picks it up, and it was that."

"Yes, sir," chimed in his partner, "and though it didn't seem to be of much value, barring that the metal might be silver, it had your name on it, sir. So we brought it here."

The explorer turned the thing over in his hands.

"Cast up by the sea," he muttered; "of all impossible coincidences, this would appear to be the most impossible."

He held out to Paul Jerome the damp, splintered wood and inscribed metal.

"Sixteen years ago," he said, "I saw such a plate upon the lid of my only child's tiny coffin. The words 'Born' and 'Died' and her Christian name are missing, otherwise it might be the same. The dates are correct, and the metal has evidently come from a coffin-plate."

Jerome touched it curiously and Irene also. The coincidence—if coincidence if were—was inexpressibly weird.

"It cannot be the same, however," pursued the explorer, laying the wooden fragment down and brushing the sea-sand from his fingers. "How could that get from the mausoleum in the park to Groudle Bay? No, someone died on the same day as my little Moira—someone who had been born on her birthday and who was called Stormont."

The war-correspondent's gaze fixed like that of one who is mesmerised.

"Moira," he said slowly—'Groudle Bay, the mausoleum—*Good Heavens!*"

Edward Stormont caught him by the elbow.

"Jerome," he cried, "what are you saying—what do you mean?"

Paul Jerome was scarcely conscious of his friend's question. He had taken from his pocket the fragment of turquoise and tortoise-shell. He thrust it back hastily, and, with a kind of shudder, to draw the explorer aside.

"Stormont," he said in a low tone, "do you remember one day when you complained of finding the mausoleum unlocked?"

The explorer started.

"Yes," he answered, "but what—you don't mean—oh, who could be so inhuman as wantonly to desecrate——?"

The war-correspondent checked his excited outburst.

"I don't know what to think," he said; "I have plunged suddenly into the heart of a profound and inexplicable mystery of whose existence I have been for some time cognisant. The only way of fathoming it seems to be——" He broke off. "Unless," he added, "that would be too painful for you?"

"What were you going to say?" demanded Edward Stormont curtly. Jerome encountered his friend's gaze steadily.

"To see," he continued, completing his unfinished observation, "if the mausoleum itself has anything to tell us."

Edward Stormont's bearded jaw set sternly. "You are right," he said, "and if we find that even the sacred slumbers of the dead are not secure from human intrusion, I shall know how to discover and deal with the guilty."

Jerome turned away with a sigh and answered nothing. Stormont got out a sovereign purse, to give the fishermen a gold coin apiece, and dismissed them. Then he came back to Jerome.

"Now," he said, "we will make the investigation you suggest. But what about Irene and your own problems?"

The war-correspondent frowned.

"Perhaps," he responded, "the settlement of the one problem will facilitate the settlement of the other. But as we can hardly allow Irene to accompany us on our present errand, I shall advise her to lock herself in this room. That will prevent any further attempt on Lady Tarleton's part to make a prisoner of her. She need not open until I return, to anybody."

The explorer knitted his brows over the first of these sentences. But Jerome offered no explanation and they passed out of the library together. The war-correspondent stayed a moment without until Irene—scarcely less perplexed than her uncle—had secured the door. This done he went to his room for a hat. The explorer did the same.

They left the Tower by the window of the justice-room. Edward Stormont had guided their steps thither to obtain a great key that hung in a certain cupboard. It was that of the mausoleum.

(To be concluded.)

"The Bond Between"

is the title of our New Serial Story which will start next week. It is written by Blanche Eardley, who is at present contributing "Tinsel Triumphs" to *Pearson's Weekly*. Order a copy of *Short Stories* for next week to be reserved for you.

LITTLE ECONOMIES,

and How to Practise Them.

By EDITH WALDEMAR LEVERTON.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Price 1s.

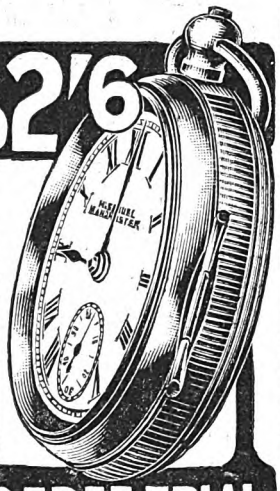
Some of the Subjects dealt with are:

Kitchen Economies—Cooking Economies—Fuel, Firing, Lights—Laundry Work—Entertaining—Carving—The Sick Room—Care of Clothes—The Financial Question—General Management—Spring Cleaning, etc., etc.

AT ALL BOOKSELLERS. Or from the BOOK PUBLISHER, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

YOU SEND 2/6



BY RETURN OF POST
YOU WILL RECEIVE
H. SAMUEL'S
'MARVEL' LEVER
Test it Free for 7 days, then, if satisfied, remit balance 8s., and receive a Grand
BONUS FREE GIFT
of a Bavarian (regd.) GOLD ALBERT.

This splendid Watch has strong Handsome Cases, exactly resembling Real Silver, fine lever movement, accurately timed and adjusted to stand the Hardest Wear. Price for Watch & Chain complete, 10 6.

Compare with Watches sold at double the price on ordinary retail methods.

7 DAYS FREE TRIAL

H. SAMUEL'S WATCHES HAVE THE LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD.
Send a Post-Card for the
BIG FREE PRIZE GUIDE
200 Pages, over 3,000 Rich Engravings of Watches, Clocks, Cutlery, &c., at Lowest Factory Prices.
FREE GIFTS TO BUYERS! SELECT YOURS!
Dept. 29, MARKET ST.,
H. SAMUEL, MANCHESTER.

A GRAND BARGAIN

Our goods always come up to what we say about them, and sometimes more. Opinions differ on most things, but all who deal with us agree that for downright good value we cannot be equalled. All our energies—all our facilities—all our advantages, are turned to your profit. We are universally known as the house for "Reliability in Dress Wear." For a short period, as an advertisement, to get you interested in our exceptional values for all classes of goods, we make this special Bargain Offer.

MODEL 16.
'Alexandra'
*
Very Smart Style.
*

Very Stylish, Latest Fashion, Tailor-Made Dress Skirt (as Illustration) for the Marvellously Low Sum of
3/6 each, or 2 for 6/9
Postage 5d. *each extra.*
Made of our "Specialité" Unspottable Serge, trimmed with four rows of Extra Quality, Silk-Finished Braid; Perfect Fitting, with Pleated Back, and very full flounce for ease in walking. Inside extra well finished. Cannot be excelled at the usual retail stores at less than DOUBLE THE PRICE. State size of waist, and front length of skirt, when ordering. Over 28in. waist 6d. extra.

BODICE LENGTH TO MATCH, 2/-.
Write to-day for Illustrated Bargain Catalogue.
T. & J. ROBERTS, The Great Warehousemen, Moorhead, SHEFFIELD.

IMPORTANT TO WOMEN.

A WONDERFUL BEAUTIFIER.

A SHORT time since our readers were informed about that wonderful preparation for the complexion, Peralia, and strongly advised to try it for blackheads, acne, wrinkles, crow's feet, pimples, &c. Now listen to what a recent user has got to say about it: "In reply to your kind letter, I have taken your advice and have procured a bottle of Henderson's Peralia from Boot's Drug Stores. Well! I must say I was astonished at the result. I have spent large amounts on so-called remedies, but with indifferent success; but one bottle of Peralia entirely removed the scurvy from which I was suffering from my face, and the unnatural redness from my nose. I am now using it on my hands and arms, which it has made lovely and white, and also find it excellent for chapped hands. I am in a large milliner's shop, and all the girls in our establishment use Peralia, and think it is lovely.—Yours faithfully, Ada Fleming, Station Street, Nottingham." That ought to be a sufficient testimonial for any reader, and we hope any of them that are suffering from such disfiguring humours will act on our advice, and at once give Peralia a trial. The Peralia Company is a very enterprising firm, and they are now making a present of a dainty little book, called "Beauty's Boudoir," to every purchaser of Peralia who asks for it. We are of the opinion that none of our lady readers should be without it. By the way, the prices of Peralia, post free, in plain wrapper, are 1s. 3d., 1s. 9d., and 2s. 9d.

Many of our readers, we are sure, would like to know of a really reliable hair curler. When we say reliable, we mean one that is not affected by rain, or the heat of a ballroom. To those who are interested, and are anxious to possess neat, curly locks, we recommend "Crimpoline." It is nothing short of marvellous the manner in which this fluid sets about its business. All you have got to do is simply to apply a little to your hair for a few nights and you soon become the owner of lovely wavy ringlets. No! you need no tongs, pins nor curlers. Sounds almost to good to be true, doesn't it? Well, try it and see for yourself. Several who have used it tell us that once you get the hair properly in curl with it, you need only use it once in the week. Its price is so very moderate, too, that none of our readers need be hindered from sending for it on that account. If you write to the proprietors, enclosing 2s. or 2s. 9d., either in stamps, or a postal order, they will send you a bottle, post free, and secretly packed. Their address is the Peralia Perfumery Co., Dept. 14, Camden Street, North Shields.

GIVEN AWAY
with this week's
HOME NOTES
(No. 488.)

PAPER PATTERN of this
BOY'S PYJAMAS
(14—16).

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.
PRICE ONE PENNY.

Digitized by Google

To CURE Drunkards

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

Mrs. Geo. Fuller, *who saved her husband.*

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51, Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles**, and by contracting for thousands annually I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc. from 8/- MONTHLY

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6-0-0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN**, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

THIS BOOK IS FREE.

Mysteries of Hypnotism Revealed.

This book was printed for you; it was printed to teach the public the many marvels of the wonder power of the age; it was printed that all might learn the long lost secrets of a hidden science; it was printed for the poor as well as the rich, that all might stand an equal chance in the race of life. The finest artists were employed to illustrate it. Twenty eminent scientists divulge their secrets in its intensely interesting pages. No other book of the kind in any way compares with it; no other book is so beautiful, so interesting, so thrilling, so comprehensive, so practical. It is a work that should be in every home. It should be read by every father and mother. It tells how you may learn the marvelous mysteries of the greatest power known to man. For a limited time only it will be sent to any address absolutely free.

This grand book gives you the key to the inner secrets of mind control. It describes practical methods for using hypnotism and personal magnetism in business and society. It tells how to strengthen your will power, your memory, your self-confidence. It tells you how to drive all suggestions of failure from your mind and replace it with a firm determination to succeed in anything you undertake. It tells you how to brush aside all hindrances to your progress and success. It gives you the ability to impress people with your real worth. It tells you how to completely master human minds and strangely control the thoughts, actions, and desires of whom ever you will. The American College guarantees to teach you all these things, and hundreds of others equally beneficial. You can learn at home during your leisure hours.

When you master hypnotism and personal magnetism you will be in possession of a mighty advantage over your fellow-men. You will be able to pass your competitors in any line of endeavour; you will be able to fascinate and influence others; you can do a vast amount of good by curing diseases and bad habits; you can change the bad disposition of children and correct their evil tendencies; you can earn a great deal of money by treating people; you can develop to a marvelous degree any musical or dramatic talent you or your friends may possess; you can give thrilling hypnotic demonstrations and afford your friends an endless source of amusement; you can be the centre of attraction at any social gathering; you can cure yourself of business or domestic worry; you can win the everlasting friendship of those you desire; you can protect yourself against the influence of others; you can develop your telepathic or clairvoyant power; you can increase your salary or income; you can win wealth and renown. If you want a copy of the remarkable book here mentioned, which clearly explains the wonders of Hypnotism and discloses its deepest mysteries, send your name and address on penny postcard to the **American College of Sciences**, Dept. WL 41, 420 Walnut St., **Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.**

Icilma

THE ONLY GUARANTEED AID TO BEAUTY.

Nature's remedy for Complexion and Skin Troubles, whether caused by heat, cold, age, irritations or accident. Send 1d. stamp for postage of Free Sample & Booklet with Guarantee.—Icilma, (Dept. 127) 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

SYMONDS'

CYCLES—HALF PRICE

Hundreds of Policemen and constabulary ride Symonds' Cycles. **Prices £4 to £8.** No matter who you are or what your business is, we will sell a cycle to you on **easy payments.** Write for catalogue.

Symonds' London Stores, 124-128, City Rd., London.

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C. "In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

A Hammock Proposal.

MOLLY: "Jack Peters proposed to me while we were sitting in the hammock." Dolly: "Then you can consider him a net profit."

Only Presents Now.

"So she's really going to be married?" "Yes." "I suppose she thinks of nothing but the future?" "Well, she only talks of the presents."

How It's Kept in Place.

"WHAT is it, do you suppose, that keeps the moon in place, and prevents it from falling?" asked Araminta. "I think it must be the beams," replied Charlie, softly.

Good for Trade.

"YES, George, it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. It is better for the jeweller, and the florist, and the postal system, and sometimes for the lawyers."

Cards Are Out Now!

"How many stars can you see?" she asked. "Two more than you," said he. "How do you make that out?" she asked. "*I* can see your eyes," said he. And that was the beginning of it all.

The Manly Man.

HE: "You say you like a manly man. What is your idea of a manly man?" She: "Well, for instance, one who doesn't stay and stay and stay, just because he knows the girl isn't strong enough to throw him out."

The Fatal Flirtation.

MR. PECK: "What is that book you are reading, my dear?" Mrs. Peck: "It's a novel, entitled 'A Fatal Flirtation,' with such a sad ending." Mr. Peck: "Something like ours, I presume?"

What Did It Mean?

MARIE: "I told papa, Willie, dear, that I thought you were just too lovely for any use." Willie: "And what did he say, darling?" Marie: "He said he feared as much. Now, what could he have meant by that, Willie, dear?"

Wanted the Letter to Go.

"WHAT in the name of Jupiter did you sew up all the pockets in my overcoat for this morning?" "Dearest, that letter I gave you to post was very important, and I intended to make sure you carried it in your hand."

New Use for a Cyclometer.

SUE: "Is this your cyclometer on the mantelpiece?" He: "Yes." She: "Why, it only registers 2! Is that all the miles you have ridden in six months?" He: "Oh, no! I keep that to tell the number of instalments I have paid."

An Impossible Task.

HE: "What would you say if I were to steal a kiss from you?" She: "But that is impossible." He: "Impossible! Why so, pray?" She: "Because you can't steal anything I haven't got, and no one has ever given me a kiss—see?"

How Unkind!

"THIS," said Mr. Flitter, "is a photograph of the only girl I ever loved." "How cleverly," said Miss Wyse, as she looked at the portrait, "they do get up these composite photographs!"

A Dilemma.

SHE (alarmed): "Oh, Tom, why do you make such awful faces at me?" He (contritely): "I can't help it, dear. My eyeglass is falling out, and I don't want to let go of your hands."

He Spoke Feelingly.

"AFTER all," remarked the sentimental wife, "home is the dearest spot on earth." "That's so," replied the practical head of the family, as he finished auditing last month's grocery bill.

She Couldn't Expect it.

HE: "You don't love me as you did before we were married." She: "Of course I don't, John. You wouldn't expect a woman to love a married man as she could a bachelor, would you?"

Found Her Out.

"No, father," the fair girl said, "Mr. Allingham may not be rich, but his heart is in the right place." "Humph!" retorted the crusty old doctor; "you've had your ear against it, eh?"

The Quotation Didn't Apply.

MR. EMPECK: "'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.'" Mrs. Empeck: "Yes, but you seem to have embarked on it in a leaky old boat with only one oar."

It Would Save 'Bus Fares.

"JOHN, dear, I wish you would get me a brougham." "My darling Amy. Didn't I tell you we must economise?" "Yes, that's why I want the brougham. Think of the omnibus fares I'd save."

They Don't Want Leading.

BLOBBS: "What nonsense it is for newspapers in their accounts of weddings to describe the brides being led to the altar?" Slobbs: "How so?" Blobbs: "Why, most of the girls could find their way in the dark."

The Late Visitor.

MR. STAYLATE: "I hear your mother's step on the stairs, and I shall be able to bid her good-night." Sleepy Beauty (wearily): "It can't be mother. She's a late sleeper. Probably it is the servant coming down to light the fire."

Which of the Six?

"You will marry a tall, dark gentleman," said the fortune-teller, examining the lines on the fair hand. "That doesn't help me at all," despairingly replied the lovely blonde who had called to consult her. "All six of them are tall, dark gentlemen."

Beating About the Bush.

"So you are having your house redecorated, Mr. Hawkins?" "Yes; the workmen began last week." "Are you making radical changes?" "Yes—very." "What is to be the main feature of the new house?" "You—if you'll consent."

She Didn't Want Long.

"GEORGE," she said, in a nervous whisper, "you must give me time—you must give me time." "How long?" he hoarsely asked; "a day, a week, a month, a year?" "No—no, George," and she quickly scanned the sky; "only until the moon gets behind a cloud."

Good Use for Him.

BOBBY (to young Mr. Fatboy): "I heard my sister Clara say something lovely to ma about you, Mr. Fatboy." Young Mr. Fatboy (anxiously): "No; did you, Bobby? What was it?" Bobby: "She said you would be lovely to sit on the big dictionary to press autumn leaves."

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Wants to be an Actress.

So you too, "HAZEL EYES," have the stage fever. You want to become an actress, do you? You are eighteen, tall, fair, and "plump of figure."

* * * * *

Well, the life of a successful actress is very pleasing to one's vanity, and even a fairly good one has a very good time. But a young lady who is not naturally fond of acting and does not feel that she *must* act, to gratify some instinctive prompting, should leave the stage severely alone. It spoils a woman for domestic life, brings her into contact with a class of people who can do her no good, and often brings her into trouble. So I should not worry myself any more about it, unless you really have some exceptional stage talent. Your friends are the best judges as to that, and I should go by their advice.

A Silly Trick.

"LILY" is suffering from the results of "Strategy for Sweethearts." I am often asked by young men how they can go to work to hurry on marriage with their lady-loves. "LILY'S" young man hit on the following scheme: He is a clerk in an Indian merchant's office, and told "LILY" that he had a chance of going abroad for two or three years for his firm. He asked "LILY" to marry him without the knowledge of his employers, who would think him too young to go to India married. He persuaded "LILY," and went to get a special license.

* * * * *

As "LILY" could not marry without her parents' consent—she is under age—the scheme fell through. Then the young man told "LILY" it was all a trick. He was not going abroad at all, but simply wanted to marry her at once because of his love for her, and could not wait till his position improved. Do I advise "LILY" to break off the engagement?

* * * * *

He acted in a rash way, "LILY," and I never approve of deception, even when love is the cause. He had no business to try to trap you into a premature marriage, and certainly deserves the punishment you threaten. Had you married him, as you say, not only might his own prospects have been ruined, and his chance of advancement gone, but he would have dragged you into trouble with your parents, and perhaps poverty.

* * * * *

Now, I don't advise you to break off with him if you both really love each other, but I think for some time I should let him know how strongly you condemn his deception. Let him have an opportunity to think it over, and make amends by working hard at his business to improve his position. It would be better for him if he could go abroad for two years, as that would make him more useful to his employers. At his age and yours the first consideration is to make a position. You should not stand in his way.

A Young Story Writer.

THE Editor tells me, "Amy," that he will be glad to see your story. It need not be typewritten, provided the writing is quite legible. The length may be anything from one thousand to three thousand words. You should inclose a stamped, addressed envelope for the return of the story if it is not accepted.

Rather Too Young.

"INQUIRER."—Yes, seventeen is rather young, certainly, for a girl to enter into an affair with a young man without her parents' knowledge. You say the young lady and yourself have been going out for five months, in spite of the fact that her parents have forbidden her to speak to young men. You yourself don't know anyone who could introduce you to her parents.

* * * * *

Don't you think you had better postpone further connection with her until she is older? Meanwhile, why not try to get to know her parents by some way or another. Surely the girl has some boy cousins of your own age whom you could get to know, or perhaps she takes part in Church or Sunday-school work, in which you might also join, and strike up a proper acquaintance that way, of which her parents would approve. I cannot advise you to continue a secret friendship with the girl against her parents' wishes, as of course until she is a certain age they are the best judges on her behalf.

Is He in Love?

"HOPEFUL" does not know whether he is in love with a certain girl or whether he is merely fond of her as a friend. He takes her out to theatres and concerts, and both of them enjoy being with each other. When they part "HOPEFUL" feels sad, and he believes she feels the same. He feels he would miss her very much if she were separated from him. What do I advise? He has not yet had the courage to talk to her of his feelings.

* * * * *

If you don't really feel passionately towards her, and do not think of her as the only woman in the world, why trouble yourself as to your feelings? If a man or a woman is in love, really and truly, they don't cast about in their minds, but are only too powerfully aware of the fact. You are evidently very friendly with the girl. Continue to be so, and if later on you think of marriage, and are in a position to become engaged, pop the question and see what happens.

Getting Married.

How soon after your engagement should you begin to arrange the wedding, "ALPHONSE"? Well, you should start at once. First there is the question of means. You know whether you have saved enough to go to work with the first details, such as selecting a house, arranging matters with the landlord, furniture, linen, plate, and other necessaries. In those matters your *fiancée* should be taken into your confidence, as they will affect her more than you in after life.

* * * * *

Of course a good deal must depend on the month of the ceremony and where you will spend the honeymoon. The best time would be June, July, or August, so that you two could spend your summer holiday—if you get one—together. Christmas is rather a bad time, as there are very few places where a married couple would be comfortable at that time of year, seeing that everybody is in the family circle and hotels rather desolate.

* * * * *

One more word—don't hang about your future bride the week or two before the wedding day. She won't be at her best, neither will her parents, and they will have a lot of things to arrange which do not require your aid.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

THE GRAMOPHONE

OUT OF DOORS.

NEW STYLE.

No. 3
£3 3s.

Oak Cabinet. Concert Sound Box, Horn, 14in., Nickel.

IN A COUNTRY GARDEN:

In the peaceful quiet of a summer evening the Gramophone affords the most delightful and soothing entertainment. Those tired with the day's work can sit and listen to the finest artistes of the day. In the cool of the evening in a low deck chair the brain-fagged worker finds indeed that music hath charms. We offer nearly 10,000 different records to choose from.

ON THE RIVER BANKS:

Nowhere is the Gramophone heard to better advantage than when played across the river on a still summer's evening. All the tone and quality of the great artistes' voices come gently swelling over the echoing water. There is no need to breathe the vitiated air of a crowded concert-room or theatre. On the river bank where all is peace, the Gramophone brings you the best music you could hear from far-off crowded cities.

ON A YACHT:

Far away from opera houses, theatres, concert-rooms, and music-halls, the yachtsman sometimes spends his evenings regretting that his love for the sea deprives him of music he would otherwise enjoy. He has only to buy a Gramophone, which is essential to every yacht, from the half-rater to ocean-going steam craft. On board, the Gramophone is a constant and never-failing source of delight to owners, their friends, and to the crew.

On receipt of a postcard we will send you Catalogues and give you the name and address of the nearest dealer in our Gramophones. Be sure you get a Gramophone, however. There are several Talking machines, but there is only one Gramophone, which is made in styles to suit all pockets by

THE GRAMOPHONE & TYPEWRITER LTD.

21 City Road, LONDON, E.C.

Digitized by Google

It deserves all the praise it has received from the Leaders of the Profession."—Medical Magazine.

Ask for the "Five Boys" Milk Chocolate.

"Unrivalled as a Chocolate Confection."—Medical Magazine.

HOLIDAY NUMBER.

SHORT STORIES

No. 752.] Week ending May 30th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

"GIVE ME IN CHARGE IF YOU DARE, MY LADY! THIEVING IS NOT SO BAD A TRADE AS BIGAMY!"

(A Dramatic Incident from our New Serial Story, "The Bond Between." See inside.)

Digitized by Google

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' System

THE "EXPRESS"

ENGLISH LEVER, (Regd.) **50/-**

is then forwarded to you. You examine and test it, and, if satisfied, you complete the purchase in nine more monthly payments of 5/-; or, if you prefer to pay the balance in one payment of 45/- within seven days from receipt of goods, a HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT (which you choose yourself) will be sent you. If you are not satisfied, return the watch, and your deposit is instantly refunded.

SPECIFICATION.
First-grade English Lever Movement, Capped & Jewelled, Safety Winding Pinion, Chronometer Balance, Massive Sterling Silver (Hall Marked) Cases. Warranted Seven Years.

On J. G. GRAVES' System you are absolutely certain of what you are buying before you pay for it.

You only send 5/- to start with

50/

Guaranteed BRITISH Manufacture throughout.

THE LARGEST WATCH-SALES FIRM IN THE WORLD.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post Free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. Good Commission. No Risk.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD

"No Better Food."—*Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.*

Fry's PURE CONCENTRATED Cocoa

"Strongest and Best."—*Health.*

Not a stimulant merely for the moment; but a Permanent and Agreeable Form of Nourishment

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Our Great New Serial Starts Below.

SHORT STORIES

No. 752.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending May 30th, 1903.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life. By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

The Wedding.

"THOSE whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The sacred words were droned in monotonous tones of long usage by the lean, apathetic curate, who but dimly observed the faces of the man and woman before him, whose lives he was knitting together irrevocably and for all time, until the grave should give up her dead.

They were but one of the many hundreds of couples that took the vows of marriage upon them under his guidance, and except that the face of the bride was one of strange loveliness and youth, they were in no way different from those others who had gone before.

The church was empty of all save the principals in the marriage ceremony, and the responses of the loud-voiced verger sent a hoarse whisper reverberating round the sacred edifice.

The dull grey fog of late October had crept insidiously up the aisle, and enveloped the four figures in a misty haze; the slim left hand of the bride, with the shining gold of a new wedding-ring on the third finger, alone was the attraction of a solitary shaft of timorous light that fell slantingly from a side window.

The ceremony was over. In the vestry the newly-married couple signed the register with icy fingers, the verger being the only witness present, who added his name after theirs.

There were no congratulations to receive; no bevy of joyous bridesmaids for the proud groom to salute; no confetti-throwing or sweet-voiced choristers to sing "The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden." The bridegroom tipped the obsequious verger, then as silently as they had entered the church they left it—man and wife—"for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer."

"Sweetheart," he murmured, looking down at the white, lovely face of the girl he had made his own, "look up at me—smile into my eyes. This is our wedding-day!"

She raised the heavy, blue-veined lids, and revealed a pair of eyes of the deepest violet found in the heart of a pansy; eyes so perfect that they might be excused if human hearts were wrecked to gain a smile from them.

"I am cold and miserable!" she answered, with a swift smile that acted as a solace to her words. "Let us get away from this horrid fog, Vernon; it has struck a chill into my very heart. I can smile in the sunshine, but gloom makes me wretched."

"Hush, darling!" he whispered. "Don't let us leave the church where we have knelt and taken marriage vows upon us with words of regret! In the darkest shadows my love for you would warm me, and keep hope in my heart."

She nestled up to him prettily, as he wrapped her tenderly round with a rug. He then kissed the proud, vivid mouth of his bride, Margaret Grant, who, an hour ago, was Margaret Heath, orphan, dependent upon the charity of an old maiden aunt. They had met but a month ago, and now this girl, beautiful as the first young buds of Spring, was his wife, to keep and cherish till death did them part.

"Cheer up, little wife!" he said; "life is going to be a long dream of happiness for us both. Something to look back to when the clouds come; our little bark will weather the storm together!"

"We must never have storms and gloom, Vernon," she exclaimed. "I want the sunshine and roses of life, not the gloom and the thorns. Poverty and sickness I could not bear. Promise me that you will keep them from me?"

She leant her exquisite face on his shoulder, and, gazing into so much beauty, he could make no other answer than the one he did. His arm tightened around her slender waist:

"Beloved! All my efforts will be to keep your feet in the sunny way; but you know," he went on, half-seriously, half-playfully, "Fate is the artist who paints the clouds in the canvas of our happiness. But *you* love me so dearly that even the things you *hate* would not influence that love!" he cried passionately. "Were I a pauper you would not change?"

She moved her head restlessly.

"Of course not, Vernon, dear," she smiled sweetly. "I love you very much—you know I do. But don't ask me

All rights reserved.]

horrid questions about paupers!" she pouted. "How can I tell what I would do in circumstances impossible to occur?"

He smiled, then sighed. How could he, a grave, struggling journalist of thirty, expect his child-wife to understand the real significance of the marriage service? She was so young—only seventeen.

"A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded."

His position was almost assured, and he had money saved up for a rainy day. Besides, there was Digby—dear old Digby Scarlett, his friend and collaborator in their first novel. He had Digby to fall back upon in the hour of need. He looked at his wife. What was she thinking about? he wondered.

"A penny for your thoughts, darling," he said abruptly.

She laughed—a pretty, girlish laugh.

"They are worth more than that, Vernon! They were about money—oh, heaps of it!" She clasped her hands impulsively. "I was looking forward to the beautiful things I would buy with it! The places I would see, and the people I would conquer with it! Oh, Vernon, I am so glad you are a rich man!"

Excitement had lent a sparkle to her eyes, and a pink flush to her pale cheeks. Rarely before had he seen her look so lovely, and he vowed never to let her know he was not a rich man. He would work hard, and make the money she already imagined he had. To see the look of disillusion in those pansy-like eyes would spell death to him.

That evening, after they had crossed the Channel, and were sitting in a private room in a Parisian hotel, Vernon Grant put a velvet case in his young bride's hand.

"A wedding jewel for my matchless one!" he said tenderly. She took it with an exclamation of surprise.

"Oh, Vernon! Another present? How lovely! What is it?"

He smiled, elated like a schoolboy at her pleasure.

"Your birthday is also our wedding-day, darling, October the thirtieth; so I have given you a trinket that represents the jewel of the month you were born—an opal ring."

"An opal, Vernon!" she said, with a sudden shiver. "Oh, how unlucky! Opals are stones of ill-omen! I almost wish you had chosen some other kind."

She put the case down with a petulant gesture, then, seeing his look of disappointment, said quickly:

"I will try and get rid of my superstition, as you did not know! See, Vernon! I will wear it now, in defiance of all precedent!" She slipped it on her finger, and laughed in his face. "*We* can afford to scoff at omens!"

After dinner Margaret opened the long windows and stepped on to the balcony. There was no fog; just a clear sky, and a luminous moon lent a silver haze to the streets, and threw shadows into unexpected places. Vernon Grant followed his wife.

"See, beloved!" he whispered, bending his face to touch the burnished hair on his shoulder, "there is the twin-sister to our 'honeymoon'!"

The Honeymoon.

DIGBY SCARLETT turned over his letters leisurely in the interim between breakfast and sorting a cigar.

In appearance he was not bad-looking, being tall and well-built, with sleek hair and gleaming teeth that showed on rare occasions in a smile that mocked, or jeered, but never caressed.

A student of the human face may have noticed that his eyes were set too closely into his aquiline nose, and had also contracted a habit of not looking straight at his interlocutor, but rather obliquely, or through half-closed li[ds].

The lips, though well shaped and red, were spoilt by a perpetual sneer, while on the upper one there was a faint, bluish mark, either the relic of some fighting contest, or a birth-mark, but it added to the sinister expression of his face.

He fingered his letters thoughtfully.

"U—mph! They don't look very important. Duns, bills, and a few invitations! Ah! There's one from my friend and collaborator, the valiant Vernon! I wonder what the Paris post-mark means? Anyway it can wait. I will first do what has taken me so long to make up my mind about, ask adorable Margaret Heath to be my wife.

"I did not know the little witch had taken such a hold on me! I, Digby Scarlett, am honestly in love with a child, and one as intangible as a sunbeam! She seemed to like me when Grant and I stayed with her aunt, but I don't fancy Love has found a place in her vocabulary—yet."

He lighted his cigar, then sat down at his desk, and in a few brief sentences signed his name to the first offer of marriage he had made in thirty years of life. With a half-sneer at his own weakness, he addressed and sealed the letter, then lit the cigar that had gone out.

"There! Now I'll give a few seconds to Vernon." He opened the letter carelessly, and for a time there was no sound in the room save the ticking of an ormolu clock on the mantel, and the purr of a placid cat on the hearthrug.

Digby Scarlett rose slowly; his face was a shade paler than usual, which perhaps made the blue mark on his lip look more strikingly apparent. He kicked the cat from the hearthrug, then smiled grimly when the animal returned and rubbed itself against his leg.

"Is that a prophetic sign, puss, that the people I kick will come back to my feet? I fancy it is. I fancy it will be so one day."

He looked at himself in the glass, and his hand went up to the blur on his lip. He frowned thoughtfully, stroking it with gentle fingers.

"Twice hit by the same hand," he murmured; "and both blows destined to die with me—to bleed internally! Not bad for a man intellectually my inferior! But the third blow *I* shall get in. My innings begins to-day. He laughs best who laughs last!"

He wrote a few letters, lit another cigar, then pulled a Bradshaw towards him.

"I'll look up the trains now."

As he opened the book, a piece of paper fluttered from between the leaves. "Ah! a note of some sort," he muttered, looking at it curiously. Then, as he looked, his face changed colour, and a curious light came into his eyes.

"By Jove! Fate is dealing me trumps this time. A bigger deal than I hoped to play!"

It was a piece of paper—blank, save for the signature of "Digby Scarlett," but not quite in the hand usually signed by that gentleman, though perilously near to be mistaken at first sight for the genuine thing.

He remembered the occasion very well. He and Vernon Grant had been, some few weeks ago, trying to outvie with the other in copying their respective signatures, with the result that Digby Scarlett had made a very poor show, and Vernon Grant had surpassed even the signature of the man he had imitated.

"Why," he had laughed to his friend, "with a little practice I should turn out a very good disciple of 'Jim the Penman'!"

"With a little practice!" Digby Scarlett murmured, putting the piece of paper in his pocket. "I fancy I can oblige my friend in his desire for fame!"

* * * * *

"Well, old man, it is a real treat to see you again. We were thinking of leaving Paris after three weeks of gaiety. Margaret is actually longing for England! Have you seen her?"

Digby Scarlett nodded his head.

"Yes, we met on the staircase, you lucky Benedict! I congratulate you! She hardly remembered me, though," he laughed; "you appear to have ousted all memories from her mind."

Digitized by Google

"I love her deeply," replied Vernon Grant simply. "I hope, Digby," he went on, "you don't think it was mean of me springing this on you so suddenly? It has been like a whirlwind—our engagement of a few days, and then our marriage."

Digby Scarlett raised his hand and touched the mark on his lip. It was a habit of his when thinking deeply.

"Of course not. By the way, you remember the bet we had about imitating each other's signature?" he began abruptly.

"Yes," laughed the other lightly. "What of it?"

"Only this. I had another bet the other day with a chap. He was struck with the similarity, but laid me a hundred pounds that I could not get a bank to take it. I said they would notice nothing; and I want you to help me win the bet."

Vernon Grant laughed.

"What! And compound a felony? Do you mean you want me to present a cheque from *you* at *your* bank, signed by myself as *you?*"

"Yes. I'll trust you not to stick to the money, though," Digby Scarlett retorted with a grin. "I only want to see if it's possible to do it. And Lacy will pay me the hundred on my word, and a letter from you."

"I'm afraid my hand is not in good form," said the other thoughtfully. "Besides, it's risky; the bank may not regard it as a joke!"

"Nonsense, I'll stand by you and explain!" Scarlett interrupted quickly. The blood in his veins was throbbing like the propellers of an engine, and the scar on his lip felt like a burn.

"Look, practice on this piece of paper, then I'll give you the cheque when your hand has regained its cunning!"

He pushed a pen into Grant's unwilling fingers. And for a few seconds the younger man wrote quickly the name of "Digby Scarlett."

"There!" he laughed, entering into the spirit of the game, for him—though he knew it not—a game of Death; "now hand over the cheque, and I'll bet that you will win your hundred pounds the moment we land in England."

He quickly wrote the signature of his friend at the foot of the cheque, filling in his own name as the person to whom the money was to be paid, and then paused.

"How much is the joke to cost?"

"Oh, fill it in for five thousand," said the other carelessly, "I know I can trust you!"

"Rather!"

Then Vernon Grant rose from the table and slipped the cheque into his pocket as Margaret entered the room.

Three days later they landed in England.

"Cash that to-morrow, Vernon, early," said Scarlett in a low tone, as he parted from them; "and wire me when you leave the bank. Oh, by the way, here's your coat; I think I took it in mistake!"

He moved away, and as he settled back in his hansom he laughed softly: "My visit to Paris was not wasted. I fancy this scores one to me!"

In the Trap.

It was dinner time, and Vernon Grant and his lovely girl-bride were preparing for a happy evening together at the theatre. As they rose from the table two men were shown into the room.

"Vernon Grant?" said one interrogatively, while his companion edged towards the door.

Vernon Grant gazed from one to the other.

"That is my name," he said haughtily; "but I don't understand the meaning of this visit."

"You will shortly," replied the man grimly. "I have here a warrant for your arrest on a charge of forgery."

"Forgery?" A short laugh burst from Vernon Grant's lips. "I can easily explain matters if it is about the cheque I presented yesterday. My friend, Mr. Scarlett, will make it clear at once."

"I have nothing to do with that," replied the representative of the law, gruffly. "And I must warn you that anything you say now will be used in evidence against you. We have a cab outside," he went on, "you had better say 'Good-bye' to your lady, then come."

For a moment it dawned upon him that matters were serious. Then he thought of the laugh he and Scarlett would have at the law's expense when all was explained.

He turned to his wife. She had uttered no cry during the interview, but he noticed that her delicate young beauty had aged as though a sudden blight had fallen upon it.

"It's all right, darling," he said tenderly. "I shall return to-night and tell you all that has happened."

She shrank from him quickly, and in the violet eyes she flashed upon him lay the shadow of an awakened hate.

"Don't touch me; don't speak to me; only go!" she panted; and, bitterly wounded in his love, Vernon Grant, after one last yearning look at his bride, left the room with the men who waited for him.

* * * * * *

The doom had gone forth! After a long trial, in which the evidence of his friend, Digby Scarlett, had only served to tighten the coil of Fate round his neck, Vernon Grant left the dock with stumbling feet and dazed senses, while ringing in his ears was the echo of the judge's sentence: "Fifteen years' penal servitude!"

Everything had gone against him, and the very fact that in his overcoat was the piece of paper on which were the few attempts to master his friend's name, had strengthened conviction. Then the money was found on him; and his plea that it was to serve his friend to win a bet was put aside as barefaced and insolent.

He had listened eagerly for Digby Scarlett to defend him, and when that gentleman, gently and sorrowfully, had declared all ignorance concerning their compact, and had confessed to carelessness regarding his care of his cheque-book, Vernon Grant, in the bitterness of his soul, began to understand the moving of the waters beneath the ripples—his friend had betrayed him, like Judas of old! But there was his poor young bride. In *her* lay his hope of living down the years before him, and avenging vengeance!

Permission had been obtained for an interview with Margaret, the last, for how long? She had been in court that day, for he had caught a glimpse of her red-gold hair under the thick veil as he stood in the dock.

The turning of a grating key in the heavy lock of his cell-door made him flush, and catch his breath. It was his wife, come to say "Good-bye!"

The door was partially closed, and they were alone.

"Margaret! My darling! God forgive me for dragging your young life into such an atmosphere!" he said, in a broken voice. "But you will wait for me, dearest, won't you? The years will fly by, and we shall be together again; and I shall then seek out my enemy, and kill him!"

"I have come to say 'Good-bye,'" said the clear, cold voice of the girl, drawing away from his outstretched hand. "Not for so many years, but for ever! You have spoilt one month of my life," she went on passionately, "but I mean to live the *years* for myself.

"I don't pity you—I hate you! Shame and disgrace are my wedding portion from you, and I never wish to see your face again! I have already destroyed your wedding-ring—see!" and she held out her left hand, slim and ringless. "That opal was an omen, after all! Good-bye!"

He bowed his head dully.

"You are justified in what you say, but I think you might have been kinder. I have suffered too. But you may go, and I promise to annoy you in no way. But, Margaret," he cried despairingly, "kiss me 'good-bye'; in the name

Digitized by Google

of womanhood have some mercy on me—your husband. Remember your vows—'for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer.'"

"I remember only that you are a felon, and that I am your wife," she retorted bitterly; then, with a slight gesture, she slipped past his outstretched arms into the corridor beyond, and the convict flung himself down on the plank bed and burst into the tears that saved his reason."

FIRST CHAPTER.

Two Birthdays.

IT was late autumn, and Nature had donned her livery of old-gold and tinted browns, while in the air there lingered that faint, indefinable suggestion of regret and mourning—regret for the death of Summer, and mourning for the birth of Winter.

The trees reluctantly cast their garments from them—the last remnants of their yearly trousseaux—and watched them circle lightly to the ground, where they fluttered crisply among their mates of yesterday. The sun, a crimson disc of fire, shone valiantly in a sky of grey, while a young thrush lifted up its voice in a song heralding winter.

Muriel Maitland raised her head and inhaled a long breath. She herself might have been a young wood-nymph, for from her toque of pheasants' wings to the dainty tan shoes on her feet she embraced all the many hues of autumn; and in a buttonhole of her brown coat was a leaf of golden red, while in her hand was a bunch of the same foliage. She rustled her feet through the drift of leaves lying thick on the ground, then turned reluctantly towards the Manor.

"I love to be out on a morning like this," she sighed. "These dear old acres of wood and field lying round the Manor are a source of undying pleasure to me! But I must go in now, or I shall be late."

She slowly crossed the lawn, opened the long French window, and stepped into the dining-room of Maitland Manor.

By the fireplace a boy was standing, gazing moodily into the glowing grate. He had a pale, aristocratic face, clear cut like that of a cameo, and a tangle of warm brown hair swept over his wide brow. His eyes were dark, and had blue rings round them, and his mouth had the discontented droop commonly seen in a delicate, spoilt child.

"Hallo, Woolf!" said Muriel, going towards him quickly, and drawing him to her, "what are you dreaming about?"

"I was not dreaming," the boy replied slowly. "I was remembering something that happened last night when I was in bed."

Muriel laughed. She was very fond of her old-fashioned little step-brother, and his quaint mannerisms always amused her.

"Tell me what it was."

"Someone came into my room," he said gravely; "and at first I was frightened and shut my eyes tight. Then a sound like a kiss fell on my pillow, and a voice seemed to wail, 'All these years and no sign; God grant I may keep him!' Then there was silence in the room," the boy went on gravely, "and when I opened my eyes it was just the same as usual, only violets seemed to be near me—like mother's scent, you know."

"That was a funny dream," said Muriel absently.

She remembered that she had not seen her step-mother that morning, and she took up the great cluster of autumn foliage and moved towards the door.

Outside the boudoir she paused, then tapped lightly at the door.

"May I come in?"

A low voice answered her, and Muriel was in the presence of her step-mother.

In a deep, luxurious chair, drawn up close to a roaring fire, a woman was sitting. Her face was that of a girl in her early twenties, round and dimpled; her red-gold hair was elaborately dressed, and in the deep-set eyes there was a gleam of something that haunted—apart from the beauty of them. The scarlet lips, revealing dazzling white teeth, were classic in their severe lines of beauty.

She looked up swiftly when Muriel entered.

"Dear, you bring a breath of wholesome winter into this heated room. I thought it was my boy!"

The girl laughed. "No, 'Mother o' Pearl,' it is not Woolf; only your natal comrade. See, here are some of your favourite leaves. A tiny gift, but acceptable, eh, Mother o' Pearl?"

She knelt down by the chair and stroked her step-mother's slim white hand. She had a great reverence for her father's lovely wife, and her girlish admiration was graciously acknowledged on her ladyship's part by an occasional lapse into sisterly converse.

"How young you look, 'Mother o' Pearl!'" she laughed. "I am eighteen to-day, and you are——" she stopped abruptly. There was something about Lady Maitland's manner that forbade a familiarity.

"While I am nearly twice that dreadful age!" her step-mother smiled sweetly. "Thirty-five, child; quite a comfortable, placid person."

Muriel laughed merrily. "I only hope I shall have the same aspect of comfort and placidity at your age, Mother o' Pearl! It is most becoming!" Then, with a sudden shy boldness, she said:

"You must have made a lovely widow before you married father! I can just imagine you in those black, clinging robes of mourning. Was—was *he* your first love?"

A strange expression flitted across the perfect face of Sir Trevor Maitland's wife, and the classic lips tightened suddenly into an ugly contortion. The kneeling girl did not see it, but she felt the hand she was holding tremble.

"How cold you are, Mother o' Pearl!" she said solicitously, lingering playfully on the pet name she had bestowed upon her father's wife. "Did you have a good night? Woolf had a dream about someone kissing his pillow. Perhaps you walked in your sleep!" she laughed.

Lady Maitland rose quickly, the long lace on her sleeve pulling a china vase off its pedestal, whence it fell with a loud crash into the fender. She started, and pushed her step-daughter from her with an irritable gesture.

"Dear, excuse me," she said apologetically. "But my nerves are all wrong to-day. Now you must hurry away; I have a lot to do before lunch, and your father wants to see me in the library. I have my present to receive," and with a brilliant smile she gently closed the door upon the girl.

Once alone, Lady Maitland stood thoughtfully gazing out of the window at the wooded expanse of scenery beyond. It was her habit to rarely appear among her family until the lunch gong sounded.

Domestic details did not trouble her, being in the capable hands of the housekeeper, Mrs. Janes, and Lady Maitland was too wise a woman of the world to wish to wrest the keys of authority from those who had held them before her advent. So she was consequently beloved and popular with everyone in Maitland Manor from the highest to the lowest, with the exception of—her elder step-daughter Agnes, who had held aloof from her since they had met fifteen years ago.

But it was not of Agnes that Lady Maitland was thinking. She had long since ignored her existence, after that first feverish desire to win the love of every creature with whom she came in contact.

"It is strange," she murmured; "the child is too open to have a secret motive in the background. But coming as her questions did on *this* day of all days they almost seemed like a foreshadowing of trouble. Perhaps I am overstrained and imaginative," she half laughed; "and after all what is there to fear? Absolutely nothing! The dead past has indeed buried its past only too well. And I have my boy—my Woolf—to live for; all the old links are dead."

She opened a tiny escritoire that was in one of the windows, and drew out from a secret drawer a paper, yellow and time-worn. What was written on it appeared to give her a sense of satisfaction, for she folded it up and replaced it with a smile

Digitized by Google

on her proud mouth; then went downstairs to her husband's study.

* * * * * * *

Sir Trevor Maitland was a typical hunting squire, big, bluff, hale, and hearty; twice the age of his second wife, whom he regarded with almost adoring reverence, for her beauty had the effect of making him feel that he was in the presence of something he could not understand; that into the window of his life had been placed a sheet of stained glass, and the face of the saint looking down on him was that of his wife, Pearl.

"Well," she said brightly, settling herself gracefully into a low leather chair, "what is my present this time, Trevor? Am I to guess?"

Her husband touched her soft cheek tenderly.

"Darling wife! This is the fifteenth birthday of yours we have spent together, and I swear that you don't look a day older than on the first! It's I, the old crock, that has travelled down the road; you seem to have stopped at the first milestone!"

She laughed lightly. "Ah, Trevor, children are we women's milestones! I ceased to grow old when Woolf came. Then I went backwards and became a child again. But come, show me your gift; I am impatient."

"My dear," her husband began somewhat hesitatingly, "my gift to you this year is one that will surprise and, I hope, please you as well. I have given you jewels of every description on previous birthdays; but this time I propose giving you a jewel of another sort—a human jewel, my dear, that will grow dearer to us with each year. Can't you guess?"

Lady Maitland shook her head slowly; she was puzzled as to her husband's meaning.

"I am not good at guessing, Trevor. You had better tell me."

"It is this. It is fourteen years now since that child, 'Ivy Strange,' was found outside the Manor gates, and we have grown so fond of her that I propose legally adopting her—making her one of ourselves in fact."

He looked at his wife for a response, but her face was averted and he could only see her regular profile.

"Does my gift please you, sweetheart?"

She laughed disdainfully. "Well, I can hardly say it does, Trevor. I am not particularly fond of stray children. It is one thing to show them charity, but another to knit them to us irrevocably. The girl is very happy at the lodge, they are kind to her, and she is always up at the Manor, and makes a nice companion for Muriel.

"But," she went on impressively, "it would be a wrong to the girl to take her out of her station and put her among people socially her superior. Besides, why another daughter in the family? Surely you owe something to your own girls, Agnes and Muriel, to say nothing of your elder son, the heir, and—and——" her voice softened, "*our* son, Woolf?"

Sir Trevor Maitland shook his head. Like all rather weak natures he was obstinate where he made up his mind.

"You are not correct, my darling, in supposing that by adopting a child I should be wronging any of my other children. They are all well provided for under the will of their mother—my first wife. But I hoped you would welcome a daughter!" he finished, in a disappointed tone. "This is the first time you have ever refused a gift of mine, Pearl!"

"Forgive me, Trevor!" and one of her white hands rested on his shoulder with a caressing gesture. "It was just a little sudden, this proposal of yours. Personally, I desire no other child but Woolf; he is the pivot round which my life revolves. It is hardly to be wondered at that I should not hail with such delight the advent of another claim on your heart and purse! But I will think it over, dear," she added quickly, seeing a cloud on her husband's face. "Perhaps you are right and I am wrong!"

"That's it," said the Squire. "Now I have some news for you. It concerns Agnes."

"Agnes?" queried his wife curiously. "In what way?"

"Heriot North, the son of my old friend, Jim North, has written saying he has just returned from India, where he has been some years, and hints that he hopes he will have the pleasure of seeing Agnes, whom he remembered as a child; also, that if she is free, he wishes for my consent to pay his addresses to her."

Lady Maitland smiled. Agnes was just five years her junior, and looked at least as many years her senior. She wondered what manner of man he was who wished to make Agnes Maitland his wife. But Maitland Manor could spare her very well.

"That will be very nice—for Agnes," she said drily. "Have you seen her, or will you let the lover acquaint her with his intentions?"

Sir Trevor hesitated. "Well, my darling, I thought that you, a woman, would understand better how to put that sort of thing than myself. You see, I might make a mess of it, while you have so much tact."

Pearl Maitland laughed. "Very well, flatterer, I will go now, and you may trust me to find out in what direction Agnes' sentiments lie. When do you expect this Mr. North?"

"To dinner to-night," replied her husband. "I hope you will succeed, darling."

Outside the library door Lady Maitland stopped, and gripped the banister with one white hand. Her cream and pink skin had faded strangely, and her lips trembled.

"It shall not be!" she muttered. "I will see no beggar brat sharing my son's fortune. I wish I had insisted on the girl going to the workhouse when she was first found! Woolf has been cheated of becoming the heir because of his step-brother, but he shall not also be cheated of his money! I must get the girl out of the way; but how?"

SECOND CHAPTER.

A Link with the Past.

Agnes Maitland looked at herself in the glass. She was dressing, not only for dinner but for life—for the long-deferred right to take her place among the women that are helpmeets and mothers of men. She was just thirty; an age when an unmarried woman is neither flesh, fowl, nor good red herring! And now Heriot North, the man she had worshipped as a child, desired to make her his wife.

She could hardly believe it at first, when her cold, beautiful stepmother had suggested that she should wear the prettiest robe she had, and arrange her pale, sandy hair in the style most becoming, for at dinner that night she was the object of attraction to Mr. North! So she had chosen a blue silk dress, and loosened the scanty knot of hair at her neck, while the strands of untidy fringe had been curled!

She could not change the narrow, grey eyes, with their white lashes, nor reduce the flaming scarlet of her neck and arms to the satin creaminess of her stepmother's, but in a subdued light she would easily pass for five-and-twenty, and gratified vanity had softened the expression of her face.

"That will do, Mason," she said to the patient maid, who was adding little touches to her dress, "you can go."

The woman lingered. She had recently arrived at Maitland Manor, and was a sour-visaged but excellent menial.

"Excuse me, miss. May I make so bold as to ask you something?"

"Well," said Miss Maitland, "what is it, Mason?"

"Only this, miss," continued the monotonous voice. "In the box-room this morning, when I was emptying those old travelling trunks of the rubbish in them, I found something that I thought I ought to ask you about."

Sir Trevor Maitland's elder daughter raised her pale red brows and surveyed the expressionless face of her maid in the mirror. But she failed to read it.

"What was it?" she said shortly. "A book?"

"No, miss; only a pair of baby's socks and a little flannel vest," the woman answered. "I was throwing away a bundle of paper and they fell out."

Digitized by Google

"It is certainly odd, but nothing out of the way, Mason. There have been many nurses at Maitland Manor since those boxes were stored."

The woman shook her head.

"Excuse me, miss; those socks and vest were not of the kind worn by Master Woolf; they were common like."

Agnes shrugged her shoulders; the woman's persistence amused her.

"I am not interested in the subject, Mason; you had better throw them away, or give them to some child."

The maid tightened her lips. But she obeyed her orders sullenly, and finished her duties before leaving the room.

When the door had closed on her, she drew from her pocket something small and flimsy, and looked at it with a grim smile.

"She may not be interested," she muttered, with a jerk of her head in the direction of the room, "but I am, and I am not going to drop it. I mean to find out who it is that marked this vest with a 'G' and left it in her ladyship's box."

When Agnes went downstairs the drawing-room was empty save for Lady Maitland, and a pang of sharp envy shot through the girl as she saw the radiant, queen-like beauty of her step-mother. She was clad in white tulle, while in her shining hair and corsage there nestled lilies of the valley.

"She might be a bride of seventeen!" Agnes thought spitefully, her thin mouth growing hard; but she concealed her thoughts under a burst of insipid girlishness.

"Are none of the others down yet?" she said, seating herself on a couch facing a long mirror in which she could see who entered the room without being seen herself.

Lady Maitland smiled. She knew what was passing in her step-daughter's mind. "Muriel has been down, but went to see Woolf in the schoolroom, and as for Jack——" She shrugged her shoulders. "I have seen nothing of him all day. Probably you know more than I do."

Agnes sneered. "You mean Ivy Strange does! I meant to tell you to-day that I think someone ought to speak to father. His foundling will cost him more than he reckons one day!"

"My dear Agnes," laughed Lady Maitland, teasingly, "I never interfere unless personally annoyed. And I am not sure that the pretty waif your father has brought up with Muriel would not make a very charming Lady John Maitland in the future!"

Agnes started to her feet. "It seems to me," she said, bitterly, "that the male portion of the family has developed a passion for dragging 'nobodies' into it!"

A faint pink stained the pale face of her father's second wife, and the delicate nostrils dilated with some inner emotion. But Lady Maitland smiled sweetly upon her step-daughter.

"Perhaps you are right, Agnes, though," she added calmly, "the female portion of the family has been unfortunate in securing 'nobody' to drag them out of it."

At that moment the door opened, and Sir Trevor came in, accompanied by a tall, dark man with an eager, strenuous face, and a well-shaped, nervous mouth.

"Here is Agnes with my wife," Sir Trevor said heartily, waving his hand vaguely in the direction of the two women.

"My dearest," he turned to his wife, "this is Heriot North; my wife."

But the visitor had already stepped up to Lady Maitland, and taken her hand in his.

Agnes

"Agnes!" he exclaimed, "is *this* you? I never fancied you would grow up *such* a woman!"

A low laugh of amusement came from the lips of Sir Trevor's wife.

"I am sorry my white frock caused you to think I was your old friend, Mr. North. *This* is Agnes; *I* am Lady Maitland."

For an instant the man was at a loss to grasp the full meaning of the error he had made; then, quickly pulling himself together, he turned with a laugh of embarrassment to Sir Trevor and Agnes. The baronet was frowning with importance, but the face of his daughter had gone haggard and pinched.

"I always laughed when doctors warned me not to try my sight," Heriot North said easily, taking Agnes' cold, clammy hand in his, and gazing with a kindly glance into her old-young face; "but after my ridiculous mistake in not recognising you, Agnes, I shall have to take to glasses at once."

She laughed harshly. The newly-aroused feelings of tender womanhood, that had lain dormant in her until that day, died suddenly of strangled hope, and from that deathbed of hope there rose up a great, bitter hatred for her step-mother; for in the eyes of Heriot North, when he looked at Lady Maitland, she had read the words that were meant for herself. Her father's wife had robbed her of her birthright!

At dinner, where Heriot renewed his friendship with Muriel and Jack Maitland—the latter tall and fair, with laughing blue eyes and crisp, curling hair, and an infectious laugh—the conversation chanced to touch the profession of the guest.

"How do you like being on an Indian paper?" said Sir Trevor. "Harder work than an English one?"

Heriot North laughed. "Not so hard, but more interesting!" he said. "But it is eighteen years since I worked for an English paper, and then I was just beginning."

"What was it?" said Jack Maitland. "'Leaders' or 'turn overs'?"

"Nothing so classy," laughed the other. "I was a police court reporter, if you know what that means."

"You must have seen a great deal of the 'seamy side'?" Lady Maitland smiled.

"Yes, I did," he replied gravely, turning to her with a sudden flash in his sombre eyes. "I shall never forget reporting a case of forgery once."

Sir Trevor's beautiful wife smiled again. She had a rare smile of peculiar sweetness, that flickered in her eyes first, and gradually curved her haughty mouth, and sent dimples to dwell in her rounded cheeks.

"Was it very interesting?"

"Very! And the circumstances were peculiar too. The prisoner's friend prosecuted him. They had been collaborators together in a novel, so far as I can remember; friends since boyhood. The prisoner vowed he was innocent, and that his friend had asked him to present the cheque at his bank, as he had a bet with another man about it not being possible. Of course the defence was fearfully weak, and he got fifteen years' penal servitude."

Lady Maitland fastened a bracelet that had slipped from its catch. She was still smiling, but her delicate nostrils quivered slightly and the colour in her cheeks was a trifle paler.

"Was he a married man?" asked Agnes.

"Yes; on his honeymoon!" replied North, slowly. "I felt awfully sorry for the chap myself. I saw his wife on the day he was sentenced. She was coming out of the cell; been to say 'Good-bye,' to him, I suppose."

"What was she like?" asked Lady Maitland, slowly raising her head and looking into his eyes.

He hesitated. "It's eighteen years ago," he laughed, "rather difficult to remember. But one thing I never forgot, and that was the wonderful colour of her hair—a mixture of copper and brown; but by this time it is probably grey, or the poor soul is dead."

Lady Maitland uttered a stifled cry that turned all eyes on her.

"The—heat," she faltered; then suddenly Heriot North sprang to his feet in time to catch her in his arms.

Sir Trevor Maitland's wife had fainted.

THIRD CHAPTER.

The Child of Chance.

"If you love me, then our marriage is a foregone conclusion, and you must reconcile yourself to the idea of one day being 'Mrs. Jack Maitland.'"

The girl so addressed, with all a lover's dear authority, was

Digitized by Google

Sir Trevor Maitland's *protégée*, Ivy Strange, who, fourteen years ago, was found half buried under the ivy of the lodge walls, and the man who wooed her so confidently was Jack Maitland, the son and heir of that benevolent gentleman.

They had met in the wood, their usual place of rendezvous, and the old, old tale, so new and thrilling when heard the first time, had been poured into the delicate, shell-like ears of the girl who, but seventeen years of age, and a waif, held herself with as much grace and dignity as did the proud, haughty lady of the Manor herself.

She smiled wistfully into the ardent face of the man she loved, and for whom she felt her love ought not to be; but to know that he had told her that he wanted her to one day become his wife was a joy fraught with pain.

"Yes," she said gently, "I do love you. I seem to have loved you since I was a baby under the ivy long ago, and was roused from my strange resting-place by being picked up in your arms and taken up to the Manor."

"Then that proves that your love is my right," he said eagerly, trying to gaze into the violet eyes under their sweeping lashes, "for had I not been beating up the leaves with a stick you might never have been found, darling! I was even your god-father," he laughed, "for it was I who christened you 'Ivy Strange,' and thought it such a good name! And now," he continued tenderly, "like that 'ivy' you have twined yourself round my heart, and I cannot live without you! You have admitted your love for me; then why should you refuse mine?"

"Because," she said, turning tear-dimmed eyes upon him, "I must remember that there is a gaping chasm between us that can never be bridged over. You are the son and heir of Sir Trevor. I am the child of chance, brought up by the charity of your father! How can I repay him by such ingratitude as permitting his son to marry me!"

"But, darling," continued her lover passionately, "why do you make a difficulty of that? Anyone has only to look at you to see that you are a lady from the crown of your chestnut head to the soles of your tiny feet. And were your birth to be discovered, I know it would be unimpeachable. But I want you as you are, sweetheart—my little 'Ivy Strange'!"

"Ah," the girl breathed sadly, "that's it. I have no name but the dear one you bestowed upon me as a waif! No, Jack, however much it breaks my heart to say it, I must refuse to marry you until I know who I really am, and that seems impossible to find out after all these years!"

He took her hands and drew her towards him. He was only twenty-five, and she was his first love, whom he had always loved, and intended one day, when she was older, to win for his wife.

"Will you promise," he said slowly, "that no other man shall ever have your love, and that the only obstacle to becoming my wife is the uncertainty of your birth?"

She lifted up her eyes, and in their true, clear depths he knew there could be no double dealing. She was incapable of deceit, and coquetry was a word she but vaguely knew of.

"I promise," she said, a delicate colour staining her fair skin, "that I shall only love *you* all my life, and no one else, and that the mystery of my birth is the only barrier that prevents my becoming your—wife."

Slowly he bent his head, and their lips met in a lovers' kiss.

"That is a barrier that shall not exist much longer," he said decidedly, when she had disengaged herself somewhat shyly from his arms. "Let me see, you were a child of about three when I found you, darling. It ought not to be difficult to trace."

The girl clutched her lover's arm with eager fingers. "Oh, Jack, find me my mother! I want her! To feel a mother's protecting arms round me when in pain or trouble. Sometimes I envy Woolf; he is the apple of Lady Maitland's eye, and when I see them together it makes me want my own—my *very own* mother!"

Jack Maitland's honest blue eyes grew misty, but he put a protecting arm round the trembling girl, and said cheerfully,

"If she is alive, my darling, I promise to find her for you. I shall leave no stone unturned to win my wife!"[1]

"Ah!" she cried earnestly, "she is alive; I feel sure something would tell me if she were not. I would understand in some mysterious way were she dead to me!"

"Darling, I will find her, dead or alive. Then she will put your white hand in mine and say, 'Jack Maitland, take your wife!'"

"But first," she whispered gently, "you will say, 'Mother, take your child!'" Then, with a sudden, shy gesture, she raised her face to his.

"Kiss me, Jack, and when you find *her* tell her I have all the love of seventeen years saved up for her!"

"And what about me?" he said half jealously.

She blushed. "All the love of my life is yours from now and for ever! Now I must go back," she said, after a pause, in which they had gazed into each other's eyes; "come with me as far as the Manor gates."

As the lovers strolled through the wood carpeted by the swirling autumnal leaves, and made dark by the gaunt branches of the great trees as they swayed towards each other, stretching out long arms to the wind-driven sky, a man stealthily crept from behind a thicket and gazed after them.

He was a thick-set, coarse-looking creature, with a receding brow, from which the dark stubble of hair grew in irregular tufts; a sallow, dirty skin, with a blue haze round the bull-dog jaw, and a pair of cunning black eyes that squinted viciously did not enhance his appearance, while round his neck was twisted a dark red handkerchief, the rest of his attire being hidden by a long coat, stained and threadbare.

"So that is the young son up at the Manor!" he muttered, "and 'e spends 'is time spooning with a girl that calls 'erself a charity kid! I thought I 'ad the list of everyone at the Manor. That cove might be dangerous. If I 'ad found the girl alone I might 'ave got some coin or joolry to go on with. Just my luck!" he yawned, "if I don't touch lucky to-night I shall get on another crib."[2]

FOURTH CHAPTER.

At Bay!

It was twilight, that brief half hour between the lights when the pendulum of Time seems to stand still, and Life assumes the tender half tints of retrospection.

In the drawing-room of Maitland Manor the great log fire crackled and blazed, throwing deep shadows into the corners and touching with playful flickers the hidden gold in the hair of Lady Maitland and her son Woolf. She was looking exquisitely fragile in a soft clinging tea-gown, and as her white fingers caressed the head of the boy at her knee, a light shone in her eyes that was never there save when Woolf was near.

The room was full of that desultory chatter of people who meet frequently, and take no pains to entertain.

Heriot North had just arrived, and after greeting the various members of the family he sat down by Lady Maitland.

"Do you intend making a long stay at Melton, Mr. North?" she said. "I am afraid you will find it very hum-drum after——"

"After what?" he queried, dwelling on the beauty of her low brow and delicately-chiselled face that the firelight lent a strange pallor to. "The boredom and dreariness of an Indian station? No," he smiled, "I don't fancy that I shall miss India—now."

She smiled. "But when you return you will not go alone?"

He looked at her searchingly. Was this peerless woman laughing at him; or did she innocently stab him?

"I shall never marry," he said abruptly. "I don't think the Fates intend me to." Then he went on quickly. "You look pale, Lady Maitland; have you quite recovered from your unfortunate faint of last night?"[2]

Digitized by Google

She shivered, then laughed lightly. "Oh, yes, thanks. I can't stand the heat, and the room suddenly felt very hot."

"But you have never fainted before, mummie!" broke in the clear voice of the boy leaning against her knee. Lady Maitland's hand touched the curls that lay loosely on the white brow of her son.

"Ah, Woolf!" she laughed. "I am getting an old woman now!" Then she broke off suddenly, and said, "I think Agnes would like a chat with you, Mr. North, so go and pick up the threads of the past."

"You send me away?" he asked in a low voice.

Lady Maitland looked at him for a moment. She was thinking deeply, swiftly. This man *must* be her friend, and to make him appreciate her patronage, she could do nothing better than let him compare her with the elder daughter of Sir Trevor. So she raised her pencilled brows slightly, and said; "I think you had better go, Mr. North."

As he was rising to do her bidding Muriel came up to them. "Oh, Mother o' Pearl," she said eagerly; "what do you think? Three robberies have taken place this last week at different houses in the neighbourhood, so I warn you to be careful of your jewel-case! Ivy told me that one of the gamekeepers in the spinney saw a man lurking about this afternoon!"

Lady Maitland smiled. "And you imagine that on the strength of that appearance, Muriel, the Manor will be broken into at dead of night?"

"Oh, Mummie!" breathed Woolf, with dilated eyes, and flushed cheeks, "I hope they will come into my room; I have never seen a burglar!"

"Why do you girls call Lady Maitland 'Mother o' Pearl'?" said Heriot North to Agnes, as he joined her in the window-seat a few moments later.

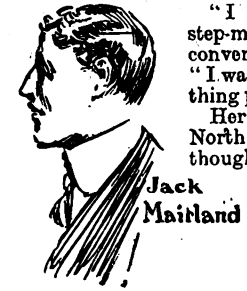
She looked at him with a bitter smile. "I think that is a fancy of Muriel's," she said slowly; "my step-mother's name is 'Pearl,' and Muriel invented that compromise—*I* call her 'Lady Maitland'!"

"She must have been a widow very young," he murmured thoughtfully.

"I know nothing about my step-mother's history," she replied shortly; "except that she was a Mrs. Vernon when my father married her."

Something in her voice warned Heriot North that she resented the introduction of Lady Maitland's name into the conversation, and remembering the object with which he had visited Maitland Manor the night before, he shuddered, for this thin, acid woman with the bitter eyes was not the fair, pretty child he had left behind him some years ago! Between her face and his another intervened; a perfect oval, with haughty, violet eyes, and a patrician mouth that a swift smile would suddenly change from coldness into warmth—the face of Sir Trevor Maitland's wife!

Agnes touched him sharply on the arm. "I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I am afraid I am hardly accustomed to the society of women now, after life in an Indian station."



"I only mentioned the fact that my step-mother seemed interested in your conversation last night," she said, slowly. "I was wondering whether there was anything particular that appealed to her!"

Her tone was significant, but Heriot North was too wrapped up in his own thoughts to notice anything out of the way.

"I do not flatter myself that Lady Maitland took more than ordinary notice of my conversation," he replied carelessly. Then, as Agnes was about to speak, interruption came in the shape of a servant with lights, and a note which he handed his mistress.

She looked at it curiously. It was in a strange hand, and bore the London postmark. She wondered from whom it came. She opened it quietly. The message was brief—of one sentence, but it was one that sent the red blood from her ladyship's lips, and a startled light into her eyes.

Lady Maitland went upstairs to dress for dinner.

The letter she had received was crushed into a ball in her hand, and when she reached her room she sent the maid away; she would dress herself.

With a sigh of relief she sank down on a chair. Her limbs were trembling, and she wanted to think—to think about the crumpled letter in her hand, the message of death that to her was life; for the last link was indeed buried in the grave—the grave of a man—"V. G. died a year after his release." That was all! She spread the letter out and pressed it to her lips passionately. Dead! That meant honour for her son Woolf, and safety for herself!

The faithful maid who had been true to her all these eighteen years, and followed her fortunes from afar, had done her the greatest of all acts in this cautious message. She hid it among her papers quickly. It was not safe to keep it about her.

Then after a while she rose and went into her dressing-room. The light had been switched on by her maid, and her dinner dress laid out; she would not be long getting into it.

Suddenly she stopped with a gasp of horror.

Standing in front of her dressing-table, that was littered with silver and jewels, was a man; he was not taking a single thing, but gazing intently into an open locket with eager eyes. She only noticed that he wore a dirty red handkerchief round his neck, and that his hair grew in ugly tufts on his brow.

"Who are you?" she said sharply. "What are you doing here?"

The man faced her with a sudden twist and an ugly scowl in his eyes that changed to a look of wonder as he saw the woman in her white, trailing skirts.

His hand sought his pocket swiftly, and gripped a long steel rod. Then as the beauty of the woman before him sank into his mind, he slowly glanced again at the open locket in his hand.

"If you don't speak I shall rouse the house," she said sharply, her hand going out to the bell-rope.

"Touch that bell, and you'll be more sorry than I shall!" said the man slowly, still gazing at her with an intent look of wonder.

"What do you mean?" she replied haughtily, dropping her hand at the sight of the thing the rogue held out menacingly; "I am Lady Maitland, and Sir Trevor Maitland is the Chief Constable of Melton. If you don't explain your presence in my room I shall immediately ring for help."

A strange smile flickered across the evil face of the intruder. He slowly returned to his pocket the "jemmy" in his hand, then said in an insolent tone:

"Now you 'ave introduced yourself, my lady, let me do the same. I am Mike Holland, ex-convict, and fellow-worker on the bog-land of Dartmoor with the *gentleman* in this 'ere locket along with yourself. 'E left before me, on licence, and we all knew that 'is lovely missis would 'ave nothing to do with 'im when 'e got 'is lagging, but I didn't know as I was to meet the lady under *another* name!" And an ugly leer curled his lips.

"Now will your *ladyship* ring and give me in charge?"

Lady Maitland put out one delicate hand and grasped the back of a chair with unconscious strength.

What was the creature saying? What hideous tale was he telling her about Dartmoor and—convicts! Was she mad—or was the man before her an escaped lunatic? Her eyes fell on the open locket in his hand, one of hammered gold, she had thought long since lost. Then she understood that it was no dream, and that the "thing" before her held a secret she had imagined buried in oblivion.

She drew a deep breath; she realised that she might mak

Digitized by Google

one rash move, and so precipitate fate. She looked at the man standing with insolent assurance to hear her speak. The expression on his face lent her the courage of desperation.

She laughed softly. "It is unfortunate for you, my good man, that your tale should so barely miss the target of truth! That locket is the property of a dear friend who died some years ago. I am forced to make this explanation," she said haughtily, "in case you should attempt to resume the topic. I will give you the chance of getting away quietly at once, or I will keep my word and send for my servants and the police!"

For a moment her calm scorn floored the ex-convict, and he would have obeyed her had not a sudden light sprung into her ladyship's eyes as he was about to put the locket on the table.

"Ah-ha! my lady!" he sneered, "you are not quite smart enough; you can't bluff me with your fairy tales. This picture here is the very spit of yourself, colour and everything. And you are going to pay me for 'oldin' my tongue, or Sir Trevor Maitland will know that his wife is——"

"You madman! Be silent! How dare you—how *dare* you threaten me in that manner!" hissed the beautiful wife of Sir Trevor Maitland, whose lovely eyes had grown haggard and fierce.

"All right, my lady," said the man coolly; "give me in charge, and I fancy I shall see you in the dock as well. Thieving is not so bad a trade as—bigamy!" he whispered. "I am an old gaol-bird—quod is nothing to me—but your ladyship would find it difficult to swallow."

She put out her hand to the bell. The ex-convict's eyes were fixed upon her white, drawn face with a malicious grin, yet admiring her pluck in defying him.

Suddenly, above the beating of the woman's heart, a voice rang, a laughing, joyous note—the voice of her son Woolf, and her arm dropped by her side.

On his innocent head would the greater shame fall! On *his* name would the stain rest! She could not combat this horror, because of the boy outside.

The convict watched the struggle between pride and the mother love fighting for the victory, and he chuckled grimly, for he knew he had won the battle.

"Mother!" cried the boy, "the burglar has been seen in our grounds! They are searching for him now!"

"Well!" said the man in a low voice, the moisture standing in beads on his brow, "Choose, your ladyship, between silence—and the greater charge!"

She turned savagely on him, a cornered fury, her motherhood up in arms for the boy outside.

"Hide in there!" she breathed, hoarsely, pointing to a deep oak wardrobe; "I accept—silence!"

Noiselessly the man obeyed her, and the heavy swing door of the wide, old-fashioned wardrobe closed on the retreating figure as the boy Woolf Maitland ran into the room.

Lady Maitland caught him to her with a laugh that might have been a shriek, so shrill was the note.

"Darling!" she said, pressing her lips to his brow, and gazing over the tangled curls at the wardrobe, "you should not rush into my room like this. I ought to be very angry!"

The boy laughed. "But you are not, mummie, are you? Besides, the burglar is being searched for—I came to tell you." The woman shivered.

"But not in my room, I hope, Woolf," she smiled. "Probably the wretched creature had disappeared long before the search began. But come, darling, we must be going down, the dinner-gong will sound soon."

He nestled closer to her. "How scrumptious you look, mummie, dear! I am so glad that I am your little boy, and no one else's!"

Her arm tightened round him. "Yes, darling, you are mine—my very own, and no one can ever take you from me!" she exclaimed passionately, again sending a glance of mingled hate and fear over the boy's head.

With linked arms Lady Maitland and her son strolled to the door, then she paused suddenly and said—

"Wait here, sweetheart! I have forgotten something!"

She swept back into the room, and glided up to the heavy oak wardrobe, then, with a quick gesture, she raised her hand and silently turned the key in the lock, a strange smile of triumph quivering across her face.

"That will do it!" she murmured, and a few moments later Lady Maitland and her son went down the wide staircase, laughing and chatting as only those who understand and love can laugh.

* * *

Three hours later Lady Maitland stood alone in her dressing-room. She had again dismissed her maid, and, though the night was not cold, she shivered, and her beautiful face looked white and drawn. Her violet eyes, burning and brilliant, were fixed upon the wardrobe as though fascinated by its grim, dark appearance.

She dragged herself up to it with trembling limbs. What was behind that silent door, what "thing" would be revealed?

Suddenly she turned and secured herself against intrusion, then slowly, and with cold fingers, she drew from her pocket the key she had slipped into it three hours before.

A cold moisture broke out upon her brow, and she bit her exquisite lips in an agony of revulsion, as the key turned noiselessly in the lock of the wardrobe.

What would she see? What horror must she face?

With one look of terror, Lady Maitland flung open the door, and then caught her breath with a sudden gasp.

The wardrobe was empty!

(Another long instalment next week.)

Mrs. Brown: "How could you define 'tact'?" Mrs. Jones: "I should say tact is the ability to make your husband believe that he is having his own way."

Tom: "Women are taking away men's occupations. Why, they're even manufacturing furniture." Tim: "Yes, that's so. My wife makes a bed every morning."

He: "Yes, darling, and it shall be the purpose of my life to surround you with every comfort and to anticipate and gratify your every wish." She: "How good of you, Harry? And all on 28s. a week, too!"

"Doctor," said the grateful patient, seizing the physician's hand, "I shall never forget that to you I owe my life." "You exaggerate," returned the doctor mildly; "you owe me only for fifteen visits. That is the point which I hope you will not fail to remember."

Some time ago a cabby was accosted by a constable while driving through the City. "Didn't you see me put my hand up?" said the constable. "Well, I thought it became dark all at once, but I had as much as I could do to keep my horse from shying at yer feet!" was the cabby's smart retort.

"Take that mantle," said the shopman to his assistant, "and put it in the window with a ticket announcing that its price will be three guineas for this week only." "Supposing we don't sell it, shall I change the price next week?" "Certainly. We never deceive the public. Next week its price will be £3 15s."

£5 a Week for Life!

THE CLOSING DATE

of the Competition, in which the above huge prize is offered, is announced in the current number of

PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

Those who wish to enter it now will find how they can do so in this week's *Pearson's Weekly*.

Digitized by Google

A Scientific Wooing.

Telling of the Courtship of a Bashful Lover.

"IT comes to this," said Allen Locke, moodily. "I am in love with her, but she probably does not suspect it in the least. In fact, I feel positive that she doesn't! If I tried to—to—— Oh, well, woo her, to put it plainly!—she would probably laugh. So what am I to do?"

He had imagined himself alone, but a movement behind him arrested his attention, and made him turn with a guilty blush. He had unconsciously spoken aloud, and his innermost thoughts were thus confided to the new-comer.

He felt somewhat relieved to find that it was his sister who had entered, but he was not wholly at ease; Mary was a mischief-loving young woman, and she had often poked fun at him in a sisterly way on other subjects.

"So that's how the wind blows, Allen!" she cried. There was a suspicious twinkle in her eyes, but she bent over him and kissed him with an amount of warmth that surprised him. "I fancied that there was something wrong with you, as you were more than ordinarily quiet. I make a guess at her identity—Freda Rollinson!"

"Don't!" implored Allen. "Don't make fun of me!"

"You silly boy, I haven't the least intention!" declared Mary truthfully. "I am so happy myself that I want to see you happy. I came on purpose to tell you, Allen! I am engaged to Mr. Hutton!"

She blushed a rosy red at this confession, and proceeded hurriedly, without giving Allen time to offer his congratulations. "Now I want to help you! What can I do?"

Brother and sister were diametrically opposite in temperament. Allen was quiet and studious; like most men who take to reading, he was fond of solitude, shunning society, and consequently becoming awkward and bashful.

He was a thoroughly good-hearted fellow, capable of making a woman supremely happy, but scarcely likely to attract anyone of the fair sex.

Mary was fond of society, full of fun, and the life of any party of which she was a member; just as good-natured as her brother of whom she was very fond, and anxious to help all who needed assistance.

"Well, since you are in the same boat, only better off," said Allen slowly, with just the shadow of a smile on his lips, "I may as well confide in you. I am in love with Freda Rollinson, but I don't suppose she has given a thought to such a recluse as I. She has only seen me two or three times, when you dragged me out of my shell, Mary, to attend some of your parties!"

"Then if you want her, you must make her fall in love with you!" said Mary decisively. "We will call that point settled. I expect that is what Robert thought when he—when it occurred to him that he was fond of me."

"Y-e-s!" replied Allen doubtfully. "But Freda will not help me!"

"Which is a nice brotherly way of saying that I did some of the wooing with Robert," interjected Mary quickly. "And what if I did?" she added, with a pretty pout. "If a girl knows that a man is in love with her, and she is in love with him, why shouldn't she show it in a delicate sort of way? But that is not the subject in hand."

"No," laughed Allen. "So we will leave it, after I have said that I am not surprised at anyone falling in love with you, and we will get to my own affair. Mary, I accept your help. How shall we proceed?"

"Can you not strike a brilliant idea with all your learning? What are you studying now?"

"It is a book on telepathy. You know"—as Mary looked puzzled—"it is like this: You are a long way from me, and yet I know your feelings on certain subjects. I'll just explain by giving you an instance of telepathic communication that was published some time ago and is incorporated in this book.

"A man wanted to know the opinions of a certain prominent lady on an idea for improving the lot of people in small villages; this idea had been published, so the philanthropic lady had no doubt formed an opinion on it.

"He declared that he was able to sit down and write a summary of what she thought about it, without having seen her or communicated with her by speech or writing. In some mysterious manner her thoughts were conveyed to him by telepathic communication."

Mary's eyes twinkled.

"I can usually tell when Robert wishes to kiss me," she remarked with assumed demureness, "but I admit that the distance between us at those times is not great! But, joking apart," she continued eagerly, "that gives me an idea! You must make love by telepathic communication!"

"W-h-a-t?" gasped Allen slowly. "I don't understand!"

"Freda has been reading about thought-reading. This seems to me to be something like it. I'll set the affair in motion by telling her that you can divine the opinions of some people, and that I think her temperament is the sort you can do something of the kind with. See?

"She will be just anxious to test it; you will be placed in communication with her, and if you cannot work things so that she falls in love with you, quite legitimately, then you are not worthy to be a brother of mine!"

"No trickery! I must win her honestly?" declared Allen.

"Listen to me!" responded Mary decisively.

They spent some minutes in earnest conversation, and at its conclusion Allen was radiant.

The first move in the little comedy was made by Mary Young informing Freda Rollinson, with admirably assumed enthusiasm, that she had discovered that her brother could divine the ideas of certain other people.

"It's most wonderful!" she cried. "I mean the science of telegraphy—no, that isn't it! Telepathy, that's it! Of course, Allen is a mere novice, but he succeeds sometimes. I have taken the liberty of asking him to try with you. You know my brother? He is one of the best of fellows! I'm sorry for you, Freda, because you haven't a brother!"

"Yet you seem to have preferred someone else's brother to your own!" observed Freda, with quiet humour.

"Don't be personal!" exclaimed Mary, laughing. "I just teased him a little by telling him that he was too shy, too bashful, to write down his divination of a lady's opinions; and—just to have a game with him, you know—I insisted that he should write down your feelings on the subject of love! Poor boy! It was rather too bad of me! But he did it, and I've brought it here for you to see!"

Mary was discreetly ambiguous in the last remark, and

Digitized by Google

Freda understood the meaning to be that Allen was not aware that his words were to be shown to Miss Rollinson.

The latter, as watchful Mary noticed, was not altogether pleased at the experiment, but Allen's sister counted on being able to excite enough interest in Freda in order to induce her to become better acquainted with Allen.

The divination was short; it ran—

"*The lady has not bestowed her affection on anyone yet; she has not met the man to whom her heart is attracted. Her feelings on this subject may be summed up thus: She will be exceedingly careful, almost calculatingly so, and will bestow her affections only when she has proved the man to be absolutely worthy.*"

If Freda had thought rather more deeply over the wording of this "divination," she would have seen that there was little more than guesswork in it.

Mary was still keenly observing her friend. She was almost certain that Freda had formed no attachment yet, but she was not quite sure of it, and she was a trifle anxious. Freda's face showed her that the guess was correct. Mary took a bold step; without waiting for a reply, she cried:

"It is true? I am so glad! It shows that there is something in this telegrammy—oh, dear! I can't remember the name of it! You must let my brother make another test!"

Freda was somewhat bewildered by the rapidity of Mary's moves; at first she had seen the difficulty of admitting to a man that her feelings had been correctly stated, but she found herself swept along as it were by Mary's rushing disposition, and before she knew it Mary had arranged the whole thing, and she was pledged to receive other "telepathic" communications.

"I have scored this time!" murmured Mary Young, as she made her way home. "That will set her thinking about Allen; she will be expecting other telees—I think that's a good word for them!—and if a woman expects to meet or hear from a man, why she is beginning to fall in love with him!

"Allen can go in and win now, for he's a really good old fellow, and Freda is sure to like him. He ought to make me a handsome wedding present!"

However, to her dismay, Allen would not face Miss Rollinson.

"It is too soon!" he expostulated weakly. "I have nothing to warrant the supposition that she would regard me favourably. I suppose it is very weak of me, but I'm so dreadfully nervous and sensitive that I can't risk it till I feel more sure that she likes me!"

It was therefore necessary that the so-called telepathic experiments should be continued; Allen scarcely approved the further prosecution of the plan, which appeared rather like deceit, but it was his only chance, and he plunged recklessly into it.

"I am dreadfully sorry, Freda," said Miss Young, a week later, "but my brother has not written another message yet. He says that there has been a change in your feelings on one particular subject, but he is diffident about writing it. The tiresome man wouldn't even tell me exactly what he had learnt. Shall I tell him that you are interested and would like to test the accuracy of this strange, unconscious communication?"

Now, Freda was but mortal, and any mortal would be curious in such circumstances. Mary made the thing so natural in appearance that Freda lost the sentiment that it was rather uncommon to enter into such an experiment as this.

She laughed, with the least trace of confusion, and said that she had no desire to press Mr. Young to do it if he did not wish to. So Mary went home with a light heart, and on the next day, she took with her the following divination:

"*Part of the previous statement, if penned to-day, would be incorrect, as circumstances have wrought a slight change. There is interest, growing interest, in someone.*"

"That is all I could get him to write!" cried Mary. "Is it not tantalising—for me, for *you* know who this someone is! He ought to have said the name; then it would have been more genuine. As it is, I don't believe—— Why, Freda, you're blushing! Then it *is* true!"

"You must not tell him!" cried Freda quickly.

"I won't breathe a word! Who is it? Oh, if you want to keep it secret, I won't thwart your desires! Then all I can do now is to tell Allen to send you a statement once now and again. Give it to me? All right, but I ought to be let into the secret!"

Mary's remarks on reaching home were to the point.

"I must not tell you whether your last guess is correct or not, Allen, but I am convinced of the success of my plan! I told you that it would excite interest, make her think of you more and more, get curious, imagine that one who could tell what her views and sentiments were must be the man intended for her—her affinity. Your plan now is to write two or three more messages and then see her!"

Love-making by telepathy was proving a grand success. Mary decided to take no more active part in future operations than to deliver the messages and notice the effect.

Freda began to take great interest in Allen Young, quite unconsciously at first, but afterwards she recognised the true state of her feelings and did not attempt to illude herself. Some mysterious power seemed to be drawing them together.

She received two more messages; they were to the effect that her feelings were becoming more intense and that she wished for the society of the someone. She avowed the truth of this to herself, and she wondered if the man who penned these slips experienced any desire to be in her society.

If there were anything in the science, or theory, he ought to be attracted to her, even unconsciously. Then a great dread seized her—could he by any chance learn that she loved him? No; it was not exactly love, but—— Then she refused to pursue the thought farther.

The day following the last message she saw Allen unexpectedly. He had perceived that the time had come for something more definite than telepathy, and his great love had at length enabled him to master his timidity. Candidly, he was a little ashamed of it!

He took the opportunity of escorting his sister in the stead of Robert Hutton, who had been called away suddenly. There he saw Freda Rollinson, to whom he needed no formal introduction, that formality having been performed before the commencement of the mysterious semi-correspondence.

"I am afraid I have been very unconventional, Miss Rollinson," he said politely and frankly. "I hope I have not offended you by——"

"Not at all, Mr. Young," she replied quickly. "I was much interested."

They were close to a quiet corner. Mary was chatting in an animated manner with some friends. Allen drew Miss Rollinson farther into the nook and begged her to be seated.

"I am glad that I have been able to enlist your interest in an occult science, Miss Rollinson," he said earnestly, "and once more I must ask you to pardon my presumption. I take the liberty of saying that the experiment afforded me great pleasure."

"It seems very wonderful," responded Freda affably. "I find it rather difficult to believe."

"I do not," rejoined Allen. "It does not appear to me to be anything marvellous that there should be some mystic sentiment affecting two persons, and even if those two persons are strangers and have the same object in view, even then, I say, the thought of one may act upon the other. But, in the present instance, I prefer to think that the connecting wave or sentiment was something deeper than a mere thought on the same subject."

Freda shot a swift glance at him from the corner of her eye.

"I do not think that there could be any deeper sentiment, such as you mention, in the present case. We were not strangers, it is true, but we were next to strangers. Then I should hardly call that a fair specimen of telepathy where a common sentiment—it must be affection, in fact—attracts two people and draws them together."

"Perhaps the sentiment—— Oh, never mind the occult sciences!" he cried, in a very unstudentlike tone. "There

Digitized by Google

is a science which no one has ever properly fathomed yet. It is the science of love, Miss Rollinson—Freda! May I hope that you will permit me to give you some lessons in that?"

It was a sudden declaration, and Freda caught herself wondering vaguely why she was not surprised. For some reason which she could not explain to herself she was not astonished.

"Perhaps you would not find me an apt pupil!" she retorted, looking at him with a mischievous boldness which reminded him of his sister. "And I am not sure that you can teach!"

"I am positive about it!" he replied promptly. "And I think you could learn if you tried!"

He tried to take her hand, but she placed them behind her. This action, of itself, would have meant a rebuff, but the expression on her face belied it. With an alertness that was surprising in him, he saw his opportunity and bent forward quickly to kiss her while she was, so to speak, off guard.

She sprang to her feet just in time to avoid it, and laughed merrily.

"It was my intention to keep you at your distance by not allowing you to take my hand till you had shown some capacity as a teacher, but I see now that you lose no opportunities. I ought to make progress under such a professor! We shall see! Now I have something to confess, and perhaps you have too!"

She seated herself once more. He took her hand and pressed it, waiting for her to speak.

"It was *you* I wished to see, although you did not say that in your telepathic message! Why? Because I saw something in it; I read between the lines; and, in some way, I—I wanted to see you, Allen! And do you know what it was that I read between the lines? Come, it is your turn to confess!"

He looked startled for a moment; then said slowly:

"Did I give myself away!"

"I guessed it after the second message!" she said emphatically. "I lost faith in mysterious sciences after that! I was on the point of sending a telepathic message to *you*, but something inexplicable took possession of me and I did not."

"That was love!" said Allen dictatorily. "And that relieves me, for it proves that you are not angry with me for my device."

"Why did you not approach me in person?" asked Freda with quizzical shyness.

"Because I am not accustomed to ladies' society, and because I feared that my case was not hopeful and I dreaded a rebuff in person. But you will have no further cause for complaint on that score!" he assured her. "Quite the contrary; it will be difficult for me to keep away from you!"

He caught her in his arms and was about to press his lips to hers when Mary appeared.

"I say, when——" she began; but, on grasping the situation, she continued airily, and not at all nonplussed: "Oh, go on! Don't mind me! I've been along that path myself!"

And Allen took her at her word and kissed Freda boldly in front of his sister; which demonstrated quite clearly that he was becoming accustomed to the society of the fair sex.

T. G. Orford.

The Third Quarrel at Laburnum Villa.

The diligent reader of *Short Stories* will remember that at the christening of Gerald Sinclair, the first son (hereinafter called "Toddles") of Gerald and Ethel Sinclair, the second big quarrel of their married life took place. It behoves me now to set down the history of their third quarrel as a warning to young husbands and wives.

It was the first week in January, and the weather was endeavouring to act up to its wintry reputation.

Inside the drawing-room at Laburnum Villa, though, it was very cosy. The blinds were drawn close, and a cheerful fire was burning, with just that suggestion of frost which makes a fire look comfortable always.

It was Friday evening, and Gerald was looking the picture of sublime happiness as he sat contentedly sucking at his pipe, as also did Toddles upstairs in his cot also contentedly sucking his own particular pipe.

Mrs. Sinclair only allowed her husband to smoke his pipe in the drawing-room one night a week, and that night was generally Friday. In consequence Gerald doted on Friday nights, and his wife said that it was the Thursday after before the room was sweet again.

"Gerald!"

Mrs. Sinclair had spoken, but the object of her speech being lost in the latest popular novel, heard her not.

"Gerald!!"

Mrs. Sinclair spoke a little louder this time, but still with no effect on her husband.

"Are you going to listen to me, Gerald, or not?" Her voice rose almost to a shriek.

"Eh?—What? H'm! Yes! Er—that is, did you speak, dear?"

"Oh, no! How foolish of you, Gerald, asking me if I spoke. Why I've been screaming at you for a quarter of an hour."

"Phew!"

"What did you say, Gerald?"

"Nothing, dear."

"Then don't. You're always cross when you've got that wretched old pipe between your teeth; I—I wonder almost that you didn't marry a pipe."

"They can't talk, at any rate!" growled Gerald under his breath.

"I was silly ever to agree to your smoking a pipe in the drawing-room; very silly indeed!"

"Yes, dear." But the "oil on troubled waters part" did not sit well on Gerald.

"Why do you say 'Yes, dear,' when you know you don't mean it? I've a good mind to put my foot down and say that there shall be no smoking in the drawing-room at all."

At this dire threat Gerald retired from the argument and picked up his book again. In justice to Mrs. Sinclair I must state that she had been suffering with an aching tooth since the previous evening, and was somewhat irritable in consequence.

Presently a sniff came from Mrs. Sinclair, and then her handkerchief came out. "I hope (sniff) if Toddles (sniff) ever marries (sniff) he'll treat his wife (sniff) better than his father does (very big sniff)!"

Crash! The book was on the floor, and Gerald was by his wife's side, and his arms were round her—but I will not, of course, go into details.

About twenty minutes later on peace sat enthroned in the Sinclair household, and Ethel sat enthroned on her husband's knee.

"Gerald, dear."

"Yes, girlie."

"What I wanted to speak about was this. You know we proved I had a head for business?"

"Yes," Gerald managed to articulate, but he groaned inwardly.

"Well, I've been thinking that we aren't business-like enough! There's a lot of waste goes on which shouldn't. Now look at the money you waste each week on smoking; still, we'll pass that over. But this is the point—see how much your tailor and hosier charge you; I'm sure you could get good things for a lot less than you pay. Then you're dreadfully extravagant with boots, too. Aren't you?"

"Yes, dear"—Gerald had discovered by this time that it was always policy to agree with his wife—outwardly, at any rate. This is one of the golden rules of matrimony.

"Now, this is what I propose. That we keep each other's accounts. I'll buy and choose your things, and you can buy mine."

"And choose yours, too, of course?"

"Oh, no, Gerald, you couldn't choose my hats and dresses."

"All right, then; you don't choose mine."

"But I meant to."

"Well, then, I'll choose yours."

Ethel sat and pondered for some time, and then, seeing any other course would mean unconditional surrender all along the line, gave in.

Thus it was that Ethel Sinclair commenced an account-book headed "Gerald Sinclair, Esq.," and her husband did *vice versâ*.

It was three days after this decision that Gerald said: "I must be getting some fresh ties; I'll give Blenkinsop an order for some." Blenkinsop was his hosier.

"But you mustn't, Gerald; I'll buy your ties for you," insisted Ethel. "Don't you remember our agreement?"

Gerald gazed in blank astonishment.

"You surely haven't forgotten how we agreed to keep each other's accounts?" pouted Ethel.

"Oh, no, dear—er—of course not. Oh, no; whatever made you think I had?" answered the arch-hypocrite Gerald.

"I should hope not, because I have been to your tailor and chosen a new suit for you. He'd got your measurements, and I got such a pretty pattern. But, do you know, dear, I had quite a bother to get it, he said he did not make suits out of that cloth, but it looked so nice I asked him if he wouldn't do it. I only saw a little pattern, of course, dear, but it looked a perfect dream."

There reigned deathly silence when Ethel had finished, and then Gerald got up and departed out of the room.

When he was safely out of hearing he expressed his opinion on matters generally with a fluency and in a manner that would have done credit to an *habitué* of Billingsgate. Then a fiendish gleam came in his eye, and about half an hour afterwards he was on his way to his wife's dressmaker.

I omitted to mention that Mrs. Sinclair's dress allowance was £100 per annum, whilst Mr. Sinclair allowed himself £50 for a like period. Also, I omitted to mention that in this fresh agreement it had been agreed that each was to spend the other's quarter's allowance for them. Thus Gerald had £25 on the credit side for his wife, and Mrs. Sinclair had £12 10s. to dispose of on behalf of her husband.

When Gerald arrived home that night Mrs. Sinclair's first remarks after the usual salutations were to the effect that her husband's suit had arrived.

"What!" cried Gerald, "my suit arrived?"

"Yes," responded his wife.

"B-b-but I didn't try it on at all!" he spluttered.

"Oh!" said his wife in surprised tones. "Do men try on their own suits before they are finished? I thought they simply gave their measurements and the tailor made the suit. That was why he laughed, then, when I said he was to finish it straight off and send it home as it was a surprise. He said he thought it would be a surprise, and he didn't think I saw him laughing, but I did."

"Laughed, madam, I should imagine the man almost killed himself with amusement. I can see him shutting up his shop in order to laugh as much as he wanted!" stormed Gerald. "Now let me see this wonderful suit."

"Its upstairs on the bed, I didn't open it. You go up and put it on and I'll see how it fits."

In about two minutes' time there came a noise from above like the roaring of a bull, and then prodigious stamping of feet. This was accompanied with the yells of Toddles, who woke up and joined his parent in his song of wrath.

Mrs. Sinclair sat waiting impatiently and growing more nervous every minute until at last her husband entered.

Ethel screamed and held her hands up.

"Oh, Gerald!"

"This, madam," he replied, "is your doing."

There he stood in the centre of the room in a bright yellow suit with a scarlet check. He said nothing more for a time, and the silence grew agonising.

At last he spoke.

"I do not imagine, Mrs. Sinclair, that my tailor was romancing when he told you he did not make suits from this material as a rule, or that he was prevaricating when he said it would be a surprise. It is a surprise, but my heart is only normal, and for my health's sake let this be the last surprise of its kind. This cloth, madam, happens to be a waistcoat material only. I think if you've seen sufficient of your folly, I will go and garb myself as a civilised being," and with that he went.

Under these circumstances there was nothing left for Ethel but to weep, and this she did with right good will, until a knock on the door caused the tidal waters to cease. Then a maid entered with a large box.

"This has come for you, ma'am."

"For me, Blanche?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"All right, that will do. Stay a minute, though, are they waiting for an answer?"

"No, ma'am." And the maid withdrew.

"From Madame Blennerhatchet's," she muttered. "I've not ordered anything." And then, as is the correct thing with her sex, she did not open the box, but seemed to imagine that by gazing and wondering she would find out what was inside.

"What ever can it be?" she repeated time after time.

At last a happy inspiration struck her, she would open it. This she did, and there revealed to her eyes lay a winter costume of pale green cloth.

She stepped back a pace, and then once more inspected it. Yes it was that and no other. A coat and skirt in a pale green thick cloth.

"Gerald," she cried suddenly, as the idea struck her. "This is his doing, and green is about the only colour I can't wear. And the colour green it is. Ugh! it is quite bilious."

Just then Gerald entered the room, and his gloomy face cleared somewhat as he saw the open box and his wife's horrified expression.

"Like your dress, my dear?" he asked briskly. "I think it's a perfect dream."

"Brute!"

"What, you don't mean to say you don't like it? I thought it would be a lovely surprise."

"Beast!"

"Well, well, there's no pleasing a woman." And Gerald went out of the room, and rushing into the dining room, fell into an arm chair and laughed until the tears poured down his cheeks.

War reigned in Laburnum Villa that night, and in the morning both got up with colours still flying.

There were a few letters and a package for Gerald.

An unparliamentary ejaculation caused Mrs. Sinclair to look at her husband. He was gazing in blank, horror-struck amazement at the contents of the package he had opened. These same contents consisted of half-a-dozen our in-hand ties and half-a-dozen bow ties. To say they were brilliant would be doing them an injustice. They were fighting the rainbow for supremacy.

"More of your work, madam?" demanded Gerald, with a gloomy face.

"Yes, Gerald, I ordered those," chirrupped Mrs. Sinclair.

Gerald fixed a stony glance upon his wife.

"Need I have asked such a question, though? Would

Digitized by Google

anyone but one of your sex choose ties with a pattern like these? I had better put on the suit you bought and one of these ties, and go out as an advertisement for Maypole Soap."

"And —and I'll wear that fright of a costume you b-bought and go as an advertisement for Sea Salt."

Gerald gazed at Ethel, with the result that the impending tears began to flow.

Then there was another interval and once more peace reigned.

"Seems to me this economising business-like idea of yours doesn't work, my dear," he remarked, as soon as his lips were free.

"It isn't exactly a success, is it, Gerald?"

"I think I'd better see your account-book, dear."

"I—I'm very sorry, Gerald, b-but I've exceeded your l-limit by ever so much."

"What," shrieked Gerald. "You've spent more than £12 10s. on those ties and that suit?"

"I don't know how it is, Gerald. I added it up twice and it came to £18 12s. 6d. each time."

"Good gracious! Why you must have been swindled all round. Let's have a look at it."

Ethel dived into three drawers, looked under the table, in the writing desk, on the mantelpiece, in the bookcase, in the sideboard, and eventually found it in her pocket.

Gerald grabbed it and began to examine it with stern face and set jaw.

Presently his face relaxed and a smile began to creep round the corners of his mouth. The smile broadened into a laugh, and the laugh developed into a perfect roar.

"Oh, Gerald, what have I done?" questioned his wife anxiously.

"The head for business. Jee-oopiter! The head for business!" he gasped, and began to shriek with laughter again.

And this was the account kept by Mrs. Sinclair:—

GERALD SINCLAIR, ESQ.

	£	s.	d.
Cash paid to Mr. J. Swiffenheim, tailor, Piccadilly, on January 9			
For clothes	6	0	0
Cab to tailor		2	6
Tea		1	6
Cab home		2	6
Cash paid to Mr. Blenkinsop on January 11th for ties, twelve of them, 2s. 6d. each	1	10	0
Cab to hosier		3	0
Lunch		2	6
Cab home		3	0
Lace collarette	1	7	6
	18	12	6
Received January 6th	12	10	0
Have not got	6	2	6

"Oh, the business-like economy of it," Gerald ejaculated through his tears of laughter. "Added in the date as pounds! Oh, I'm going to choke. And what about the lace collarette? I haven't worn that."

"No, Gerald; you see I shouldn't have seen it if I hadn't been going to your hosier's. And it was such a bargain—marked down from £1 8s."

"The economy of it—ye gods!"

And now all is as of yore at Laburnum Villa.

E. Newton Bungey.

[Other Laburnum Villa stories which have appeared are—
"A Romance of an Unpaid Bill"—Feb. 21.
"What's in a Name?"—May 16.]

A FALSE ALARM.

How Mr. McSwat Showed His Bravery.

"WILLIAM! Hark!"

Mrs. McSwat sat straight up in bed and listened to a noise she seemed to hear downstairs.

"What is it, Lobelia?" inquired Mr. McSwat, drowsily.

"It sounds like somebody talking. Listen!"

Mr. McSwat listened. He, too, thought he heard something.

"I will see what it is," he said, speaking very loudly and moving very leisurely. "Don't be alarmed, Lobelia. We are well armed. Besides these two revolvers," he continued, in a high-pitched voice intended to terrify any unauthorised persons that might be in the house, "I have a heavy cane and a large glass paper-weight. Be calm, Lobelia!"

He crawled out of bed, collected his arsenal, and the procession moved downstairs in the following order: Mr. McSwat, with revolver in each hand, heavy cane under his arm, and paper-weight in pocket of his dressing-gown. Mrs. McSwat, ready to scream, with front hair in curl papers, lamp in one hand, and bottle of camphor in the other.

At the landing half-way down Mr. McSwat stopped.

"Lobelia," he observed sternly, "it will be necessary for you to go in front. You have the lamp. I will protect you." Mrs. McSwat took her place in front as directed, and the procession moved on again. At the foot of the stairs William stopped and took up a commanding position near the hat rack.

"Now, Lobelia, go ahead with the lamp into this room on the left. I will remain here to see if anybody rushes out. If anybody does rush out," he exclaimed, grinding his teeth in a manner horrible to hear, "I will put fourteen bullets through him, knock him down with this paper-weight, and break every bone in his body with this cane!"

Mrs. McSwat went into the room on the left and looked about.

"Do you see anything, Lobelia?" asked her husband, in a voice of thunder.

"No, William."

"Go through the other rooms," he roared, bracing himself firmly against the wall.

While William remained in the hall, armed to the teeth, pale with iron resolution and trembling with ungovernable ferocity, Lobelia explored all the rooms and came back.

"Did you see anything?" he demanded.

"Not a thing, William."

"Give me the lamp!"

He handed his weapons to Lobelia, took the lamp, and with dauntless bravery went through the rooms himself.

"It wasn't anything, Lobelia," he said, with extreme disgust. "You didn't hear anything or anybody!"

The procession moved up the stairway on the return trip.

"You must try to overcome this timidity of yours, Lobelia," said Mr. McSwat as he put down the lamp and relieved his wife of her load of deadly weapons. "If I hadn't been here to protect you," he grumbled, crawling back into bed, "you would have frightened yourself to death."

O. P. W.

Digitized by Google

Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The eleventh list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

TENTH LIST.

55. It was at Trinity Church, Ludlow, that Charlie Peel was married two years ago.

56. A great discovery was recently made in the old castle at Stokesley of Roman coins and sculptures.

57. During a cricket match in which I played while at the seaside, nine out of the eleven men at the wicket were clean bowled.

58. Our losses in one battle were one trooper slain, twenty-four dangerously wounded, and eleven missing.

59. They made a rush all at once for a coign of vantage, so that the boat nearly capsized.

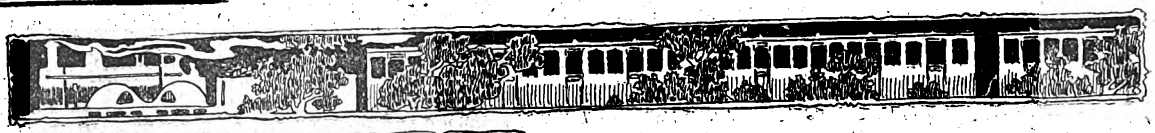
60. A niggardly man, you'll find, rarely leads a truly happy life.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

Digitized by Google

Begin reading now.



A shadowy figure appeared behind the chair.

A Narrow Escape.

Being the second of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

THE evil fogs had faded away, and crisp, frosty weather replaced the gloom. The carriage windows were white with a bewildering ice pattern, as of foliage, and the friends welcomed each other cheerily.

Mr. Carter was groaning under the weight of an enormous turkey, which his wife had commissioned him to bring from Leadenhall Market.

"Got a large family party at home," he said apologetically, depositing his straw basket on the rack. "Three married daughters and a son just back from India."

Stourbridge, who was empty handed, blessed his bachelorhood.

"You are a regular 'Carter' Paterson, eh?" remarked Harford, looking round for appreciation of his pun.

"Cards?" suggested Stourbridge, drawing forth a pack.

"No, let's see these stories out, one apiece, I say," Mr. Carter declared, who was renowned for his bad luck at play.

"I will tell you about Jack Thorne," said Blount, "and his lively investigations into the realms of spiritualism; it is a genuine tale, and as the chief conspirator has joined the great majority, it cannot matter repeating it. Besides, now I come to think of it, you none of you know Thorne or his wife, who are at present living in America.

"Jack was young and impressionable in those days, he yearned to plunge into the fathomless depths of psychological research.

"It happened that he made the acquaintance of a man named Seyfang, through falling in love with his beautiful daughter, Olga. The father was white, haggard, and old, with piercing eyes and long grey hair. He professed to be a medium and made money by strange practices, which Olga declared brought no credit on their household. She never appeared at the *séances*, professing herself a rank unbeliever in spiritualism. The girl nevertheless was completely under her father's rule, and he was a strong-willed, magnetic creature, and strangely enough, though Seyfang refused to listen to Jack's suit, the poor fellow became one of his most ecstatic disciples.

"The manifestations produced by the medium had the strongest effect on Jack Thorne's mind. In his gloomy despair at the disapproval shown by Seyfang to his daughter's lover, he fell a ready victim to the medium's art.

"'You can't marry the girl,' Seyfang would say, his greedy eyes glittering, 'she is made for something better. Olga, a mere child, endowed with the blessed birthright of beauty, to be wantonly sacrificed to a man who could not even afford her a carriage! Look at me! I am poor, living on a power given me from above, I cannot leave her a fortune with which to keep you both in affluence. She is born to be rich, and with her face could purchase a wealthy husband to-morrow.'

"'But I have plenty to live on,' Jack vouchsafed, 'she would never want. Besides, she loves me—are her feelings nothing in the matter?'.

"'Tut, tut,' cried the old man, running his lean fingers through his greasy grey locks. 'There is Colonel Leith—a man of means, with a huge family estate in the North and a house in town. He worships the very ground that chit of a girl treads on, and why? Simply because she has eyelashes as long as from my nail to the thumb joint, because she knows how to smile, how to speak, walk, move. Nature made such women for wealth and luxury.'

"'But she loathes the very thought of Colonel Leith!'

"'Bah! don't talk to me—I am a man of the world, as well as a medium.'

"Jack buried his face in his hands, and ground his teeth.

"'Come to our meeting to-night—I feel the devils are in me, or the angels—I know not which—but I fancy something will happen.'

"'Yes,' replied Thorne, 'I'll come.'

"Then he dashed out of the room with bent head and drooping shoulders.

"Olga met him in the hall. She raised her great tear-dimmed eyes to his sorrowful face.

"'You have seen my father again,' she faltered; 'he is inexorable?'

"'So far, yes, and the worst of it is he makes me feel a brute for wanting you.'

"Olga smiled mournfully.

"'I shall be true to you always, Jack.'

"He took her in his arms.

"The old man was heard calling Olga over the stairs. Jack

Digitized by Google

slipped silently away, while the girl obeyed the commanding voice.

"'Come here,' he said, motioning her into his study.

"Then he closed and locked the door. Olga watching him silently. She was terribly afraid of her father.

"'Listen to me, child,' he began. 'I am in a fix, you must help me out.'

"A look of resignment crossed her face.

"'What can I do?'

"She had the air of one accustomed to submit.

"'My accomplice has fallen ill. *You* must take her place. I have ten people—ten men—coming to-night. It means ten guineas, which I can ill afford to lose. We must give them something for their money; I have never been known to fail. Why are you staring so stupidly? What is there to gape at, pray?'

"Olga's eyes were starting out of her head; she was pale to the lips and trembling.

"She rose as with an effort, and confronted him.

"'Do you realise what you are asking of me?' she cried hoarsely, her slight frame quivering with emotion.

"'Perfectly. Is it such a great hardship for you? The work is short and simple.'

"'How dare you even suggest such a thing?' she continued, with increasing anger. 'To fool Jack—the man I love—who reverences and honours me. To hoodwink him.'

"Her voice shook, she reeled against the mantelpiece, giddy with the horror that possessed her.

"'Don't be an idiot,' retorted Mr. Seyfang. 'Sit down and keep cool.'

"'To begin with, father, it is robbery. I have kept your secret for years, despising you in my heart, abhorring the deceit—the sin! My mother believed in you; it was her religion, her stronghold, her all. When she saw the baseless fabric—discovered that you were a common swindler, a clever actor, perjuring your soul for gold—the shock killed her. She told me with her dying breath, for fear that I also might live in faith and be awakened. She felt the smarting pangs of disillusionment—the agony of finding her mortal god dethroned.'

"Indignation blazed in Olga's eyes.

"'Have you finished?' asked Mr. Seyfang, with a sneer.

"'Yes,' replied the girl, turning to the door. 'I have given you my answer; let me go.'

"But Mr. Seyfang slipped his wiry figure between Olga and the door-handle.

"He took out the key and put it into his pocket.

"'No nonsense, now!' he muttered, pulling her roughly by the arm and forcing her back into the chair. 'The *séance* cannot be postponed, and you will do as you are told.'

"He looked at her in a way that always made Olga's head swim, and her will feel weak and powerless under his gaze.

"'No one can recognise you in the dark, have no fear, and you need not speak. Only disguise yourself in the white shroud, and appear in the usual way.'

"Olga fancied the devil must have taken possession of her father, as he spoke in his even, calculating tones.

"'But——'

"He flicked her across the mouth with the back of his hand.

"'Do as I say, or you will suffer for it!'

"Olga gasped for breath.

"Mr. Seyfang rose on his toes, and towered over the cowering form of his daughter.

"She shrank back involuntarily.

"'You understand,' he said, 'you have got to obey.'

"'Yes, yes; only don't look at me.'

"The mesmeric power of his eyes frightened her far more than personal violence.

"He unlocked the door, opening it with a majestic air.

"'Good,' he answered, 'you can go.'

"Utterly petrified with horror and disgust Olga crept from his presence, still numbed by that awful soul-piercing gaze. She walked slowly up to her room, feeling her way by the banisters.

"She had borne frequent humiliations, but nothing so bitter as this.

"To be dragged down to her parent's level, and forced to assist in a fraud appalled Olga inexpressibly. She flung herself down on her bed, and cried aloud in her agony of self-abasement.

"The terrible fear of detection froze her blood; to play the hypocrite was gall and wormwood to the girl's sensitive and upright nature. At any rate *she* would not be the one to deceive Jack, Olga declared, and straightway wrote him a hurried letter with fingers that hardly could form the words, so violently did they shake from agitation.

"'For my sake stay away to-night. I can give you no reason, but only implore that you will respect my wishes. Believe me, this is no girl's fad, but deadly earnest. Ask me no questions when next we meet—I could not bear it. I am miserable and distracted; you can help me by stopping away.'

"Then she folded the sheet, sealed the envelope, and dispatched it by hand immediately.

"When Jack opened the letter he had just come in before starting, and had been thinking a good deal of the evening's *séance* throughout the day.

"He had all a Briton's horror of being deceived, and Olga's manner had more than once brought a shade of suspicion to his mind.

"Jack fancied that her lip curled occasionally in disdain when Mr. Seyfang conversed with him on supernatural topics. From the first she had resented his interest and excitement, though it was good for her father's pocket, Jack advertising the old man's power widely among his friends.

"Now this letter added to the vague suspicions torturing his breast.

"He read it three or four times, then folded the letter tenderly, and laid it upon his heart.

"'Dear little girl,' he thought. 'It is hard not to comply with her wishes. But it is a duty I owe to myself and my fellows to sift this matter thoroughly. If we are being tricked by a plausible scoundrel the sooner he is shown up the better. We shall see if he then refuses his daughter's hand to an honest man who will only live to make her happy.'

"Jack's blood was up, for he scented treachery, and going to a drawer of his desk he took something out of a case and hid it away in his coat pocket.

"Then he went to Mr. Seyfang's house with a set purpose and resolution.

"The old man received his visitors cordially. He was in evening dress, and looked thinner and keener than ever. His eyes had a sinister light in their lurid depths. He smiled curiously as he took Jack Thorne's icy hand.

"'How cold you are, my dear fellow, and early too. We expect five more gentlemen for our sitting.'

"Jack addressed him in an undertone.

"'Might I see Olga, then, for a few moments before we commence?' he pleaded.

"Mr. Seyfang drew in his lips and shook his head.

"'Certainly not, Mr Thorne. The girl is foolish enough already, without being made more so. The less frequently you meet the better.'

"'Is she well?'

"'Yes, yes. Did you imagine she would sicken and die since the morning. Love is not a very killing complaint.'

"Jack turned

Digitized by Google

away to conceal his disappointment and vexation. He felt a deep-rooted hatred spring to life in his heart against the white-faced man, who was looked up to with such awe and admiration by his own *clientèle*.

"He glanced round at the men assembled, they certainly were not an attractive crew. Jack began to wonder how he could have sunk to their level. They were all more or less pale, weary-looking individuals, some tired and *blasé* with much dissipation, over-dining, and over-drinking. They craved a new sensation, and sought it at the hand of the magnetic Seyfang.

"'I wonder if he mesmerises us all,' thought Jack, for the storm of doubt raged within him—a perfect tempest of suspicion. Seyfang's eyes were powerful enough in all conscience; he could imagine them subduing a wild beast, terrifying a child, fascinating a woman, ruining a man. There was young Blake, who had neglected his business and lost his position in Lehmann's firm, through his dreaming and gradual brain decay. He had sworn by Seyfang, and spent his last penny in publishing a book on the great medium's occult experiences.

"The work had been written down, and sold badly, its only mission being that of enticing a few more shoals of prey into Seyfang's net.

"'Do you think my wife will materialise to-night?' asked a quavering voice of Seyfang, at Jack's elbow.

"The speaker, an emaciated man of thirty, prematurely grey and careworn, clutched a chair for support as he spoke.

"The medium smiled in his sarcastic superior way.

"'How can I possibly tell? While in the trance I know and see nothing, all my senses are controlled by a greater force than any natural power. I believe my body is actually dead for the time being, I am (to speak anomalously) a living corpse.'

"'How horrible!' muttered the man, shuddering. 'Why do we wait?'

"He began to pace the room impatiently.

"'Calcutt and Montennis are expected. I said eight o'clock. We cannot commence till then. You are in a highly nervous condition, I should fancy, from your appearance.'

"'Yes. Could you give me a brandy-and-soda? I am awfully run down, low, and unhinged!'

"'Afterwards,' replied Seyfang; 'if you drink before, people are apt to say what is untrue, and doubt the reality of our experiments. We cannot be too careful.'

"'You mean they would say I was drunk?'

"'Yes,' replied Seyfang firmly.

"'I have not been the same man since the wife died. If I could look on her face again, or feel the touch of her hand, it might save me from perdition.'

"'If you are content to wait and persevere it will come,' Seyfang assured him confidently. 'Only have faith, patience, courage; miracles are not worked in a day.'

"The poor fellow sank on a chair with a sigh.

"'I ought to be a good subject, in touch with the Unseen; I am not long for this world if medical knowledge counts for anything.'

"'Who is that man—the widower?' asked Thorne of a friend.

"'Whitehurst, a good-for-nothing creature, who has ruined his constitution with spirits of both kinds. He took to it after his wife's death. She was a beautiful woman.'

"'A brace of telegrams,' announced Mr. Seyfang; 'one from Montennis, to say that he and the two friends he was bringing are prevented joining us to-night, and another from Calcutt: "Down with the plague," which means influenza; it's raging in his neighbourhood. That cuts us off four sitters. The sixth gentleman has evidently fought shy of the fog which is thickening, and being now ten minutes past eight, I think our *séance* should commence. Alas! that we are only five. Gentlemen, pray follow me to the inner room.'

"They rose and filed solemnly, one by one, through the heavy curtains he drew aside. The partially-dark apartment had an air of mystery; they pushed their chairs to the table, and seated themselves in silence, Mr. Seyfang at the head. His face was in gloom, the lights seemed to sink and grow less; they were almost in total darkness now.

"Hands were joined, and silence reigned. Only the chattering of Whitehurst's teeth broke the awful stillness of that ghostly chamber. Once or twice he muttered 'Sybil' under his breath, as though calling on his departed wife. Strange lights like stars came fitfully, weirdly, on the walls; they flashed before the wondering faces and faded.

"Suddenly a weak voice moaned 'Aubrey,' and Whitehurst leapt to his feet like a man distraught. He flung up his arms wildly, and gazed into the shadows, shrieking: 'Sybil! Sybil! She touched me; her hand; I felt it *here, here!*' striking his breast.

"Then he tottered back with a groan, and fell prostrate on the floor.

"He rolled over in violent convulsions. The lights flared up, and the men gathered round, horrified, amazed.

"'He's in a fit,' said Thorne.

"A young doctor bent down and caught hold of him.

"'No, he isn't. Nerves and drink. I will take him home if you fellows will help me to get him downstairs and into a cab. He is a patient of my father. Thanks! Support him so and he will soon find his feet. I shall not come back as it's a three miles' drive. Look at Seyfang dead asleep, and livid to the lips. I have had enough of this awful place for a first sitting.'

"So the young doctor bore the unfortunate widower away in a state of mental and physical collapse.

"The three remaining men crept noiselessly back; the lights were low again, and Seyfang, who had just come round, asked what had happened.

"They briefly explained.

"He leant forward with a sigh. 'Intensely tiresome,' he said. 'It has spoilt one of our greatest chances.'

"'Try again!' they replied in chorus. 'The night is still young.'

"Mr. Seyfang agreed.

"'Perfect silence, if you please, gentlemen, and implicit faith. One unbeliever might ruin all.'

"Then he fell back once more in his huge oak chair, and closed his eyes.

"Jack felt his heart beating wildly. He vowed this night to prove everything.

"Seyfang had previously informed him that he hoped Miss Thorne, Jack's deceased sister, might appear. She had been close to him on two previous occasions, and once the medium declared he had seen her gazing through the ceiling straight down on her brother. Half an hour of silence and patience, and then the quickening of Jack Thorne's pulses, the expectation of something about to happen. Again a voice, low and muffled, speaking in the air.

"'John!'

"Jack's sister had always called him John from childhood.

"He covered his eyes with his hands.

"'Seyfang,' he whispered, suddenly unnerved. 'I can't stand it. I——'

"But the words died on his lips, as the shadowy figure of a girl gradually appeared.

"It was Olga, her face concealed in a gauzy veil, white and floating, her body shrouded in hanging garments, disguising it beyond recognition.

"In spite of her external placidity, as she rose through the ground on a trap-door behind her father's chair, ready to sink back at the slightest movement of his head, a sense of deadly shame oppressed her. She was sickened by the false proceedings, that filled her with unutterable contempt.

"As she stood in the gloom, swaying slightly in her painful agitation, a vehement desire for knowledge robbed her lover of sense and reason.

"Hardly knowing what he did, Jack Thorne sprang to his feet, drawing something sharply from his pocket.

"'Are you dead or alive?' he hissed. 'I *will* know, come what may.'

"A sharp report, the smell of gunpowder, the agonised cry of a woman, the heavy thud of a senseless body at Jack's feet, with long dishevelled hair stained by a crimson flood.

Digitized by Google

"In a moment he was bending over the girl, his revolver flung aside, the cold sweat of mortal agony and dread breaking out in the palms of his hand.

"He realised in a moment what had happened; he had been hounded to this crime by the sacrilege of playing with his dead sister's memory.

"He stared wildly down at the ashen features, his blood freezing in his veins, as he recognised the face of his beloved Olga.

"'Great Heavens! what have I done?'

"The old man had risen, grey to the lips, though his eyes flashed fire, as he beat his forehead with his fists.

"'Fiend! murderer!' he cried, 'you shall swing for this!'

"Jack Thorne, a moment since utterly paralysed, crushed to the very dust with hopeless remorse, now turned madly upon Seyfang.

"Springing at his throat, he seized him and shook him, till he was blue in the face.

"'You brute, you villain,' he cried, 'it is your doing. Your vile schemes have wrought this catastrophe!'

"Then he dropped him as if his touch were pollution.

"One man turned up the lights, while the other helped Jack to raise Olga.

"The hues of life flushed back, her limbs relaxed, and the girl they supposed dead, opened her eyes feebly, looking round as one bewildered in a dream.

"'She only fainted,' said one of the two strangers, 'and cut her head in the fall. It was a near shave.'

"Jack's relief was so great that for a moment he was speechless. There was a wild disorder in his thoughts—a tumult unappeasable.

"'Thank God!" he cried. 'She is saved.'

"Now he knew the reason for the desperate prayer of Olga's letter.

"Seyfang, suddenly grasping his precarious situation, turned appealingly to his three dupes, and gazed at them distractedly, with startled eyes.

"'I am in your hands, gentlemen, utterly and entirely,' he groaned.

"'Yes,' replied Thorne, 'at last! You have fooled us enough—obtained money by false pretences. But I'll show you up; and the public shall no longer be gulled by your devices.'

"Olga now rose, weak and feeble, but ethereally lovely, and clasped her hands in supplication. Tears moistened her sad blue eyes, through which her whole soul seemed shining.

"'For my sake,' she said, turning from one to the other, 'spare us the disgrace of an open revelation.'

"Her words amazed her lover, who knew well Seyfang's cruel treatment of his daughter, easily imagining the terrible pressure he had brought to bear in order to compel her to obey him.

"'I'll give it up for ever,' whined Seyfang, falling on his knees, 'to my dying day—I swear—I swear!'

"The two strangers turned to Jack.

"We would rather not be mixed up in this disgraceful affair. If we were idiots enough to come we should prefer to keep it dark.'

"But still Jack Thorne appeared unmoved, though he pressed Olga's hand reassuringly.

"'I would give anything for your promise of silence,' wailed Seyfang, noting the stony resolve on his features.

"'I take you at your word,' replied Jack Thorne.

"'And the price?'

"'The boon you denied me this morning.'

"The old man looked sharply across at his daughter. He dared not refuse.

"A radiant smile of joy and peace stole over Olga's face, while Seyfang the medium bowed his head."

* * * * *

Blount ceased speaking.

"Have *you* ever been to a *séance?*" asked Mr. Carter.

"Yes. I was there that night. I was one of the two idiots!"

(Next week: "The Abduction of the Millionaire.")

Your Editor Chats.

THE tenth list of sentences in the competition will be found on page 687. Two more lists will appear.

I HOPE all my readers will peruse the first instalment of "THE BOND BETWEEN," our new serial. I can assure them that the story is well worth their closest attention. It is long since any work by a new writer has taken my fancy so much as Blanche Eardley's, and I hope that I shall soon hear from many of my readers that they agree with me.

THIS is decidedly an age of competitions, but a competition in which a human being is offered as a prize must lay claim to being a great novelty. Mr. P. Doubleyou, a well-known member of the staff of *Pearson's Weekly*, is the prize offered in a competition, of which full particulars are announced in the Whitsuntide number of that paper. I would advise all my lady readers who are in want of a husband to make sure of getting a copy of the issue of *Pearson's Weekly* for June 4th—on sale May 29th—which contains the necessary information as to how they may win the young man in question.

IN next week's SHORT STORIES, which will be the holiday week number, will commence a new competition in which the Index to Stations you already have will be required. It will not be a picture puzzle competition, nor a competition similar to the one already running, but something quite fresh. Tell your newsagent to reserve you a copy, so that you may be sure of having one. June 6th is the date, on sale Saturday, May 30th, instead of Tuesday, June 2nd.

WHILE you are making your plans to have a good time at Whitsuntide, I hope you will not forget those who are are not so fortunately situated. There are many dwellers in cities who never can go away for holidays. A large proportion of these are children, and it is for the children that the FRESH AIR FUND appeals. It only requires ninepence to pay the whole expenses of one child for a day in the country, including plenty to eat and drink.

I am sure that most of my readers could well afford to give away ninepence—some of them more—and I would ask one and all to send along just as much as ever they can spare that a record number of children's lives may be brightened this year. All contributions will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*, and should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, FRESH AIR FUND, Pearson's Buildings. Henrietta Street London, W.C. Collecting forms can be had on application.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

THE PROFESSOR'S MISTAKE.

And the Happy Result that Followed it.

"What a blessed thing it is to be heart-whole and fancy free!" exclaimed Professor Johns as he stretched out his fine-built form to its full extent and stood gazing out of the window of his lodgings.

"Here I am, a man of forty, and have never experienced that poetical sensation called love, in consequence of which I may go where I will and have no one to drag after me; nor do I have to chide myself for having left someone at home.

"I am a bachelor, a thing for which I can never be sufficiently grateful. Now, after I am settled a bit, I will begin to write that new march and will not have to stop at every bar to answer some stupid question, or have my arm pushed hither and thither by the baby, as my friend James does, poor fellow! I simply pity him. He has genius, but he has a wife and child also, and those two absurdities would kill any genius!

"How any man can become so foolish as to allow love to overbalance him is past my comprehension! Yet there are few who do not."

He turned away from the window and began to unpack his bag with as much care as a woman might have used. His task completed, he strolled back to the window, where he stood looking out. On the house directly opposite, his gaze became riveted. Seated at the window was a young person whose golden locks and beautiful complexion reminded him more of a picture than of anything human.

This individual was totally oblivious of the professor's interest, and seemed to see nothing but the work upon which she was engaged. Now and then the ringleted head would be rested upon a slender white hand, to be raised again in a short while as though seeking thoughts from the heavens.

The professor stood gazing at this fair young face as if spellbound, until awakened from his comatose state by his host's invitation to the evening meal.

Next morning Professor Johns got out his materials, and settled himself to work, but, happening to raise his eyes, met a pair of very serious blue ones contemplating him from the other side of the street. To his surprise, and, we think pleasure, the golden head of his neighbour gave a friendly nod, and was immediately lowered over its task.

Thus it continued for several days, and, although the professor had no wife or children to stop him at his work, he had nevertheless made little progress in it at the end of the week. He determined not to sit near the window while composing.

This determination wrought little or no good, for at the end of another week, between walking to the window to look at the clouds, and thinking of golden heads and blue eyes, he had made less progress than during the week previous. So he decided to lay the march aside for a while. It was all well enough for men who had to drudge to do it, but that was not the case with him. He might lay his work aside until he felt more like finishing it.

Strolling past his landlord on his way out for a walk he inquired: "Who are our neighbours across the way?"

"Snoogles lives there," was the answer.

Great Heavens! To think that so beautiful a creature should have fallen heir to such a name, thought the professor.

"Their daughter seems to work very hard. What is her occupation?"

"Expect the gal's hands are full helping the old woman with her lodgers," answered the old man.

"They take in lodgers, then," said the professor, greatly relieved. The young person at the window was without doubt one of them.

"Do you happen to know the young person who generally sits at the window?"

"Snoogles says they have gone daft; do nothing day in and day out, but write music and play it!"

A musician, then, thought the professor, and small wonder that I should feel so drawn in that direction.

"Funny how some people waste their time," ventured the old man. The professor answered by a nod, passed out of the house, and down the street.

Returning, he was provoked to find his gaze riveted upon the worker at the window; also to note the pleasure with which he received that friendly nod. At the end of a month the professor had thoroughly studied his attitude towards the young person in the house opposite.

He was confident that he had become one of those fools who, having lost their heads, are willing to lose their liberty also. He decided to persuade the golden-headed student across the way to join her lot to his.

To prepare the way, he wrote, asking to be of service in what seemed to be a very troublesome part of the young musician's composition. His advances were met with a polite refusal, which ran thus—

"Dear Sir,—*Many thanks for your proffered kindness, but I always make it a rule, when puzzled, to work it out by myself.*

"Gabriel."

So her name was Gabriel—truly a beautiful name! To his dismay the professor found that his pen worked faster than his thoughts. He had positively written the name Gabriel more than a dozen times. This was developing more of the fool than he ever dreamt was in his nature.

In disgust he tore the paper into little bits, and tossed them from the window. Ye Fates! Raising his eyes he beheld the object of his thoughts sitting in her usual place, the slender hand resting against the golden head, and a perplexed look upon the young face.

This completely unbalanced the professor. He loved his young neighbour. There was no question about it. Why should he sit quietly by and allow each day to add to the toil of that young life when he possessed money enough to keep her in luxury, and knowledge enough of music to help her towards the goal of her ambition?

Should he be governed by that foolish idea which had ruled his former life, or by the promptings of his heart? It might be foolish, but he would do as his heart bade him. Drawing a chair towards his desk, he seated himself and penned these lines—

"My Dear Gabriel,—*I have a favour to ask of you; a something which I have never before asked of anyone. Though an unusual manner of approaching a lady upon so serious a matter, believe me, it is with all due honour that I ask you to join your fortune with mine.—Very sincerely,*

"Professor Johns."

If the professor could have seen the merry expression that shone in those blue eyes as their owner read this missive, he would have been even less happy as he awaited an answer. It arrived in due time, and ran thus—

"Professor Johns,—*Will you kindly accept my sincere thanks, but Fate has not been kind; she has given me no fortune to join to yours.*

"Gabriel."

The dear, sincere child, how could he succeed in making her understand? If only she would grant him a half-hour in which to explain! He was a determined man, so once more a note found its way to the house opposite.

Digitized by Google

Once more the blue eyes caught up their merry expression, and the following came back to the professor—

"My Dear Friend,—*This love that you have expended upon me is a great mistake. Believe me, it has been misplaced.*

"Gabriel."

Determined not to lose this precious treasure through what he deemed a young girl's shyness, the professor allowed a week to elapse before he made a very careful toilet one evening and betook himself to the house opposite. After a few moments he was shown into the dimly lighted room. Seated by the window was a little golden-haired figure clothed in black.

"I hope you will pardon this intrusion, dear Gabriel, but I could no longer stay away from you," said the professor.

The little lady in the chair rose and explained that she was not Gabriel, but Gabriel's sister!

Noting the confused look overspreading the professor's countenance, she hastened to explain that persons quite frequently mistook them from the window. Would not the professor await Gabriel's return? He had gone out, but would soon be back.

Professor Johns did wait, and between merry little stories and witty sayings from Gabriel's sister, found himself well paid for his visit. She incidentally mentioned that she had only arrived that day. It had been so lonely for poor Gabriel, who was such a student, and she had come to keep him company.

* * * * * *

The professor is married now to someone wonderfully like Gabriel. What is more, he does not seem to object to that someone dragging about after him or asking questions; and from certain scraps of information which have come to him, Gabriel feels assured that his sister has fallen heir to the best of husbands. Like a good boy, however, he keeps his secret fast locked in his own heart.

Alice A. Moran.

A Love Tangle.

Telling of a Doctor, His Maiden Aunt, and a Nurse.

"I will not have it!" declared the old lady positively. "If Mark takes up with a nurse, he loses the allowance I have provided for him, and he gets nothing when I am gone! A nurse, indeed! Here have I paid for his education, enabled him to study medicine, secured him an appointment in a large London hospital where he can gain experience, and offered to buy him a good practice when he is fully qualified, and he has the audacity to set his affections on a nurse! They are all designing creatures! Of course, she knows his prospects, and he is a weak simpleton!"

So Miss Frances Frenton, the maiden aunt of Mr. Mark Holland, the rising medical practitioner, wrote a severe letter to her nephew, which he received on the following morning.

"I call this an unwarrantable interference with my liberty!" cried Mark Holland, when he had finished the reading of the unpleasant communication. He was not without a spice of his aunt's quick temper, and the letter made him angry. "I admit that she has done a lot for me, but it is going too far when she threatens to cut me off because she has heard I intend to marry a nurse.

"Well, I cannot marry anyone just yet if she does so; on the other hand, I must give up the sweetest girl in the world for ever! No, I won't! I'll take my chances without aunt's money, and trust to my ability to make an income that will enable me to marry in three or four years, anyhow, and that will be better than giving her up for good. Besides, I am getting a little tired of Aunt Frances' dictatorial manner."

If he had reflected a little more he might have tried some plan that would have led to a compromise and even to reconciliation eventually; but that touch of quick temper spoilt the chance of compromise, and Miss Frances Frenton received, in turn, a note that made her compress her lips and alter her will.

It was very quickly observed in the hospital that Mark Holland's bearing towards Nurse Walton was changed, and none noticed it more quickly than Nurse Walton herself.

A cold chill struck her heart, and her face lost its happy expression, her cheeks lost their colour. Holland seemed desirous of avoiding her, and she attributed this change of demeanour to a change in his sentiments towards her.

With her hand pressed to her left side, she sat down to ask herself why she felt thus. Holland had not made any positive declaration; she could not say that he had given any absolute indication that he was in love with her; yet——

Ah, yes! Love can be expressed in so many ways without words, and she could recall so many acts, so many little things, to confirm her belief. And she had fallen in love with him!

Now he was throwing her over! For whom? She waited. Rumour is always busy, and it was not long before a whisper reached Madge Walton that Holland was behaving gallantly to Nurse Hoyle. Naturally, she saw nothing of this; if he were throwing her over, she would not see him paying attentions to another—not yet, at least.

Madge Walton surveyed herself sorrowfully in her mirror; she had been called handsome, and she was twenty-six, her beauty compared favourably with that of her rival, and their age was the same.

These two nurses had been regarded as beautiful and attractive; they were ideal nurses. Why should he have tired of one and passed her over in favour of another who was not her superior in any way?

"Men are fickle, they say! There is no other explanation, and I must suffer for my foolishness in thinking that he loved me!" she murmured, with just a trace of bitterness in her voice. She sank on to her knees by the side of her bed and sought comfort in tears.

Mr. Mark Holland's appointment at the hospital was advantageous for the practice it gave him, not on account of the salary atached to it. The remuneration was little more than nominal, so he had to seek work outside in order to live suitably.

He found employment as an assistant to one of the doctors, who had a large private practice, and was getting old, and this prevented him from spending so much time at the hospital as he had formerly done.

"I cannot speak to her yet!" he would say to himself. "A man cannot ask a woman to become his wife till he has something to offer, and I have next to nothing at present. Moreover, it is hardly fair to pay attentions to her; that might be depriving her of a better chance, which would be wrong, seeing that I cannot be certain that I shall have anything good to offer if she waits for me.

"Bother Aunt Frances! I don't think she has dealt fairly with me! I will keep Madge in view. I am half inclined to believe that Nurse Hoyle—Hm, I mustn't misjudge people but she has been very sweet lately!"

Mr. Mark Holland was disagreeably surprised one morning,

on reaching the hospital, to learn that Nurse Walton had resigned; she had been gone several days, and her intention was to become a private nurse.

When safe from observation, he gnawed his moustache, and permitted a disconsolate expression to steal over his handsome features. He tried to find her address, but without success, and he lost, from that day, much of his geniality.

There was one man who could have given Holland the information he wanted, but that man was not asked, and remained silent. This was Dr. Miller, an elderly man, who had always taken a kindly interest in the orphan girl now known as Nurse Walton. She went to his private consulting-room in Harley Street and asked him to recommend her as a nurse.

"I am sorry you have left," he said pleasantly, "but I really think you will do better privately. Certainly! I shall have pleasure in recommending you, but you look ill yourself, and ought to have a rest!"

"I intend to have a week at the seaside, sir; then I shall be ready. I have been—upset—lately!"

"Yes," said Dr. Miller, in that peculiar way which suggests that the speaker knows all and yet leaves the hearer in doubt whether he knows anything or not.

A week later she appeared again, and Dr. Miller was able to give her a case which employed her for a month. She had not been free more than two days when he sent for her.

"An old friend of mine in the country has asked me to find him a born nurse, with proper training, for an awkward patient. This is a crochety old lady who has bronchitis and complications. She has money, so the engagement will be remunerative. I thought of you, but there is one little difficulty," said Dr. Miller. "That is," he went on, as she was about to speak, "the old lady is, I find, Miss Frenton.

"She has found out that her nephew, Mr. Mark Holland, whom we both know, intends to marry a hospital nurse, and she has cut him off. So," he added slowly, "it seems that he will not be able to marry Nurse Hoyle—as he is said to think of doing.

"Now, Miss Frenton is dead set against nurses on that account, which will give you trouble, and it is just possible that you might meet someone if she gets very bad and relents!"

Madge Walton was thankful to her old friend for pretending to be hunting for a letter. When he turned to her again, she was composed.

"I'll try it, sir!" she said quietly. "Perhaps I may be able to uproot Miss Frenton's prejudices. The honour of the profession is at stake, it would seem——"

"She thinks nurses are not ladies, but designing adventuresses!" interposed Miller quietly.

"If I can upset that notion, Mr. Holland might regain her favour, and have the opportunity of"—her voice faltered ever so slightly—"of marrying the woman of his choice!" concluded Madge bravely.

After her departure Dr. Miller uttered his thoughts aloud.

"Brave girl! It is surprising what a woman will do for the man she loves, although he may not have treated her well. I don't understand Holland's action. This is a queer move, and it will be interesting to see how it ends!"

The appearance of Nurse Walton in the residence of Miss Frances Frenton was a peculiar experience for the former. She found herself face to face with the arbitrary woman who had spoilt the prospects of the man she loved, although that love had, alas! been given unasked, as events had proved. This invalid was Mark's aunt, prejudiced against trained hospital nurses and ready to sacrifice the happiness of two young people for a whim.

Miss Frenton glared from the bed at the nurse; then she turned to her doctor and said, acidly: "I want a *nurse!*"

"I have brought you one!" retorted Dr. Wynne bluntly.

They had known each other for thirty years; he understood her peculiar ways, and treated her accordingly.

"This is Nurse Walton," he went on. "She is recommended to me by one of the finest doctors in the Metropolis, who guarantees her skill. What more can you desire, madam?"

"An older woman!" said the patient shortly. "These young nurses are all——"

A fit of coughing seized her. Madge stepped forward, raised her in bed, firmly and gently, and afterwards administered a restorative to the exhausted patient.

In spite of herself, Miss Frenton tacitly admitted that Nurse Walton was capable. The medical gentleman retired with a smile of satisfaction.

"You will have your work cut out, I am afraid," he said to the new nurse. "She is very ill and will be worse, and to cap all, she is very irritable and crochety. Nevertheless, I believe she is a good woman at heart. I am sure she has a soft spot in that portion of her organism if you can manage to find it."

"I'll try to discover it, sir!" responded Madge, confidently, at which the doctor smiled.

The position of nurse to Miss Frenton was anything but a sinecure; her illness took an acute form and both doctor and attendant had a hard fight to pull her round.

Mrs. Mason, a faithful old housekeeper, helped to the utmost, but the work of looking after the patient fell almost entirely on the nurse. The doctor was afraid that she would break down, and thought of wiring to his friend for another nurse to help, but Madge begged him not to do so. "I want to have the credit of this all to myself, and I am sure I can go through it!" she pleaded.

The doctor agreed, surprised at her devotion, but he did not know that Madge wished to obtain a hold on the patient's gratitude for the sake of the man who had, as she thought, left her for another.

Madge Walton shivered one day when she saw a letter on the hall-table ready to be posted; it was in Mrs. Mason's handwriting, and was addressed to Mark Holland. She sought the housekeeper and made inquiry with assumed innocence.

"I understand that Miss Frenton's nephew incurred her displeasure about something, and is not now recognised by her. But, as she is so ill, do you not think that he should be informed?"

"Bless you, nurse, don't let Miss Frenton hear that!" gasped the housekeeper in dismay. "I don't mind telling you, because I know you won't tell tales, that I wrote to Mr. Holland about it, and I had a letter from him this morning. I have just written to him again. I like him, and a man ought to be free to marry who he likes!"

"Does Mr. Holland propose to come here?" asked Madge, and her heart seemed to stop beating as she waited for the answer.

"I advised him not to," replied Mrs. Mason. "At any rate, not yet!"

"He must not come till I say so!" said Nurse Walton firmly, presuming on her authority to overawe Mrs. Mason. "And did you tell him my name? I suppose you said that a nurse was here?"

"Yes, but I didn't say anything about you."

"That is well. Please don't mention my name. You see," she added thoughtfully, "if he came and knew my name, Miss Frenton might think that I had been corresponding with him, and that would set her against me and she might be ill again."

"That's true, nurse!" said the simple Mrs. Mason, profoundly impressed.

Madge Walton felt that she was safe, so far. She must have time to complete her task, and then, when she was gone and he and his aunt reconciled, he might learn who had effected the reconciliation.

At last, after many weary days, the time came when Miss Frenton could lie on the couch near the window, in the rays of the unusually warm Spring sun, and listen to Nurse Walton reading.

"Stop reading for a while; I want to talk to you!" commanded Miss Frenton. The tone, although one of command, was more gentle than it had been for many years. "You have been very attentive to me, and I am not an ungrateful woman, whatever other people may say! You look ill; you must have a rest!"

Digitized by Google

"I shall soon be able to leave you, Miss Frenton," said Madge. "My work here is nearly finished. Then I shall rest awhile."

"Nonsense!" snapped the invalid, with some of her old acerbity. "I shall go away as soon as I can be moved; *I* shall go to Bournemouth, and you must come with me!"

Madge shook her head slowly.

Miss Frenton, at the risk of making herself ill, resumed her remarks in an energetic manner that was astonishing in one who had been so ill.

"I shall require a nurse for some time yet, and I can pay. You must come!"

Madge could hardly restrain a smile; the difference between her reception by Miss Frenton and this new turn of affairs was very great. She was only human, was Madge, and she could not resist the retort.

"You can have a companion, Miss Frenton, not merely a trained nurse!"

Miss Frenton shot a quick glance at Madge. Her face showed that some inward struggle was taking place. After a minute's silence Miss Frenton spoke.

"You have heard that I have said hard things about hospital nurses, and you are hitting me back. You are taking up the cudgels on behalf of the profession. That is fair. But you are not a hospital nurse, and——"

"I was till a few weeks before I came to you!" interposed Madge.

"Well, then you are an exception!" said Miss Frenton, shifting her position.

"That is not fair," interposed Madge again, gaining courage as she went on. "You are prejudiced, which is unjust. You know nothing of hospital nurses. Why are you so bitter against them?"

Again Miss Frenton was silent for several seconds.

"I do not wish to be unjust; that remark hurts me," she said slowly. "I will tell you. I educated my orphan nephew because he was the only child of my sister, and she was dear to me. I gave him all that was necessary to place him in a good position in life. Then a designing nurse captivated him, and gained such a hold on him, that he preferred to cast me aside—me, who had been a mother to him—and cling to her!"

"Did you object to his marrying at all?" asked Madge. "No? Then why object to her as a wife?"

"If she had been a lady," began Miss Frenton. She was feeling a trifle ashamed of her action, for the first time. "If she had been like you, now, I would have welcomed her!"

A spasm crossed the sweet face of Madge Walton, but she controlled her voice as she replied:

"I scarcely think that I am an exception; I believe that you would find her an agreeable companion." It was hard—so hard!—to plead for the one who had taken her place in the heart of Mark Holland, but she went bravely through her ordeal. "You have never seen her, so you cannot judge honestly. You imposed your will on your nephew without even giving him the opportunity of defending his choice. What sort of a man would he be who would meekly give up the woman he loved without a struggle?"

Miss Frenton winced at this outspoken remark. She looked with admiration at the beautiful face of her nurse, flushed with excitement, and sighed.

"Perhaps I was a little hard on him," she admitted. "Yes, I suppose I ought to have seen her. But that is all over now; she would never forgive me, even if he did! Let us talk of something else. You must come with me to Bournemouth; I am a lonely woman and I want a companion. You would make a sweet companion, nurse!"

Madge laughed awkwardly; the happiness of being a helpmeet and companion to the man of her choice was denied to her. She shook her head.

"You can have the companionship of a niece if you are morally strong enough to admit that you were wrong—as you ought to do!—and reinstate your nephew!" she asserted boldly. She felt that she must fight for him, her love! "He has constantly inquired after your condition and would have come had he not been forbidden!"

Before Miss Frenton could reply Mrs. Mason entered.

"Mr. Holland is here, miss, and says that we have no right to keep him away. I was to tell you that he wished to inquire after your health and did not come for mer—mercenary motives! I think that was it!"

"You must see him!" cried Madge, turning pale. "You owe it to him, and if you think that I have any claim upon you, repay me by thinking better of him! I will go!"

She flitted upstairs, where she waited with a white, haggard face. Mark Holland was shown into his aunt's presence, and had great difficulty in repressing his amazement at seeing her extend a feeble hand with a smile and an apology. Whatever had happened?

"I don't think I should ever have altered my opinion," said Miss Frenton, a little later, "if I had not been ill and been attended by a former hospital nurse. I haven't seen your future wife, Mark, but if Miss Hoyle is like my nurse, you have the sweetest——"

"Miss Hoyle?" queried Mark. "I'm not going to marry Miss Hoyle! Where did you get her name from? No; the woman I would have chosen is gone; before I could make her an offer, she left the hospital and I lost trace of her. I had to discontinue my little attentions, owing to the change in my circumstances, so I expect she thought I did not care for her, or perhaps she did not care for me! I should like to see this nurse of yours; what is her name?"

"Walton."

"What!" cried Mark, springing from his chair and almost causing his aunt a nervous shock. "That is *she!* I must see her!"

Dreading the ordeal, Madge Walton obeyed the summons reluctantly. She entered the room all of a tremble, although outwardly calm.

"Miss Walton——" began the patient.

"Madge!" interrupted Mark Holland impetuously. "Why did you leave me? Who told you that stupid rumour?" He held out his arms, eager to enfold her, yet uncertain whether she cared for him sufficiently to come to him. "I have tried to find you! My aunt has told me all. Madge, will you come to me?"

Something affected Miss Frenton's eyes at that moment; they began to water copiously, and while she was using her handkerchief, she could not see what was happening. She heard a glad cry, that was all. When her eyes were clear again, Mark and her nurse were standing before her, hand in hand.

"Do you think you would mind living with us, aunt, and permitting my wife to take care of you?" he asked.

Madge gave a happy little laugh as Miss Frenton caught her disengaged hand, drew her nearer to the couch, and kissed her.

"I don't suppose it will be so sweet as those you have just had," she said with a malicious twinkle in her eyes, that quite transformed the wan face and made Madge blush furiously, "but it is just as genuine in its way."

G. Merriam.

Remember Friday, May 29th.

WHY?

Because that is the day on which the June Number of the

LADY'S MAGAZINE

will be published.

It contains the very finest fiction,
10 Splendid Short Stories, 2 Serials.

WHAT CAN YOU WANT MORE?

PRICE 6d.

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

HELD APART.

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER, author of "The Golden Dwarf," "The Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THIRTIETH CHAPTER.

You Talk in Riddles.

THE explorer and the war-correspondent strode across the park in the direction of the curious grassy hollow that contained the ancient and weather-beaten pile of the mausoleum. Edward Stormont was mute, revolving his own thoughts, Paul Jerome was silent also, watching his friend and host. A finger and thumb thrust into one of his vest-pockets, held, half-unconsciously, the scrap of jewelled tortoiseshell.

"You spoke," said the explorer at length, abruptly, and without checking his swift and angry paces, "of having been, for some time, cognisant of a mystery. What did you mean?"

Jerome did not answer directly. "Let us see first if my suspicions are correct," he replied, "then you shall have the whole story."

Edward Stormont bit his lip. "Suspicions," he repeated, and added a trifle sharply, "it seems to me, Jerome, that if you had suspicions of such importance as would now appear to be the case, I ought to have been informed of them."

The war-correspondent made a gesture of dissent.

"No, no," he said gravely, "the more serious a suspicion is, Stormont, the more necessary it should be confided to no one until it has been substantiated. Besides, it is only within the last ten minutes that I have been given a clue to the solution of the problem with which I have been wrestling. I have not even had time to work out the details."

"And am I," asked the explorer, drily, "am I not to inquire what this same clue may be?"

"Your daughter's name," said Paul Jerome, "the two words, 'Moira Stormont.'"

Edward Stormont plucked irritably at his iron-grey beard. "You talk in riddles, Jerome," he exclaimed. "I will not wrong you by supposing that you have not an adequate reason for all this assumption of mystery."

Jerome quickened his stride. "Assumption, my dear Stormont," he retorted, "there is no need for an assumption of mystery. The whole thing, as yet, is one to me. I cannot even persuade myself to credit the amazing conclusion that forces itself upon me. That is why I am anxious not to put it into words until I have some tangible basis for it."

The war-correspondent was about to enter the winding alley that formed a short "cut" between the Tower and the principal gateway of the park, passing, in its course, through the plantations which surrounded the mausoleum. He stopped; at the distant curve of the long drive had appeared a smart phaeton and pair—he recognised them as the favourite turn-out of Guy Vanbrugh.

"One moment, Stormont," said Paul Jerome. "Strange as it may seem to you, certain threads of the mystery with which we are dealing are in Vanbrugh's hands. I will, with your permission, ask him to join us in our investigation."

The explorer would have spoken, but Jerome was already hastening down the avenue towards the advancing phaeton. Guy Vanbrugh drew up and leant over to grasp the war-correspondent's hand. Their eyes met in silent comprehension, but, manlike, the one shrank as much from uttering as the other from hearing spoken sympathy.

"How are you, Jerome?" Observed Guy Vanbrugh, curtly. "I suppose my cousin is still at the Tower, I—I wanted to see her." He hesitated. "It—it was good of you to come up with her yesterday," he faltered. "I—I——"

He fingered his reins and stared down at them intently. Jerome suppressed a sigh.

"Vanbrugh," he said in a low tone, and drawing closer to the step of the phaeton, "I'm afraid I can't do as I should like and leave a horribly recent wound untouched. But the fact is, I think I—I ought to ask you some questions about—about poor Miss—Miss Davenal."

Guy Vanbrugh's features twitched at the sound of the name and he lifted his head almost haughtily.

"You will know more than anyone else about Miss Davenal's history and antecedents," pursued Jerome hurriedly, for Edward Stormont, following him, had all but gained the point where the phaeton had halted, "but if I am not wrong in certain audacious conclusions, she was not John Davenal's daughter, nor was her name Davenal."

The reins in Guy Vanbrugh's brown fingers were bent and twisted convulsively.

"I—I don't understand how you have come by the information, Jerome," he stammered, "or—forgive me—how the matter can concern you. But what you have said is no news to me. Miss Davenal—that is, Moira, was the soul of honour, all that she knew of herself I knew also. But it did not matter—I—I——"

He covered his face with a hollowed palm; he could not go on. Their conversation was otherwise interrupted; Edward Stormont had come up to them. The war-correspondent had turned to him.

"Stormont," he said, "I am in the curious position of knowing, or, at all events, of suspecting, the truth about a problem in which both Vanbrugh and yourself are more deeply, I am sorry to say, more tragically interested than I. Yet, as I have already suggested to you, we had better postpone explanations until I can be sure that I am not the victim of circumstantial evidence and a morbid imagination. Perhaps Vanbrugh will leave the phaeton to his man and join us."

Impressed by Jerome's air of quiet intelligence, Guy Vanbrugh gave the reins to the groom at his back, added a brief instruction, and descended. The war-correspondent took his arm, and the three, piloted by Jerome, walked down the leafy alley hard by.

"This morning, Vanbrugh," remarked the war-correspondent, as they went, "two fishermen brought to Stormont a piece of wet and rotting wood with a fragment of engraved metal—apparently part of a coffin-plate—attached to it. It had been cast ashore by last night's gale, and bore the name of Stormont, and two dates seventeen or eighteen years ago."

Guy Vanbrugh started. Paul Jerome noted the fact, but pressed his companion's arm arrestingly.

"Those dates," he proceeded, "Stormont recognised as the date on which his only child—a girl—was born, and that on which she died. The plate he also recognised as resembling that affixed to her coffin. We are now on our way to examine that coffin, Stormont supposing that an act of terrible desecration may have taken place. You will not wonder at my enlisting your co-operation when you learn that the name of the child, the name presumably missing from the broken plate, was Moira."

Guy Vanbrugh stood still, dazed alike by Paul Jerome's words, and by his apparent intimacy with more than one carefully guarded secret. Edward Stormont intervened, he was pale and excited.

Digitized by Google

"This is hardly kind to me, Jerome," he said, "for Heaven's sake be explicit! Why do you speak to Guy of my dead child, what can he or you know of her, what can either of you have to do with the discovery of her broken coffin-plate in Groudle Bay?"

For answer the war-correspondent pointed across the open glade to which they had penetrated. Before them, its domed roof rising above the rim of the grassy hollow about it, was the mausoleum.

"There lies the explanation of the riddle," he responded. The explorer looked at him with concentrated brows, then glanced down at the great key which he still carried in his hand. It was old and intricate, but in good condition—the grease on its wards and barrel showed how it had been protected against the ravages of rust.

Paul Jerome pressed forward towards the steps that gave access to the hollow. Instinctively the others followed him—glancing covertly at each other. A moment more and Edward Stormont had turned the key in the lock of the heavy iron door. It swung back and the trio entered.

For the second time in his investigations the war-correspondent had had the forethought to pocket one of his bedroom candles. He produced and lit it. The gloomy, honeycombed interior of the vault became visible.

"Which is the compartment?" asked Paul Jerome gently of his elder companion.

Edward Stormont indicated one of the ranged recesses that was not far from the level of the ground. In its square aperture was perceptible the end of a leaden casket. On this latter was a plate, discoloured by age and the vapours of the place. It was inscribed—

MOIRA STORMONT
Aged 1 year and 7 months.
August 10, 1886.

The war-correspondent held the candle down and directed the explorer's attention to the inscription.

Edward Stormont shook his head.

"The plate was rather that from the shell within," he said; "we must lift the leaden casket out."

Guy Vanbrugh was studying the wording on the engraved metal with thoughtful, troubled eyes. Jerome touched him on the shoulder.

"You will help us, Vanbrugh?" he murmured. The younger man roused and assented. Together the three gripped the leaden receptacle, slid it from its recess, and set it on the granite floor. The war-correspondent noticed as they did so, that the massive lid was unsealed and loose.

Removing the candle from the ledge where he had temporarily deposited it, he brought it to the side of the casket, and extracting from a hip-pocket a many-bladed knife, he opened a short steel lever, and inserted it in the crack between lid and casket.

The leaden slab slipped up, and he lifted it off. An exclamation burst simultaneously from his own and the onlooker's lips. The casket was empty!

The explorer muttered a terrible anathema upon the authors of the sacrilege. But Paul Jerome checked him.

"Stormont," he said, "how if this does not mean what you imagine? How if it was not a dead but a living child of which this coffin was cheated?"

Edward Stormont cried out like a woman. "My child," he said, "my little Moira, alive, not dead. Great Heaven, that it could be so! But what—how——"

The war-correspondent shivered; there was an extravagance of joy in the explorer's face that was almost ecstasy.

"Alas, my poor friend!" he answered, "I cannot say that; would that I could. But if all be as I suspect—as I fear—here is one who can tell you of her as she grew to be, one who loved her, one who grieves for her even more than you can do now." And he drew forward Guy Vanbrugh.

In the flickering light of the candle Edward Stormont stood by the empty coffin and gazed incredulously at his nephew. Guy Vanbrugh put a shaking hand on the explorer's shoulder.

"I suppose it's true," he said unsteadily, "though I can scarcely figure it all out, or understand how Jerome got at it.

Twenty Minutes Late.

All the way from King's Cross we had been steadily losing time. The rails were wet and the train unusually heavy. At York we were twenty minutes late. There the railway people attached an additional engine and the train entered the Waverley Station, Edinburgh, that night on time. The principle is commonplace; when you cannot diminish an excessive load, increase the power. But what is an excessive load? Gently now. Wait a bit.

On any correct scale one hundred pounds is one hundred pounds, but on the back of a porter it is one thing and on the back of a slender girl quite another. To the first it is nothing to notice, to the second, it is crushing. In other words, weight is a question of what supports it.

This, then, is the principle on which we are to understand Mrs. Margaret Williams' assertion that she was *heavy* some years ago. No doubt the weighing machine would have showed her some pounds off her proper weight; for she was ill, out of sorts, and not eating anything to speak of. All the same, the lighter she *got* the heavier she *felt*; and when it comes to one's relation to one's own weight it is *feeling*, and not the scales, that settles the point.

For several years she dragged along in this unsatisfactory way; always weary and fatigued, as if from hard and continuous labour, when, in fact, she was doing scarcely any work at all. Indeed, her weakness was so great she could hardly get about.

If Mrs. Williams could have eaten heartily and digested her food well, it might be thought she would have recovered. But it was precisely because she could *not* do so that the illness came upon her. In other words she was suffering from chronic indigestion and its consequences. Let her tell her own story. Writing from her home, 8, Brook Street, Taibach, near Port Talbot, on January 24th, 1903, she says: "I could not digest the food I took, and in consequence it lay like lead on my chest, causing me excruciating pain round the heart and between the shoulders, often followed by vomiting.

"I varied my diet, ceased to take solids and lived on bread and milk, but all to no purpose. Loss of sleep, splitting headaches, and flatulency added to my sufferings."

The usual means of relief having been tried in vain, Mrs. Williams resorted to Mother Siegel's Syrup, with what result she shall state herself: "After the first two bottles," she declares, "I felt somewhat better, but a marked change took place after I had taken the third bottle. I could then eat without vomiting or experiencing any pain, felt my food was nourishing me, regained strength, and in a short time was quite cured and have never suffered from indigestion since."

Truly, no matter what the scales may affirm as to one's weight, one never feels encumbered by it so long as plenty of well-digested food furnishes the power and strength which should fill it from head to heel. When digestion *fails*, the remedy—as shown in numberless instances—is the same that restored again to Mrs. Williams the vigour of health.

Eloquence and Dyspepsia.

A keen observer of human life declares that all good after-dinner speakers are dyspeptics. The vital force which is required by the digestive apparatus in the performance of its functions is, he asserts, used up by the brain, at the expense of the stomach, liver and kidneys, which are thus robbed of their power to digest and assimilate food. When digestion fails, whether from overwork, loss of tone, or errors of diet, the surest remedy—as has been proved in thousands of cases—is Mother Seigel's Syrup. It completely cured Mr. Wm. Taylor, 15, Hanover Street, Haverstock Hill, London, of acute indigestion and debility. He still takes it occasionally, for he says: "I find it aids my digestion and regulates the system."

Digitized by Google

SERIAL STORY.

But Moira told me recently that she wasn't Moira Davenal—John Davenal had just confessed it, on what narrowly escaped being his death-bed. A while before he had brought up, when working on my yacht in the bay, part of an inscribed plate with the name 'Moira' on it, and the words 'Born' and 'Died.' It was the other half, no doubt, of the one brought to you. The coffin from which the plate came must have been thrown into the bay."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the explorer, for the speaker had paused wearily.

"What is the use of trying to fathom it all now?" continued Guy Vanbrugh, the depression of a profound melancholy betraying itself in his tones. "It won't give her back to me. Davenal was too ill to tell her any more, and after that the nurses wouldn't let them talk. We were going to ask him about it when he got well; we were going to do a great many things then."

Edward Stormont gripped the hand that lay on his shoulder.

"Then," he cried; "why do you say 'then' and 'now' like that? If my child was not dead and not buried, and if she grew up, why, as Jerome says, do you not take me to her? Who is Davenal, and why should she be passed off as his child? She is mine, and I will see her righted. I can guess why she was made to die this sham death, she stood between wealth and a selfish woman, whom I was fool enough to trust. Fool, triple fool, that I was."

The explorer was speaking excitedly and at random, like a man in a trance.

Paul Jerome stepped a pace or two nearer.

"John Davenal," he said, "and Hannah Davenal, your sister-in-law's maid, were brother and sister. He is a widower, and has passed as having one daughter, a girl of eighteen or nineteen, named Moira. Vanbrugh saw her and loved her, they were even, with a certain romantic secrecy, betrothed. A series of significant incidents, not easy to set out coherently, suggest that she may have been your daughter. Unhappily she was drowned yesterday in Groudle Bay."

Edward Stormont groaned, and his hands closed with a nervous tenderness over those of Guy Vanbrugh.

"My boy," he said, "my poor boy!"

Paul Jerome heard a sob from the throat of the younger man and slipped away, leaving the two alone together.

Gliding out of the small, heavy portal into the fresh, bright morning, he moved to clear the line of sight from the entrance. The grief of the two at once so strangely bereaved and so strangely brought together did not permit even of the neighbourhood of a third.

As he lingered, scanning idly the not unpicturesque vistas presented by the glade and the plantations, he heard his own name called in a familiar voice, and facing about, beheld, mounted upon the verge of the hollow in which he himself was lounging, the tall form of Mr. Ussher. With him was another person, a woman.

Paul Jerome gasped and stared, and stared and gasped again. There was no mistaking the shy yet proud features, the blue eyes, the red-gold tresses, the delicately-poised, almost classic head. They were those of the girl he had seen in the diving dress in Groudle Bay, the girl who was Guy Vanbrugh's betrothed, the girl whom they had believed drowned.

THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

"Oh, Sir, my Lady!"

"This is Mr. Jerome, Miss Davenal, the gentleman of whom I have been speaking. No doubt he will be able to tell us if Sir Guy has called at the Tower this morning."

With these calmly uttered words the detective introduced his companion to the war-correspondent. Paul Jerome had leapt across the hollow and sprung upon its edge at the point where Mr. Ussher and Moira were standing. The latter bowed shyly, and Jerome saw that she was not only pretty, but well-bred, and did not wonder at the whole-hearted enthusiasm which had prompted Guy Vanbrugh to offer the diver's supposed daughter his name and hand in marriage. He bowed in return.

"I am delighted," he began, "to see you safe and sound, Miss——" He paused over the next word, but gave her her usual surname—"Miss Davenal," he said. "We feared that you were no longer to be numbered with the living. The——the accident——"

Again he paused, and looked at Mr. Ussher. The detective blushed.

"You are right, sir," he remarked, nervously. "Miss Davenal's account of the affair—as completed under a little cross-examination, for the young lady is most discreet and far from vindictive—bears out your view. Hartigan decoyed her into the boat upon some pretext, upset it, as she thought by accident. But once in the water and finding that she could swim, he tried deliberately to thrust her under, saying that he 'would do for her this time.'"

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated the war-correspondent, glancing at the shy, slight heroine of this terrifying experience.

"Miss Davenal," went on the detective, "escaped by diving, and was carried out by the current as far as Groudle Island. The lighthouse men there knew her and gave her shelter for the night—the gale prevented her return till this morning."

"Groudle Island!" cried Jerome; "why, that is three miles out."

Moira smiled involuntarily at his surprise. "I am one of the best swimmers in all Groudle," she said; "father taught me."

The word she had used so instinctively in speaking of the diver recalled the war-correspondent to a sense of the situation.

"Miss—Miss Davenal," he observed; "you will pardon my seeming presumption when I say that I am aware of your engagement to Sir Guy Vanbrugh."

He glanced over his shoulder at the mausoleum. The explorer and the baronet still lingered in the shadowy place.

"You are well informed, sir," commented the detective, ruefully; "however, I myself gathered yesterday that, as it was reported in the village, Sir Guy Vanbrugh had been paying Miss Davenal—begging her pardon—considerable attention. This morning I went up to make some tentative investigations—for I will confess, sir, that your view of Hartigan's proceedings rather haunted me. Judge of my amazement, sir, when at the Close I met Miss Davenal herself, anxious, as I ventured to conclude, to reassure Sir Guy, should he have heard of her supposed death. The servants said he had driven over here and we came across together."

Paul Jerome stepped down into the hollow at their feet. "A moment," he said, and, without further parley, strode to the mausoleum door. For the first time Mr. Ussher perceived that it was open and a new thrill of bewildered curiosity seized him.

The war-correspondent was looking into the gloomy interior of the granite pile. Edward Stormont stood with bent head and folded arms, Guy Vanbrugh, plucking restlessly at his driving gloves, was talking to him in low, broken sentences. Mastering imperfectly his own emotion, he was speaking of Moira, of her beauty, of her housewifely ways, of her frank yet proud simplicity.

Jerome went out of the sunshine into the shadow that surrounded the two men, and confronted them suddenly.

"Guy," he said, "Stormont—you are not women to start or faint at a piece of strange, good news. It is not the first time by many, and it will not be the last by many more, that the sea has given up its fancied prey—alive."

Guy Vanbrugh tottered like a drunken man and clutched at the war-correspondent's arm.

"Jerome," he gasped, "old fellow, you don't mean—Moira?"

"Yes, I do," he was answered heartily. "She reached Groudle Island in safety, carried thither by the current. The gale detained her at the lighthouse station there, and she only landed at Groudle this morning. She is outside now."

Digitized by Google

The baronet broke from him, and darted into the open. Paul Jerome turned to Edward Stormont.

"Fate has given happiness back to Vanbrugh," he said; "let us hope that it has also given you back a daughter. But as yet she knows nothing of you. Be patient for a little. Vanbrugh must have suffered terribly in the last few hours."

The explorer drew a long breath and was silent, studying the empty leaden casket beside him.

The war-correspondent touched his arm.

"She is a lovely creature," he added. "Time promises to pay you a lavish interest on his debt. Will you not steal a glimpse of her unawares? It may be that some fortunate resemblance will confirm our apparently fantastic suppositions. She does not favour you except in the colour of her eyes. Her hair is a wonderful red-gold."

Edward Stormont started from his peculiar stupor. Jerome's last sentence had pierced it. He sprang to the door of the mausoleum. Near it stood Guy Vanbrugh and his betrothed—the fair head and the brown one very close together. Further off, contemplating the tree-tops with a great show of interest, was Mr. Ussher.

The explorer's gaze fastened hungrily upon the unconscious girl and his hands went out slowly, quiveringly. It was as if some irresistible attraction were drawing him to her.

"How like!" he muttered—and there was a yearning sob in his deep voice; "how very like—*her!*"

The sob rose to a piercing cry. Moira had turned—Guy Vanbrugh was pointing to the figure of the explorer. She made a step in the direction of Edward Stormont. But the explorer was already at her side. Tremblingly he took her face in his hands, poring upon it with a pathetic intensity.

But the cry he had uttered at the sight of her features had been eloquent of the conviction they had brought him. There was stamped upon them, plain for him to read, in a trick of lips and brows and eyes as they smiled up at him in a wistful sympthy, the likeness—the soul's likeness—of the only woman he had ever loved.

He forgot, in a flash, the as yet incomplete chain of proof, the amazing nature of the involved problems, the extravagance of the view that he was accepting, and, with an inarticulate exclamation of love and pity, folded her in his arms.

Moira had not wept on her lover's breast, but, some strange new emotion overcoming her, she laid her head on Edward Stormont's shoulder, and burst into tears.

Jerome shot a glance of satisfaction and significance at Guy Vanbrugh, and, passing the three, joined Mr. Ussher. The detective had faced about and was regarding this latest development of the situation with ludicrous perplexity.

"Well," asked the war-correspondent, "and what about Hartigan now?"

A ruddy glow overspread the other's countenance. "You have wiped my eyes a second time, sir," he said, "and what is worse, our bird is flown. I called at the Half Brick on my way here with Miss Davenal, meaning to clap the darbies on the fellow, but he had left—for foreign parts, he told the landlord."

"That won't do," answered Jerome, thoughtfully, "we must have him—for many reasons we must have him."

"Quite so, sir," agreed the detective; "I did send down an ostler to the depot with a description of him to be circulated. This will be done immediately. But my instinct led me to follow up Sir Guy's association with Miss Davenal, and besides, I wished to see you."

Mr. Ussher bent to the war-correspondent's ear.

"Excuse me, sir," he pursued, "but I fancy I don't yet know all that you do. What did Hartigan want to kill Miss Davenal for—she herself apparently can't tell. And what is she to Mr. Stormont?—something more than ordinary, by what we have just seen. And why do I find all you gentlemen in this particular neighbourhood, with that queer burial place open. What is going on?"

Jerome hesitated. "I am not sure," he replied, "that I ought to answer any of those questions before consulting Stormont himself. I had better do so at once."

(*Continued overleaf.*)

Curious Effect of a Crust of Bread.

A curious effect of a crust of bread is communicated by Mrs. Frances Butterfield, of Albert Cottages, Victoria Road, Mexboro, a woman who has been restored to health by Bile Beans after suffering forty years from indigestion and biliousness. She says: "When I saw a piece of breadcrust it had a most peculiar effect. It would suggest the sticking of food at the chest. A feeling of dryness, and by degrees a sharp cutting pain would come on. I had had indigestion from being a girl, and frequent bilious attacks. I should vomit green bile one day, and be so bad that for two or three days afterwards I could do no work. An acute pain at the chest and through the shoulders was an unfailing sign that another attack of indigestion was due, and then I should be prostrated for a few days. It was terrible! Often I was so weak and dizzy that I reeled if I stooped to pick up anything or made the slightest strain in doing what I was engaged upon. My husband used to look at me sometimes and say "You look like death." Sometimes I should be burning hot one minute and chill as ice the next, and these alternate hot and cold sensations would occasionally keep me awake all night. The doctor I consulted didn't seem to be able to give me any relief. I can safely say I have swallowed hundreds of bottles of medicine and boxes of different pills, but still I went on ailing just the same, until just over fifteen months ago. At that time I was very bad, and on the advice of a friend I tried a box of Bile Beans. It did me good, and I got another. Just by what stages they acted upon me I can't now say, but within a few weeks after beginning with Bile Beans I found they were curing me. I persevered with them, and within three months they had cured me completely. For forty long years I had never been free from indigestion and biliousness for longer than a few days. It is now twelve months since Bile Beans cured me, and during the whole of that time I have never had a trace of either complaint. This leaves no mistake about the permanency of my cure. I have recommended Bile Beans to scores of people, and I shall continue to recommend them."

The above facts have been embodied in a sworn statement made by Mrs. Butterfield before a Commissioner for Oaths. Mrs. Butterfield is the mother of seven children, and one of her grown-up sons was amongst the miners affected by the recent strike at the Denaby and Cadeby Collieries, in connection with which so many families were evicted.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

Miss MARIE TEMPEST says:—

"I have used your EUGOL TOOTH POWDER for some time, and I consider it the most delightful preparation ever brought before the public." A bottle of Eugol Liquid Dentifrice, also box of powder or paste, post free for 2s. 6d., with plan for return of your 2s. 6d. for four minutes' easy work.

EUGOL CO., 52 Berwick Street, LONDON, W.

Digitized by Google

He made his way back to the explorer, taking from his pocket, as he went, the fragment of jewelled tortoiseshell.

"Pardon me, Stormont," he said, when he had gained the little group hard by, "but one matter presses. The worthy Mr. Ussher represents the law, and, as this young lady will tell you, the death from which she has escaped so narrowly was not an accident but an attempted murder."

Edward Stormont recoiled. "Murder!" he repeated, and Guy Vanbrugh echoed his exclamation.

"Yes," said Jerome; "Hartigan, the husband of Lady Tarleton's late maid, Hannah Davenal, and the man originally suspected, as you know, of compassing that singular person's death, tried to drown her—in fact, believed he had done so."

"Davenal's husband!" muttered the explorer, "so! Villainy never lacks choice of instruments. I remember now, both man and woman had true gallows-faces."

Jerome held out his hand with the broken pin in it. He saw that Edward Stormont's thoughts were running in the same channel as his own.

"You recollect the day when you were so angry at finding the mausoleum open," he remarked, "and my brushing the threshold for the door to close. I picked this up there, and kept it, by an odd chance."

The explorer took the piece of jewelled tortoiseshell. "What is this?" he demanded.

"You will recollect also," continued the war-correspondent, momentarily ignoring the question, "a gamekeeper of yours confessing to Ussher that he believed he had seen, late on a particular evening—or rather in the small hours of the following morning—a certain person passing near this spot and accompanied by Hannah Davenal?"

"Yes," answered Edward Stormont, with some attention.

"This pin," proceeded Jerome, gravely, "has been recognised as being one of a valuable set given by her daughter to——"

Edward Stormont interrupted him hastily. "But the matter with which we are now dealing," he said, "took place sixteen or seventeen years ago. Why should she have revisited the—the scene so recently."

Paul Jerome shook his head. "That is part of the mystery," he responded; "the mystery to which the death of Hannah Davenal belongs."

The explorer frowned, then put Moira's arm in his own, and moved off. "Bring Ussher with you," he said; "the fellow may be needed. Once for all we will fathom the whole scoundrelly business."

Guy Vanbrugh went forward with his kinsman and his betrothed. The war-correspondent only stayed to summon the detective. There was a trifle of reluctance, even of anxiety, in his bearing. But he, too, strode with his companion across the glade and made for the Tower. By the time he had evaded half a dozen of the detective's questions, they had caught up with Moira and her escort, and all five entered the Tower together.

Edward Stormont led the way to his library and laid his hand upon the knob of the door. It resisted. He had forgotten that Irene had been left to the protection of its stout lock and thick panels. Jerome tapped and called cheerily to the occupant of the room. The lock clicked within, the latch whined, and the opening door revealed the captive.

When she saw Moira she started forward with a glad cry. Too practical for superstitious alarm, she had guessed the truth instantaneously.

"Oh, my dear!" she exclaimed, "so you didn't get drowned after all. You can't tell how glad I am. But what *has* been happening that you come here with—with Sir Guy and Uncle Edward?"

She stopped, catching a significant glance from her lover. Edward Stormont had passed her almost roughly into the library, put Moira into a chair, and rang the bell. Guy Vanbrugh followed, not without a covert squeeze of Irene's hand, and took up his position by Moira, while Mr. Ussher, slipping modestly into the apartment, retreated to a convenient corner.

Irene watched these proceedings with acute interest; Paul Jerome had lingered in the middle of the room, the troubled, doubtful expression still hanging about his usually resolute features. A look of anxious pity crossed them suddenly, and he drew nearer to Irene. A servant, answering the imperious peal of the bell, had entered the library.

"Ask her ladyship," said Edward Stormont harshly, "if she will be good enough to come down to the library. And Jerome," he added, "perhaps Irene will take your word and mine that she will save herself and us pain by withdrawing."

Irene coloured—her uncle's tone was almost insulting.

Jerome whispered to her.

"Forgive him, dear," murmured the war-correspondent; "he has had a great shock—he is not himself. Let us slip out together. I am afraid there is going to be a trying scene."

"How strange," said Irene, in the same guarded tone; "about us? Then why is Miss Davenal here, and Guy?"

The war-correspondent did not reply, but drew her gently from the room. They did not cross the threshold—the footman, returning, with extraordinary speed, from his mission, burst into the apartment. But it was not to precede and announce Lady Tarleton, the man's face was white and his eyes starting.

"Oh, sir," he gasped, "my lady!"

The explorer glanced, but once, at the man's tell-tale visage, then rose and dashed from the room.

(To be concluded next week.)

For Seaside and Holiday Reading.

NOW READY.

PERIL ISLAND.

A STORY OF WEIRD MYSTERY AND THRILLING ADVENTURE.

By SIDNEY DREW.

96 pages. Profusely illustrated by "VAL."

COLOURED COVERS.

Obtainable at all Newsagencies and Bookstalls, price 3d., or post free 4d., from C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Henrietta St., London, W.C.

A SIXPENNY EDITION OF

THE PARASITE,

By A. CONAN DOYLE,

THE CREATOR OF SHERLOCK HOLMES,

IS NOW ON SALE.

Take it away with you for Whitsuntide.

Digitized by Google

A Popular Medical Journal on Deafness.

The April "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases" takes up the question of the lately reported increase in the percentage of deaf people. In the opinion of the Editor, the public knowledge of defective hearing and its causes must be developed, and to this end the present issue of the "Review" gives plainly worded instructions for testing the hearing, and a series of popular articles on "Prevention and Cure of Deafness." As this number of the "Review" is intended for public benefit, those who are interested in the subject can obtain a free copy by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. Another special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged, if given by correspondence. The Editor advises patients, however, when possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are—in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultation.

IMPORTANT TO WOMEN.

A WONDERFUL BEAUTIFIER.

A short time since our readers were informed about that wonderful preparation for the complexion, Peralia, and strongly advised to try it for blackheads, acne, wrinkles, crow's feet, pimples, &c. Now listen to what a recent user has got to say about it: "In reply to your kind letter, I have taken your advice and have procured a bottle of Henderson's Peralia from Boot's Drug Stores. Well! I must say I was astonished at the result. I have spent large amounts on so-called remedies, but with indifferent success; but one bottle of Peralia entirely removed the scurvy from which I was suffering from my face, and the unnatural redness from my nose. I am now using it on my hands and arms, which it has made lovely and white, and also find it excellent for chapped hands. I am in a large milliner's shop, and all the girls in our establishment use Peralia, and think it is lovely.—Yours faithfully, Ada Fleming, Station Street, Nottingham." That ought to be a sufficient testimonial for any reader, and we hope any of them that are suffering from such disfiguring humours will act on our advice, and at once give Peralia a trial. The Peralia Company is a very enterprising firm, and they are now making a present of a dainty little book, called "Beauty's Boudoir," to every purchaser of Peralia who asks for it. We are of the opinion that none of our lady readers should be without it. By the way, the prices of Peralia, post free, in plain wrapper, are 1s. 3d., 1s. 9d., and 2s. 9d.

Many of our readers, we are sure, would like to know of a really reliable hair curler. When we say reliable, we mean one that is not affected by rain, or the heat of a ballroom. To those who are interested, and are anxious to possess neat, curly locks, we recommend "Crimpoline." It is nothing short of marvellous the manner in which this fluid sets about its business. All you have got to do is simply to apply a little to your hair for a few nights and you soon become the owner of lovely wavy ringlets. No! you need no tongs, pins nor curlers. Sounds almost to good to be true, doesn't it? Well, try it and see for yourself. Several who have used it tell us that once you get the hair properly in curl with it, you need only use it once in the week. Its price is so very moderate, too, that none of our readers need be hindered from sending for it on that account. If you write to the proprietors, enclosing 2s. or 2s. 9d., either in stamps, or a postal order, they will send you a bottle, post free, and secretly packed. Their address is the Peralia Perfumery Co., Dept. 14, Camden Street, North Shields.

FOR SMART WOMEN

As an advertisement, we have decided to offer this remarkable stylish Skirt at the absurdly low price of 4/11. Beautifully Tailor-made of good Black Serge. Perfect Fit. The inside is as good as the outside. 8 rows of cording, 4 rows of satin-finish strapping. Also in Navy Blue. Gives an air of distinction to the wearer.

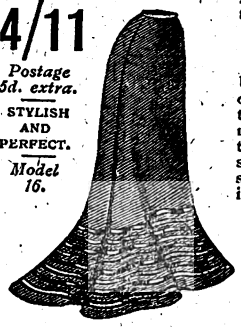
AN ASTOUNDING OFFER.

4/11

Postage 5d. extra.

STYLISH AND PERFECT.

Model 16.



DON'T FORGET!

Unless you send for one at once, it may be too late. Only a limited number on hand. Write to-day and thus make sure of one of these splendid bargains. State if Black or Navy, and length of skirt front and waist measurement.

Send for Illustrated Bargain Catalogue.

ANOTHER BARGAIN

We have secured a consignment of unshrinkable woven **Natural Combinations**, trimmed self-coloured torchon edging, that we are offering at the remarkably low price of 2/- per pair. 2 pairs for 3/10. 4 pairs for 7/6. Postage 4d. extra. High Neck, Short Sleeves. Colours: Natural and Pink. Smocked Knees 6d. extra. Sizes—Small, Women's, Medium. Extra size 6d. extra. State size and colour preferred when ordering.

T. & J. ROBERTS, The Great Warehousemen, SHEFFIELD.

TO BE FIRST

Is to occupy an enviable position. Many aspire for first place, but few attain it. To acquire the lead, aspiration and push alone are not sufficient. Merit is required. This is exactly why . . . .

BEECHAM'S PILLS

stand foremost among medicines. They possess real merit, and have proved themselves worthy of a permanent position in the family medicine chest. Trial purchasers become regular users, because they find nothing to equal Beecham's Pills for dispelling

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Indigestion, Sick Headache, Languor,

and other such troubles which arise from a Disordered Stomach. They regulate and tone up the entire system. The genuine worth of BEECHAM'S PILLS has obtained for them the unique position of having the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World.

Sold Everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills) and 2/9 (168 Pills).

Digitized by Google

GIVEN AWAY
With this week's
HOME NOTES
(No. 489)
A PAPER PATTERN
of this
THREE-QUARTER
COAT.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.
PRICE ONE PENNY

PUREST & NICEST.
PINK'S
JAMS
A good housekeeper thinks
The "pink" of Jams is PINK'S.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

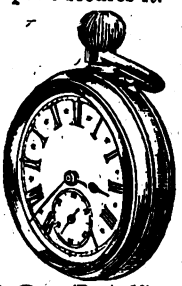
ARRESTED!
WHAT WE SAY WE DO, WE DO DO!
If your attention has been arrested by this, please send for our latest Catalogue, No. 10 of bicycles, and No. 9 of cyclists' accessories. Superior goods, startling bargains. Symonds' London Stores, 124-128, City Road, London. Also 246, Edgware Rd, W.; 47-49, Newington Butts, S.E.; and 14, Peter St., Manchester.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.
Model C is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for Cash is £8 8 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 15/10 each. Gentleman's machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns Juno Cycles. Trailers from £2 5 0, or 10/6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—JUNO CYCLE Co. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

Carr. Paid.

TRIUMPH Cycles.
£10 10 to £19 19
or by Deferred Payment System.
"The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce."
CATALOGUES GRATIS.
TRIUMPH CYCLE CO. Ltd., COVENTRY.
4 and 5, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.
30 Deansgate Arcade Manchester. 4 King Edward St. Leeds

30/- REAL SILVER KEYLESS WATCH
for 11/6 only. 1/6 Deposit secures it.
Simply send your full name and address and enclose 1/6 P.O., also three penny stamps for postage, to secure one of these marvellous bargains; you can pay the balance by small instalments of 1/- weekly.
LADIES' or GENT'S
Real silver government stamped ¾ plate jewelled movement, 1/- discount for full cash with order. Postage abroad 1/- extra.



H. STANLEY & Co. (Dept. 12)
Bankrupt Stock Buyers,
284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM
(CLOTTED).
Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/4, 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard-Bishop, Devon.

ESTABLISHED 1851.
BIRKBECK BANK,
Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London
2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%
repayable on demand.
The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

FROM FACTORY DIRECT TO RIDER.

HANDSOMEST, RELIABLE, BRITISH MADE CYCLES.
£4 10s., £5 15s. 6d., £6 10s.
Cash.
Prices by 15s. monthly payments quoted
Write D Dept. for Catalogue and Lists.
WILLIAMS' DIRECT SUPPLY MANUFACTURING CO.,
12 Approach, London Bridge, London.

REMEMBER THE BLACK BEETLES.
TELL YOUR COOK
To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with
"KEATING'S POWDER,"
unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, ONLY in tins, 3d., 6d. and 1s. each.

Rider Agents Wanted
in every district to buy sample cycle at special price and take orders for us. Large profits in spare time. 1903 Models £3.10 to £6.10
New Departure Coaster Brake, Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.
200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10
Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory in any way.
Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. Address Dept. 4B.
MEAD CYCLE CO., Liverpool.

Digitized by Google

She'd Like it Then.

He: "Would you like to hear me sing 'In the Sweet By-and-Bye,' Miss Mattie?" She (sweetly): "Yes, Henry, but not before."

A Splendid Compliment.

She: "Yes, my little girl is a beautiful child. People say she took her beauty from me." He (gallantly): "I can't say that I noticed your loss."

His Love Wasn't Blind.

He: "Stop! We can't sit down here; this is wet paint." She (tearfully): "I fear you don't love me blindly. If you did you would never have seen the paint."

Hurt His Feelings.

She: "I think Mr. Rymer, the minor poet, felt hurt at a remark you made the other night." He: "What did I say?" She: "You said there was only one Shakespeare."

It Would Save Curling Tongs.

"Cartoon has written a story that'll make your hair curl," said Mawson. "Get it for me, for goodness' sake!" said Mrs. M. "It'll save me from burning my fingers off with the tongs."

His Looks Would Tell.

Mr. Gotlots: "Do you really love my daughter, or do you only think you love her?" Percy Mushly (rapturously): "Oh, Mr. Gotlots! Can't you tell by my looks that there is no thinking about it?"

Showing Her Hatred.

"I thought, Miss S., that you hated that flirty minx; yet you went up and kissed her." "So I do hate her, and that is why I did it. Look at the big freckles on her chin where I kissed the powder off."

The Value of an Honoured Name.

"Young man," said the young woman's father, "you have boasted several times that you possess an honoured name." "Yes, sir," replied the foreign suitor, haughtily. "Well, may I inquire what bank it will be honoured at, and for how much?"

A Relic of War.

Jones (looking over friend's collection of curios): "Ah, and where did you say this cannon ball was from? A relic of some celebrated field of battle, I suppose?" Married Friend: "Yes, it *is* a relic of a field of battle—one between my wife and me last Christmas. It is her first Christmas pudding."

Such a Good Man!

"George," she said in a low voice, "would you make a great sacrifice for my happiness?" "Certainly," he replied. "Would you give up smoking for my sake?" "Give up smoking for your sake?" he repeated. Then after a silence he exclaimed hoarsely, "I can refuse you nothing. I will give up smoking for your sake. Hereafter when I smoke it will be for my own sake."

An Animal Proposal.

She: "You looked so sheepish when you proposed to me." He: "And you looked so wolfish when you accepted me."

Closed Eyes Needed.

"She sings with a great deal of expression, doesn't she?" "Yes, she does; but it's the kind that you must close your eyes to appreciate."

Only a Hint Dropping.

Maud (who lives next door): "What was that terrible noise I heard about twelve o'clock last night?" Mabel: "Papa dropped a hint for Charlie to go."

No Need to Prosecute.

Judge: "You say you do not wish to prosecute this defendant for stealing a kiss?" Fair Complainant: "No, your honour. The property has been restored."

The Employer's Reply.

"When I asked for a rise I told my employer I had grown grey in his service." "What did he say?" "He said if I had worked anywhere else I probably would have got bald."

Changed the Name.

"And so my little wife cooked all this herself. What does she call it?" "Well, I intended it for bread; but after it came out of the oven I concluded I'd better put sauce on it and call it pudding."

A Valuable Thumb.

Mrs. Wickwire: "The idea! Here is a story in the paper about a woman suing for £2,000 for the loss of only a thumb." Mr. Wickwire: "Perhaps it was the thumb she kept her husband under."

No Longer Engaged.

Afternoon Caller: "Is Miss Lippitt disengaged?" Nanette: "I'm afraid so, ma'am. I just see her young man hurry down th' front steps with the diamond ring she's been wearing since April."

Was It Intended?

Ella: "Pa says we can't marry for ten years. But don't look so sad, George; you are yet young." George: "Yes, I know I am, dearest. I wasn't thinking of myself, but of you, love." It was at once put off indefinitely.

Dressed to Kill!

Clara: "Now, I'm all ready for the ball. How do I look, Jack?" Jack: "You remind me of a Dervish in his war dress." Clara: "Oh, you nasty thing! I—I——" Jack: "Don't cry, darling! I simply meant you were dressed to kill."

She Hadn't Done So Yet.

"You've kissed that young Jones good-night and let him go, haven't you, Stella?" said a weary voice at the top of the stairs. There was an awful silence for a moment, and then in a timid, hesitating voice the young man in the darkened hall below responded: "No, ma'am, but I—I think she's going to."

Taking Strong Measures.

The modern woman is developing physically as well as intellectually. A powerful-looking damsel was heard the other day to complain of an insult offered to her by a yokel while she was taking a country ramble. "What did he do to you?" asked a sympathetic friend. "Chucked me under the chin." "And what did you do?" "Chucked him over the fence."

He Lost the Bet.

"Then it can never be?" he gasped, as he rose like a man in a dream. "No," she murmured, in a low but decided voice; "I am sorry, Mr. Poppledick, but it can never be. It is impossible." "Grant me, then," he said hoarsely, passing his hand across his blinded eyes, "one last request." She extended her hand in silence. "Let me," he said, in a low voice, "have half-a-crown until to-morrow night. I've got a bet on this, and I've lost, and the fellows are waiting patiently round the corner for me to treat them."

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.]

A Troubled Iceberg.

"CORAL."—Your letter is most interesting. You fear you could never love, as your temperament is too cold. Yet you have had very many suitors, who have been devoted to you, and whom you have wished to love. I know girls of your type, and think they often make very good friends for men.

* * * * *

Wait till you meet the man whom you *like* better than any others, and should he propose marriage, act on your own judgment as to accepting him. The "good fellowship" match is often a happy one—especially as you appear to have "Bohemian" ideas. But don't forget that actors' professions of love are often meaningless. They are too used to making them on the stage.

❦❦❦

Love versus Family.

"GLOW WORM" is twenty-six. When he was eighteen he had to suddenly earn his own living, and took a place in a large shop. He has now met a girl who is a tradesman's daughter, but quite uneducated. "GLOW WORM" tells me he comes of a noble family, and that they would disown him if he married the girl. As they love each other, do I advise "GLOW WORM" to marry?

* * * * *

Well, "GLOW WORM," if your noble family have not been able to do anything better for you than they seem to have done, it would not seem to matter very much how they regarded your marriage. Marry the girl you love, and ignore your relations. As you are in for a business career, you had far better marry a girl in the same sphere than be dragged at the heels of somebody you do not love who is higher up socially.

❦❦❦

Lover or Parent?

"E. A. C." is a lover, and also a good Samaritan to his sweetheart's parent, who is in a business which has fallen on evil days. "E. A. C." has been spending all his ready money in helping them, but the girl has written asking him to discontinue his attentions until things are financially brighter. Should he do this, or would it be better for him to insist on continuing his help?

* * * * *

If you feel that your help is really vital to them don't listen to their requests for you to cease it. That may be mere pride, and ought not to stand in the way of a really good action. If, however, things are really getting smoother with them, and the girl wishes to help her parent in the business, it would be perhaps better for you not to press your claims on her at present. The girl has to choose between helping her family and marrying, and has quite rightly given the first claim prior place. You, on your part, should be disposed to agree to this, at any rate until things improve.

Won't Raise his Hat.

"MARY" is in sad trouble. She recently met "ARTHUR," to whom she took a great fancy. This she told her friends. Now, "ARTHUR," though a very nice boy, has the very slightest knowledge of good manners. Whenever "MARY" meets him she bows very nicely, but "ARTHUR" never raises his hat. This has gone on for such a long time that "MARY" asks my advice as to how to convey to "ARTHUR" his proper duty when meeting a lady.

* * * * *

Let "MARY" go out with her brother, or cousin, or male friend, and when next they meet "ARTHUR," and she recognises him, let her request her escort to raise his hat in a very conspicuous way. If "ARTHUR" does not see from example what is the proper thing to do, then he must be lacking in intelligence as well as knowledge of good breeding, and would scarcely be a nice man for "MARY" to wish to cultivate.

❦❦❦

One-sided Love.

"PERPLEXED" has been keeping company with a young lady for eighteen months, and is very much in love with her. When he proposed, she told him she did not like him better than any other man she knew, and did not think she could love anybody, as she did not experience the tender emotions. "PERPLEXED" proposed again, and got the same answer. The girl said she did not see why two people like themselves should not be happy.

* * * * *

I quite agree with the girl. There are very many people in the world like her, but not so outspoken. The average girl would have pretended to feel all sorts of things for you that she did not, and when she undeceived you would have done so in a way that might have broken your heart.

* * * * *

I do not see why, if she feels that she likes your society and respects your good qualities, and does not love anybody better than yourself, you should not drop all talk about love, and decide to go through life together, trusting that affection will follow, as it probably will. I have known many marriages in which the love has been one-sided, and yet the couples have been among the happiest.

❦❦❦

A Flirt's Fancy.

"FLIRT" is twenty, and has been what her pen name suggests, but she has now decided that a gentleman twenty years older than herelf and rather above her socially is her ideal, and the only man she could ever love. She has only known him two months, when she terminated her friendship with him, as she knew her parents would never consent to it. Now she is two hundred miles away from him, and longs to see him again.

* * * * *

Such attachments are very dangerous. Very often girls of your age meet what they think to be their ideal men in those much older than themselves. Generally they are wrong. Men of that age are often only too prone to trifle with the affections of young girls. They are usually very skilled in the arts of flattery and courtship, and their conversation is generally far more interesting than that of their juniors. This accounts for their fascination for certain girls. But these men are very rarely sincere. Probably what they say to one girl is precisely the same as to others. I have seen too many cases of that sort of thing in men of mature age.

* * * * *

I should really try to forget him—unless, of course, he proves, by constant attentions to you, that he has serious intentions. But marriage is very much a lottery when the husband has twenty years' start of the girl. You must remember the time, ten or fifteen years hence, when you will still be a young woman, but your husband will be long past his prime.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Important Information for every Lady.

The Lady's Magazine

for June contains something which will please and fascinate every member of the feminine sex. There is no room to tell you more about it here, you must get a copy to be able to fully appreciate the new attractions.

If you are a Lady

You will hasten to the bookstall and order one at once.

If you are a Man

You will take one home to your wife.

If you are a Youth

You cannot do better than send a copy to the sweetest of your lady friends.

ON SALE MAY 29.

ASK YOUR BUTCHER

. . FOR . .

Swift's

American

BEEF

Choice and Tender.

SOLD BY ALL UP-TO-DATE DEALERS

THE

"OCEANIC"

THE UP-TO-DATE

HALF-GUINEA BRITISH BOOT.

STYLISH—DAINTY—DURABLE—COMFORTABLE.

Ask for and see the stamp "Oceanic" inside every boot.

THE CORRECT WAY TO USE TABLE SALT

IS IN THE

PRETYT NICKEL TOP

"ALVINA"

CASTORS.

No Spoons.
No Dust.
No Germ.
No Spilling.
No Crushing.

At all Grocers for a few pence, or send stamps to the proprietors,

FLETT'S ALVINA WORKS, LIVERPOOL.

4½d. for One, or 1s. for Three.

EVERY BRITISH HOUSE-WIFE

should polish all metals with it too. Most foreign polishes set up acid and are *sticky* in use, and require hard work. "MATCHLESS" Metal Polish spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. 'MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is made wholly in England, and its sale supports British Labour.

Manufrs.: The "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH CO., LTD., LIVERPOOL.

Digitized by Google

HOLIDAY WEEK NUMBER.

SHORT STORIES

No. 753.] Week ending June 6th. 1903. [Price One Penny.

GLANCING FEARFULLY ROUND, LADY MAITLAND HURRIEDLY TOOK

"My system is sound"

"I HAVE built up one of the Largest Concerns in the World on my original System of Business. I employ close upon 3,000 people in my Offices and Warehouses here in Sheffield. I receive and execute every week from ten to fifteen thousand orders. Every one of the millions of transactions recorded since I founded the Business (and the System) sixteen years ago, has been carried out on the distinct understanding that if the goods when received and critically examined are not considered completely satisfactory, the intending purchaser is to return them and the transaction is at an end. This promise fully and completely protects you. You may order in perfect confidence: I will take the whole risk of the goods giving entire satisfaction, and if you decide against purchasing after inspection has been made, merely send the package back and no remarks will be made."

My Terms are Advantageous. Any purchase may be made by Easy Monthly Instalments after the goods are delivered and approved of. Or, if you prefer to pay in one amount after approval, you will be entitled to select a Handsome Bonus Present from the Illustrated List sent with Invoice.

Each Departmental Catalogue is sent Post Free on application, together with Order Form and full particulars.

1. **WATCHES.** All my well-known Watch Specialities fully illustrated and described. My Watch Department is the Largest Watch-Sales concern in the World.
2. **TOOLS AND MACHINERY.** Thousands of illustrations. Every known Tool and Machine is supplied on Easy Terms of Payment.
3. **FURNITURE.** Every Furnishing requirement is illustrated. My System of Furnishing by Easy Instalments is fully explained.
4. **MANTLES AND COSTUMES.** A beautiful Album of the Fashions of the Season.
5. **GENT'S TAILORING.** This Stylish Department is splendidly equipped, and is probably the Largest Clothing Business in Great Britain.
6. **BOOTS AND SHOES.** Beautifully illustrated. A Splendid choice of the Newest Ideas in Foot Wear. *Contractor to His Majesty's Government.*
7. **BOOKSELLING DEPARTMENT.** Catalogue describes a vast assortment of Standard and Current Literature.
8. **SHEFFIELD CUTLERY & PLATE.** The produce of my own Factories illustrated and fully described. *Hotel and Shipping Orders a Speciality.*
9. **GLASS, CHINA, LAMPS, & STOVES.** Dinner and Tea Services, Toilet and Bedroom Ware, Lamps, Stoves, &c.
10. **CLOCKS.** Every known style and make supplied on Easy Terms of Payment.
11. **GENERAL DRAPERIES, etc.** Dress Goods, Blankets, Sheets, Furs, Ladies' Outfitting, Babies' and Children's Clothing, etc.
12. **GOLD JEWELLERY & DIAMONDS.** Engagement and Wedding Rings, Bracelets, Brooches, and all kinds of Gold Ornaments, fully illustrated & described.
13. **GENERAL FANCY GOODS.** Bags, Umbrellas, Albums, every kind of Leather Goods for Wedding Presents and Home Use.
14. **CAMERAS AND OPTICAL GOODS.** Hundreds of Designs by the most reliable makers.
15. **BICYCLES.** Exclusive Designs for the present season supplied on Easy Payment Terms.
16. **MUSICAL DEPARTMENT.** Pianos, Organs, and every known Musical Instrument supplied on Easy Payment Terms.
17. **ARMY AND NAVY.** A Catalogue representing all kinds of Goods required by all grades of both branches of the Service.
18. **COLONIAL DEPARTMENT.** A comprehensive illustrated Book which deals with the requirements of customers abroad, and quotes Special Cash Discount for Shipping Orders.

Mention Number of Catalogue required

An AGENCY for my firm is a very remunerative way of using spare time to advantage. Write for Agency particulars.

J. G. Graves, 69 DIVISION ST., SHEFFIELD.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model A is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for Cash is £3 3 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 5/10 each. Lady's Machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns Juno Cycles.

Carr. Paid.

Trailers from £5 5 0, or 10 6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free. —JUNO CYCLE CO. ("S.S." Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS

Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

SENT ON APPROVAL

Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory. **1903 Models**

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44C,

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C

Below is Our Great New Serial.

SHORT STORIES

No. 753.] Week Ending June 6th, 1903. [One Penny.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life.

By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The sacred words were droned in monotonous tones by a lean, apathetic curate. The church is empty save for the two principals—Margaret Heath and Vernon Grant—and the necessary witnesses. After the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris.

Digby Scarlett turns over his letters leisurely in the interim between breakfast and sorting a cigar.

"Ah, here's one from my friend and collaborator, the valiant Vernon. I wonder what the Paris postmark means? Any way, it can wait until I have written to ask the adorable Margaret Heath to be my wife."

This done, he opens Vernon's letter, and when he reads the news of the latter's marriage to the girl to whom he has just penned a proposal, he murmurs—

"Twice hit by the same hand, and both blows destined to die with me—to bleed internally. Not bad for a man intellectually my inferior! But the third blow *I* shall get in. My innings begins to-day." Then he leaves for Paris to join the happy couple at their invitation.

Scarlett and Grant at one time had practised copying each other's signatures, and Grant had been very successful in his imitations of that of his friend. Now Scarlett persuades him, for a bet, to sign his name to a cheque for a large amount, promising to make it all right at the bank when presented. This, however, he fails to do, and Grant is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude for forgery, Scarlett not even saying a word in his defence. Mrs. Grant goes to the prison to bid her husband farewell, and tells him that she will never have anything more to do with him.

The First Chapters.

It is the birthday of Lady Maitland, the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland, of Maitland Manor. As a birthday gift her husband says that he has decided to give her a daughter—at present she has an only son, Woolf—by adopting a girl, Ivy Strange, who had been discovered in the grounds some fourteen years before, and brought up with Muriel, the baronet's younger daughter. Jack Maitland, Sir Trevor's elder son, is in love with Ivy.

Lady Maitland does not take very kindly to the proposal; then Sir Trevor says that he is expecting a visitor to dinner, in the person of Heriot North, an old friend of the family, who is coming to pay his addresses to Agnes, Sir Trevor's elder daughter.

All rights reserved.]

Outside the library door Lady Maitland stops and grips the banister with one white hand.

"It shall not be!" she mutters. "I will see no beggar brat sharing my son's fortune. I wish I had insisted on the girl going to the workhouse when she was first found! Woolf has been cheated of becoming the heir because of his step-brother, but he shall not also be cheated of his money! I must get the girl out of the way, but how?"

When North is introduced to Agnes it is evident that he is terribly disappointed in her. During dinner he mentions a forgery case which was tried eighteen years before, and describes the wife of the prisoner.

Lady Maitland utters a stifled cry.

"The—heat," she falters; then suddenly Heriot North springs to his feet in time to catch her in his arms.

Sir Trevor Maitland's wife has fainted.

When Lady Maitland goes up to her room to dress for dinner the following day she finds a man in her room—evidently a burglar. He is gazing at two photographs in a locket as she enters.

"Who are you?" she says sharply. "What are you doing here? I am Lady Maitland, and my husband is the Chief Constable of Melton. If you don't explain your presence I shall immediately ring for help."

"Now you 'ave introduced yourself, my lady, let me do the same. I am Mike Holland, ex-convict, and follow-worker on the bog-land of Dartmoor with the *gentleman* in this 'ere locket along with yourself. 'E left before me, on license, and we all knew that his lovely missis would 'ave nothing to do with 'im when 'e got 'is lagging, but I didn't know as I was to meet the lady under *another* name!

"I shall want to be paid for holding my tongue. Bigamy is an ugly charge to have made against one. I am an old gaol bird—quod is nothing to me—but your ladyship would find it difficult to swallow. Now will you give me in charge?"

Lady Maitland is just about to pull the bell when she hears Woolf's voice outside. She must preserve her son's good name at any price! She turns savagely on Holland, her motherhood up in arms for the boy outside.

"Hide in there!" she breathes hoarsely, pointing to the deep oak wardrobe. "I accept—silence!" The man obeys her, Woolf enters the room, and he and his mother start downstairs together. Lady Maitland goes back for a moment to turn the key in the wardrobe door.

Three hours later she is again in her room. Tremblingly she flings open the wardrobe door to find it—empty.

Digitized by Google

THE BOND BETWEEN.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lady Maitland Scores.

"FATHER, I want you to give me your consent to marry Ivy! Of course, not now, but, say, in a year or two. We are both young, and Time will soon fly."

Had a bomb been exploded outside the study window, Sir Trevor Maitland could not have been more taken aback. That his son and heir should feel anything more than a brotherly affection for the homeless girl whom he had adopted in a moment of philanthropic impulse had never occurred to him. They had grown up as children together, and Sir Trevor Maitland had not relinquished his hope of formal adoption regarding the lovely foundling. But Jack's speech showed him a new difficulty in the way, to say nothing of his wife's aversion to the idea.

"This is very sudden, my boy," he said slowly, pushing back his chair and gazing at his son gravely. "Is it not an impulse, a youthful infatuation for Ivy's beauty? Remember, dear as the girl has become to me in all these years, it is a serious matter to allow a stray child of fortune to step into your mother's place one day. The future Lady Maitland should have a name and position as assured and open as your own; you owe your family some consideration, Jack, before entertaining such a sentiment as marriage towards the poor child."

Jack Maitland's handsome, boyish face flushed and then paled, as he listened to his father's calm, judicious reasoning. But his voice was just as resolute when he replied quickly:

"You mistake me, father. Ivy herself refuses to let me speak to her of marriage until she learns the mystery of her birth. And her pride is just as strong as yours. You have only to look at her, dad, to see that there is no common blood in her. Why," he went on passionately, "she looks just as much a lady as our step-mother herself!"

Sir Trevor Maitland stiffened. "Your step-mother is a woman of irreproachable birth, Jack. Poor little Ivy is—what?"

"At present, just the one girl I love, father!" he said bravely. "But don't be afraid," he added hastily, "I shall do nothing rash or that will make you ashamed. Surely my coming to you now proves that I desire to be thoroughly open, and straightforward? Ivy and I have agreed to let matters remain as they are until I have found out who her father was and where her mother is; for she persists in believing that her mother is still alive!"

Sir Trevor shook his head sadly. "Fourteen years is a long time, Jack, my boy. And whoever the parents may be—whether well-born or obscure—there is no getting away from the fact that it was a case of intentional desertion."

"I know there are difficulties in the way, sir," Jack answered steadily. "But in unravelling this mystery I shall all the sooner win my wife."

A shadow stood in the doorway, causing both men to turn their heads, and Lady Maitland slowly came forward. She was looking exquisitely fragile, and faint rings round her violet eyes lent her an air of languor. In the bosom of her white cloth dress there were a couple of golden red leaves.

She looked keenly at the two faces before her as she sank gracefully into a chair.

"What is this solemn conclave I have disturbed?" she laughed softly. "I heard something about 'mysteries' and 'wives'—two terms that have become synonymous!"

Sir Trevor gazed at her proudly. "There is not much mystery about you, my dear!"

Lady Maitland laughed merrily. "Middle-aged women can never claim mystery, Trevor! But I have not heard yet what you were discussing."

"I was telling my father that I intended one day marrying Ivy Strange," Jack said quietly. "But she insists upon her parentage being discovered first."

The delicate brows of Sir Trevor's wife were raised in a quizzical smile. "Really quite a number of people are bitten with that young person's charms! I can hardly congratulate you upon your match, Jack, as one of the most eligible *partis* of the county; and Ivy Strange is what you would scarcely describe as a desirable bride for Maitland Manor's future squire!"

He reddened under her laughing sarcasm, but faced her squarely.

"I know all about that, mater; and as Ivy has as much pride as yourself, she realises it also. I am henceforth going to make it my mission to seek out all that can be traced regarding her birth."

"Poor Jack!" murmured his step-mother. "I am afraid it will be a case of tilting at windmills! But never mind," she said, patting his arm with a pretty gesture, "I trust, for your sake, that love's young dream will prove successful, and that your quest for those wonderful parents will not finish in a garret."

"Whatever I find out, mater," he said, gravely, "it will not influence my love for Ivy. But I must be off now," he said awkwardly, "I have a lot to do." Then, with a brief "Good morning," he turned on his heel and left the room.

"I am disappointed in Jack," said Sir Trevor. "I had hoped better things for him."

His wife shrugged her shoulders. "What can you expect, Trevor, when you allow a mysteriously beautiful young girl to daily throw herself at his head? Even you," she laughed, "wished to adopt the girl!"

Sir Trevor shuffled uneasily. "Adoption is not so serious an act as the elder son of Maitland Manor making her his wife! I am very fond of Ivy, but I must confess I am disappointed in Jack."

Lady Maitland rose from her chair and went to the window. Two figures passed near one of the shrubberies; it was Woolf, walking with Muriel. As her eyes fell upon the eager, upturned face of her child, Lady Maitland caught her breath sharply. Only a few hours ago, and for his dear sake she had almost——! She bit her lips, and turned to her husband.

"I will leave you now, dear. *Au revoir!*"

Once in her boudoir she closed the door gently and sat down.

"I wonder," she murmured silently, "who did it! Who took him, or—*it*—out! I am sure to know soon whether it is a friend or foe! And then——!" She raised her head, and a curiously savage look crossed her face that would have startled the admirers of Sir Trevor Maitland's wife had they seen it.

* * * * *

In the meantime Agnes Maitland was curiously examining a dirty ball of paper, half pulp, that she had taken from her step mother's toy spaniel. He had frisked after it as the wind cheated him of his prize, until he at length caught it, and prepared to make a meal. But Agnes was of an orderly nature, so she, gently and firmly, took the paper from the dog and smoothed it out. It had evidently been crushed into a ball and flung into a waste paper basket; but how it had got into the garden was a mystery. Half the words were entirely obliterated, but she could just faintly decipher one or two.

"Died," she read, and then "release," and in front of "died" were two initials, something like "V. C." or "G." she could not tell which.

"I wonder," she murmured thoughtfully, "*who* 'died,' and what 'release' means?" She folded the paper carefully, and put it in her purse. "I don't remember anyone with the initials 'V. C.' or 'G.,' but I may find out."

As she retraced her steps to the house later in the morning she met her maid, Mason, hurrying towards the kitchen entrance. She looked excited, and her usually quiet black eyes glittered strangely. At the sight of her mistress the woman paused for a moment, then hastened her steps.

"Mason," Agnes called sharply, the woman's manner rousing her suspicion, "where have you been?"

"I beg your pardon, miss," returned the maid, with sullen obedience, "I've been to the village to post a letter."

"That's not true!" said her mistress bluntly. "There is a post-bag that leaves the Manor twice a day, and you know that."

Digitized by Google

The woman flushed. "I'm sorry, miss," she said humbly, "I *did* go to post a letter, but not only for that."

"Then what for?" said Sir Trevor's elder daughter sharply. "Come; you had better be careful what you say. I will find out if it's true!"

"I went to the chemist's, miss," Mason replied. "I have suffered from toothache a lot lately, and to-day was allowed to go into the village and get some mixture. See, this is the bottle, miss," and she held up a small bottle labelled "Nerve Tonic."

Still Agnes was doubtful. She suspected her maid of concealing something, and of having used the toothache as a "blind" for a deeper object.

"Oh, yes, I see the bottle!" she remarked drily; "but I am not sure that you are telling me the truth, Mason. But you may go now," she went on, "I see you are determined to keep something from me."

She turned away, and Mason looked after her with a peculiar expression on her sallow face. "You think yourself very clever, my lady!" she muttered; "but I am not going to help you to find out much. Although I'm no friend of her ladyship's, I'll not give you any satisfaction in your prying."

She went into the house, and continued her duties methodically and satisfactorily, then finding that she had a few minutes to herself she stole to the door of Lady Maitland's boudoir, and knocked timidly three times.

"Come in!" said a low, sweet voice in reply, and Mason entered the room, slowly and deliberately.

"My lady," she said, in a respectful tone, "I have a letter for you."

Lady Maitland turned her head. "Yes, Mason, put it down."

Still the woman hesitated. She advanced nearer into the room, and lowering her voice confidentially, said, "Excuse me, your ladyship. If I give this letter up, what do I get for it?"

Lady Maitland looked at the woman in surprise; she did not often notice servants, but she could not remember having seen the face of the woman before her.

"I don't understand, Mason," she said languidly, "what you mean! I am not in the habit of 'tipping' my servants for bringing me a message."

The woman's sallow face reddened. She had not looked for such a reception; besides, the haughty curtness of her mistress made her uncertain how to proceed.

"This is no ordinary message, my lady," she said, after a pause. "I've got it from no lady or gentleman, but——"

Lady Maitland stifled a yawn with a white hand. "Proceed Mason," she said wearily, "you are very diffuse!"

"But," continued the woman slowly, fixing her long, black eyes upon the face of her beautiful mistress—"*from the man that I let out of your ladyship's wardrobe last night, nearly dead!*"

There was a pause, in which Lady Maitland examined her filbert nails with minute interest, while Mason began to wonder whether her mistress had heard her—or whether she had made a mistake after all!

Suddenly Sir Trevor's wife raised her eyes and fixed them upon the woman before her. "To say that your conduct shocks me, Mason, is too mild an expression. I am horrified to think that a woman of such a peculiarly unprincipled character should have been under my roof! And I am not sure that your audacity in confessing now is not part of a plan to trade on my kindness in forgiving you! Of course I must let Sir Trevor deal with you," she went on, "such subjects are distasteful to me."

The woman, caught in the coils of her own venom, made a futile effort to resist. "Indeed, my lady," she cried, "I did not lock the man in. I"—she stopped, and her mistress laughed contemptuously.

"Don't say anything more, Mason. The fact remains that the man could not have locked himself in my wardrobe without help, and you were his accomplice! Why," she went on sternly, pointing to the letter in the woman's hand, "even the man has more honesty than yourself, for he trusts you with a note to me!"

At that moment Sir Trevor entered the room.

"Ah! I was going to send for you, dear," said his wife. "I am very grieved and distressed to tell you that we have reposed a confidence in Mason that was not merited. She has confessed to me that she locked a man in my wardrobe last night, and let him out when we were at dinner. Just think of it, Trevor!" And her ladyship trembled, while her violet eyes grew moist. "We might all have been murdered in our beds!"

Her husband listened with speechless amazement; then, livid with rage, turned upon the shrinking creature.

"I've a good mind to send for the police, you hussy!" he spluttered; "you will leave this house to-day, and don't come here for a character."

The woman burst into a storm of tears, partly baffled rage, partly fear. She knew the meaning of instant dismissal. As she raised her apron to her eyes she dropped the note from her fingers, where it fluttered to Lady Maitland's feet.

"If you go now, dear," said her ladyship gravely, "I will speak to Mason. Perhaps, in a small way, I may influence her—for good." And a slight smile lurked in the corners of her mouth.

When they were alone, Lady Maitland put one white, strong hand on the sobbing woman's shoulder. "Mason," she said firmly, in a clear, sad voice, "I should be sorry to see you lose your place, and will plead with Sir Trevor to alter his decision, and allow you to make a fresh start. But," she went on slowly, "you must absolutely promise me that you will do nothing to make me regret my kindness. Avoid wrong companions; for once you make a false step you will find it difficult to shake off bad influences. Now go, and remember my words!"

"Oh, your ladyship!" gasped the woman, whose sobs were now of relief; "bless you for your kindness, and forgive me! I—I—" she added shamefacedly, "I will give you the letter."

"I don't want it, your confession will satisfy me, Mason!" replied her mistress. "I don't wish to hear anything more about the subject."

With a sudden gesture the vanquished woman seized her ladyship's hand and kissed it gratefully; then left the room.

For a moment Lady Maitland looked at the hand the woman had kissed, then taking her handkerchief she deliberately rubbed it until a red mark showed on the delicate skin.

"Bah!" she laughed contemptuously, throwing the dainty gossamer article into the fire; "that creature's touch was like the sting of a venomous reptile—only I drew the sting first!"

She laughed again—a laugh of exquisite amusement. "The fool! The poor fool! To think she could pit her cunning against *my* wit! Her clumsy strategy against my generalship! I fancy Mason has met more than her match."

Then, moving her foot, she stooped swiftly, and picked up something that had lain underneath it.

It was the letter Mason had dropped.

SIXTH CHAPTER

The Figure that Followed.

THE wind howled dismally among the trees, and the dead leaves whirled recklessly in semi-circles on the ground, rising—when a sudden gust seized them—for a dance in the air. Overhead, black clouds were scavenging the sky, and a pale moon sent fitful gleams through the bare branches and flickered on the stagnant water of a pond.

A tall figure, clad in some clinging black, and heavily veiled, battled against the wind, and presently paused to cast a glance behind her, where Maitland Manor lay. After a brief scrutiny, she moved on, and at the same moment another figure, also

closely wrapped up, crept from behind a bush and followed swiftly behind.

At the pond's edge, near a large oak, gnarled with age, the woman stopped and looked impatiently round; but the dark was intense, and she could see nothing, a cloud having covered the face of the moon.

Suddenly a hand on her arm roused her, and turning, she encountered a pair of cunning black eyes that leered insolently into her own.

"So you are here?" she said shortly, speaking in a low, cautious tone. "I almost began to hope that—you had changed your mind!"

"It's not likely that I should lose the chance of making a deal," said the man, "'specially since I've got on a good lay. But I'm glad you 'ad the sense to come down to me, or I would 'ave gone up to you; I'm not going to be fooled this time, my fine madam!"

The woman cast a glance of such hatred and loathing at him from behind her heavy veil, that, could glances have killed, he would have been dead at her feet.

"Don't make the mistake of imagining that I am frightened of you," she said in a low, scornful voice, "that would be a waste of your time. I intended to see you at your request here, because it suited me to come; had it not done so, I would have stayed away. But I had to set you right on a certain matter!"

The man sneered. "Yes, it was to put me '*right*' that you turned the lock on me the other night; ch, my 'igh and mighty lady? If it 'adn't been for your girl, you would 'ave done it too. That was one to you—to-night it is my turn!"

She bit her lip. It was gall and wormwood to her proud spirit to be at the mercy of a brute like this! But no other course had been open to her. She had read the pencilled words: "Shall expect you near the old oak in spinny to-night at twelve. Come without fail, and bring money, or shall call at Manor!" She had burnt the letter at once; and when all the household was silent, had crept like a thief in the night, to know what the man who had secured a hold over her intended doing with his knowledge.

"You are mistaken in supposing that I wished you dead," she said coldly; "you must see that your dead body in my wardrobe would be an inconvenient burden to conceal! I locked the door to prevent anyone tampering with it. But that is not the question," she continued hurriedly, "I am here for the purpose of informing you that your knowledge concerning the—convict at Dartmoor has lost its value."

The man took a backward step and peered through the gloom, trying to see whether she was jesting with him. But he saw nothing, and with a brutal gesture, he caught her arm:

"That won't wash, my lady," he hissed. "What 'as took place since yesterday to change the fact that you was the wife of a ——"

"Hush!" murmured the woman, whose hearing, acutely sensitive, had caught the sound of a broken twig. "We are being watched by someone, I know it; and discovery would be awkward for us both."

The man paused, irresolute. It was far from his intention to have his little game queered by an untoward discovery. That would be killing the goose that laid his golden eggs!

"Is that cloak and 'at yours?" he whispered. "If not, let me 'ave them!"

"No; I took them from one of the servant's rooms this evening," she answered. "They were having a party in the kitchen. What are you going to do with them?"

Without replying, the ex-convict put his hand up the trunk of the oak-tree, and felt a half-bent nail that had once supported a notice to trespassers.

"I spotted this 'ere nail this afternoon," he whispered. "Now, if I 'ang your cloak on it so as to show a bit on the ground, when the moon shines out, if anyone comes along and waits for you to turn back the same way, they will 'ave to wait a long time!"

With a grim smile at the idea of the wife of the Chief Constable of Melton being shielded by an ex-convict, she handed him the long, black cloak, which he put on the nail, and the hat just over it.

"Now, put the tail of your skirt over your 'ead," he whispered; "when we've done our bit of business, you can get back over the bridge."

Silently she followed him, walking with cautious tread. The steps behind them had suddenly ceased, for the moon had glimmered through the clouds, and the ruse of the burglar and ex-convict must have been successful.

"Who was it?" she asked herself feverishly. "Who had watched her at this hour?"

The man came to a halt suddenly. "Now, my lady, what I want and mean to get, too, is money. You accepted 'silence' yesterday, and you've got to buy it."

"You shall have money; not as a bribe, but because I promised to a certain extent to give it to you when I agreed to your terms," she said coldly. "But in my momentary panic I had forgotten that there was no need to fear you; for I am free from the shadow that stood between myself and the past."

"What d'ye mean? You aren't bluffing me again, are you? Trying to come over me with a carney trick? Becos, if yer are, ye're on the wrong tack!" and the man tightened his hold on her wrist with an ugly laugh. "Speak plain, or I'll make yer!"

A mocking smile curved the lips of the woman, as she listened to the enraged speech of the outlaw.

"I will 'speak plain,' since you wish it!" she replied. "The man—the convict you saw in that locket—is dead!"

"Dead!" he whispered. "Dead! I don't believe it! It's a lie made up to save yourself from the dock, you white devil! Don't tell me that you know 'e's dead!"

His evil face was close to hers, contorted by a hideous grimace, and in the depths of the narrow, black eyes she could read something that spelt "murder!" For an instant she almost quailed, then, pulling herself together, she laughed softly.

"Why should I lie, my good man? I had my information from the one soul who remained my friend all these years. The man died a year after his release; those were the very words. I destroyed them after reading them several times, So you see our positions are reversed. There is nothing for you to do but go away!"

"All the same," the man growled savagely, "Sir Trevor don't know that you were the wife of a convict! That might interest 'im, anyway, and you 'ardly wish that little fact to be known to 'im!"

"It does not matter in the least, now, if he did know it," she answered coolly; "he would do nothing for the sake of his name and our boy's! I am quite safe! But," she added, "I am prepared to send you twenty pounds when I hear that you have left Melton for London—anywhere—not before!"

An imprecation burst from the burglar's lips as he realised that the hold he had over her was lost. And he had imagined himself on such a good "lay" too!

"You didn't bring the 'ready' with you then?" he said sullenly.

"Not being a fool I brought nothing with me, knowing that gentlemen of your calling have a frail sense of delicacy regarding other people's property," she retorted. "Now, say whether you accept my offer—it will not be repeated."

He hesitated, and his cruel fingers itched to be at the soft, white neck gleaming in the moonlight; but twenty pounds *was* twenty pounds!

"'Ow shall I let you know I am in London?"

"A telegram with the words 'dress ready to send,' will be enough," she answered briefly. "I will send the money by a friend to the District Messenger Office in Regent Street,

Digitized by Google

for you to call for. I shall run no risks; the money will be in gold."

She turned to go, then paused, and said: "It may interest you to learn that the police are much concerned in you just now. Melton is not a safe hiding-place!"

As the gloom hid her from sight, the baffled man sent an oath, strong and venomous, after her.

"Yes, my fine madam, you've scored again, but I'll get my own back one day! To think that after 'anging on all these years, my old pard should kick the bucket just when 'is life 'ad got so valuable!"

He moved away, then a sudden thought struck him, and he laughed grimly. "I'll find out for myself whether there is bunkum in it or not! Then, if I discover she has done me in the eye—my lady will pay for it twice over, in more than money!"

* * * * * *

The great hall-clock struck half-past twelve as the mistress of Maitland Manor stepped softly into the dining-room, through the long French windows. She had left them on the latch when she went out, but someone had passed through since, for they were difficult to open at first, as though they had been pulled violently to.

She closed them firmly, then felt under the rug where she had taken the precaution of hiding the key, in case malicious persons should tamper with it. As she turned it in the lock, she smiled grimly, as though tickled by a previous occasion on which she had done the same thing; only then, it was to keep an enemy in; this time it was to keep an enemy—out!

"Now," she murmured softly, "if my suspicions are right, that some person followed me out of the house, I shall know! I hope, whoever it was, that the cold night air will occasion no serious results!"

With a low laugh she stole up the wide stairway into her room, where a dim light was burning. The shutters were up to her windows, preventing the light from being noticed outside.

She undressed quickly, cleaning the mud from her shoes with paper that she afterwards burnt, and in a very short time was fast asleep—one white arm flung over her head, and a smile of unusual sweetness on her lips!

The air grew more chilly as time slipped by, and the waiting figure in the spinny, watching for the woman to come from behind the old oak, shivered with the cold that struck a chill to her lean body.

"If I were not certain," she muttered, "that it *was* she whom I saw from my bedroom-window cross the lawn to-night, I would not wait; but I know there is some mystery afloat, and I mean to fathom it! She can't be long now, and as the clouds have cleared, I shall see her face in the moonlight. She can't escape me; I shall know!"

She cowered down again in her hiding-place, patient and revengeful, nursing the thoughts of her enemy's discomfiture when her treachery should be revealed. Presently the crisp, dry leaves and twigs stirred and crackled ominously, as though heavy steps were treading them down. The heart of the waiting woman beat high with excitement! at last she would run the principals in this secret meeting to earth—find out the reason of the midnight rendezvous.

The steps drew nearer to her hiding-place. Cautiously she stole forward, and looked up. It was a man, walking briskly as though in a hurry. She could not catch more than a passing glimpse of his face, but she saw it was dark and sallow, and that his black eyes glittered cruelly, while round his neck she noticed a red muffler.

The man passed on and again the silence grew intense, fraught with a hundred different voices of the wood—myriads of personalities seemed to people the earth, yet not one sound reached the expectant ears of the woman who watched for the figure behind the old oak to come forward.

At last she rose slowly from her crouching attitude, and stretched her stiffened limbs that ached, and stood irresolute, her eyes fixed upon the cloak that she could see distinctly in the clear moonlight—motionless and sombre, like a gaunt shadow.

A sudden thought struck her, gripping her in a fearful terror. Suppose the woman that wore that cloak had met with death—had faced the Unknown, while she had waited to accuse her—of what?

With a shiver she stole towards the old oak, a clammy moisture bursting out all over her at the thought of what lay on the other side. She knelt down and touched the cloak with timid fingers. She felt nothing under her hand except the stuff she held. With renewed courage she went closer; then, after a brief inspection of the tree, she knew she had been outwitted by a clever ruse, a practical joke that had cost her an hour and a half of sleep, all for nothing! The woman for whom she had waited was represented by a hat and cloak hanging on a nail.

She smiled bitterly at the sudden well of sympathy that had risen in her. Fooled by the woman she had hoped to humble! How she must be laughing at her now! She turned towards the Manor with trembling limbs, feeling in each tree she passed a witness of her mortification!

As she stepped across the lawn she glanced up at the house. All was dark and chill, and with a sensation of having wasted her time, she went towards the long French windows of the dining-room.

Half an hour afterwards Maitland Manor was in a state of confusion, and the subject of interest was the fainting figure of Agnes Maitland, who had dropped insensible on the threshold as the door was opened by a frightened maid, in answer to repeated peals of the bell. When she recovered consciousness Agnes met the kindly gaze of her stepmother, who, lovely in white *negligée*, was bending over her.

"Dear Agnes!" she said, "what does this mean? I thought all the household was in bed ages ago. I woke up suddenly, thinking the Manor was on fire!"

The eyes of the two women met—Lady Maitland's innocent and anxious; her stepdaughter's suspicious and puzzled.

"I don't know," she answered, averting her gaze. "I know I used to walk in my sleep, but I thought I had broken off the habit. But now it seems it has returned."

Lady Maitland laughed softly. "Yes, dear, it looks *very* like it, but you must not let these bad habits return! I shall have to watch you and follow you next time."

"There will be no 'next time,' Lady Maitland," replied Agnes sullenly, feeling that she was at a disadvantage. "I will see that I keep my eyes open!" And she threw a meaning emphasis into her words.

Once again inside her room, and Maitland Manor restored to silence, her ladyship laughed noiselessly. "That has done her good! She will think twice before following me again!"

At that moment, when her maid, Mason, was putting her into bed, Agnes Maitland looked at her closely.

"Mason," she said, drinking the hot milk that had been prescribed for her, "when you were in the village this morning, did you see anything of a stranger in Melton—a dark, loafing-looking man, with a red handkerchief round his neck?"

The woman started, and came towards the bed with dilated eyes.

"A red handkerchief, did you say, miss?" she exclaimed. "I'm not sure, miss—I—I—don't notice people much!"

To herself the woman was thinking:

"What is the meaning of it? Has he spoken to her, too?"

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Brand of the Broad Arrow.

"I WONDER if I may ask you to do something for me while you are in town, Mr. North? It is a very slight thing, but it requires a friend to accomplish it."

"Indeed, you can depend upon me to do anything for you within my

Digitized by Google

power, in fact, anything outside my power, as well," Heriot North answered, a glad glow within him that he should be honoured by a commission from the peerless wife of Sir Trevor Maitland.

She laughed lightly. "It is nothing very serious. I have a few poor hangers on to my charity, and one in particular—a very deserving man—is in great need of help, I hear, and I thought you might leave a letter from me at 269, Regent Street, a District Messenger Depôt, I believe, where the poor creature has written me from. I cannot send a cheque, for the reason that he has no banking account, so you will not mind gold, will you?" And she smiled sweetly into his face.

"Of course not, Lady Maitland," he replied. "I can hardly express to you that it is a great honour you have conferred upon me. I will be only too glad to serve you in any way, always and at any time you may desire it."

"'Always, and at any time'?" she laughed gaily. "I shall remind you of that promise one day, Mr. North; then you may regret having made it."

"Never!" he breathed fervently, and in after days that promise came back with a terrible significance.

"I suppose you return to India shortly?" Lady Maitland said lightly, flashing a keen glance at him from under her lashes.

"I don't think I shall ever return to India," he replied gravely. "This morning I received an offer to take up the editorship of a big paper in Bombay; I am not sure that I care about it—now."

"Have you seen Agnes yet?" queried her ladyship quietly. "The poor girl has been quite an age in bed with the chill she caught when walking in her sleep the other night. It was most unfortunate!" And the firelight playing on her face sent a distorted smile into her eyes.

"I have not seen her for several days," he answered carelessly. "I am sorry she is ill. But it is not for Agnes that I came to inquire to-day, Lady Maitland!"

"No," she murmured softly, "what then?"

He leant forward, his eyes fixed upon hers with a yearning she did not notice. "It was to ask you whether I should do well to accept that offer for Bombay. I do not require the money, I have enough to satisfy me now. But I would go, even then, unless I knew that——"

"Ah, North, how are you? Glad you've come in to have a chat with us," and Sir Trevor Maitland entered the room, accompanied by his son Woolf. Heriot North concealed his chagrin at the untimely entrance of his host. He had hoped for a *tête-à-tête* with the mistress of Maitland Manor.

Woolf crossed over to his mother, whose eyes lit up with a tender light as the boy laid his head on her knee. "Oh, mummie! What do you think? Parkins told father that he saw a man in the spinny the other night, and he was sure that it was the same man who was in the grounds."

"Yes," broke in Sir Trevor, turning to his wife. "It is most extraordinary, my dear. Parkins declares there was a woman with him also. I am going to have a regular search made. There appears to be a gang about."

Lady Maitland laughed softly, and Heriot North thought he had never seen her look so fair and sweet.

"A woman, did you say, Trevor? I wonder whether it was Agnes walking in her sleep that Parkins saw the other night!" And her eyes flashed with amusement.

Sir Trevor shook his head gravely. "No, Pearl, I think not. She was tall, and was deep in conversation with him also. Besides, Parkins found a——"

Lady Maitland moved slightly, and raised her fan to her face to shield it from the fire. Her skin was very delicate.

"This is getting quite interesting," she laughed gaily. "What did he find, Trevor?"

"A piece of jewellery, my dear. I shall be passing the lodge to-morrow, and will bring it back with me. Parkins did not know whether he ought to have brought it himself."

His wife put a slim, white hand to her neck thoughtfully. "Ah, by the way, I promised to send some needlework down to the lodge to-morrow. I might go down myself, dear, and spare you the trouble."

As her husband turned again to their guest, with a remark about the meet for the following day, Lady Maitland lay back among her cushions, thinking deeply. She knew the effect her beauty had upon the imagination of Heriot North, who, for many years, had had but a limited acquaintance with the feminine sex.

"I fancy he might be useful to me," she thought. "He is quite quixotic, and has an exalted idea of the clinging loveliness of my sex! Yes, he most decidedly would do anything for me, and ask no questions!"

When Heriot rose to go, she was standing in the window, gazing out with pensive eyes.

"Good-bye, Mr. North," she said, gently, placing her hand in his, where it lay like a snowflake, cool and light. "I think you have spent quite enough time in India," she went on, "you must give your friends in England a chance now."

He bent over her hand silently. He had received his first command from Sir Trevor Maitland's haughty wife.

"Thank you, Lady Maitland," he replied simply. "I shall always be at the service of—my friends."

She smiled slightly. It amused her to receive the homage of this courtly man.

"When may I expect your commission for town?" he said, lowering his voice.

She raised her eyes to his, swiftly. "I will send it by messenger to-morrow to the Hollies," she replied clearly.

As they moved towards the door a pair of cruel, spiteful eyes followed them from behind the shelter of a screen.

The opposite end of the long drawing-room was bright with firelight and the sound of laughter, but the watcher on the other side of the screen was in darkness.

"So she is using *him*, now!" she muttered. "I wonder what she is sending to the 'Hollies' that he should take to town? I shall find out somehow."

As Lady Maitland rejoined the group round the hearth, a slight figure slipped noiselessly from behind the screen, and left the room.

* * * * * *

"Good morning, Mrs. Parkins; is Ivy Strange in? Tell her I want to speak with her," and Lady Maitland smiled graciously upon the plump, homely wife of the lodge-keeper.

The woman curtsied with pleasure and excitement. A visit from "her ladyship" was an event that did not happen twice in a year.

"Good morning, your leddyship," she stuttered, wiping her red hands quickly on an apron. "Ivy went out just a second ago, your leddyship, but said she would be back almost immediate, your leddyship. Will your leddyship take a chair?"

Lady Maitland smiled again. "Yes, Mrs. Parkins, I will wait just a second or two. I shall enjoy a warm by your bright fire this cold day."

Bristling with gratified importance, Mrs. Parkins brought a chair from the "parlour," and wiped it with her apron; then placed it in front of the roaring fire in the kitchen.

Lady Maitland sat down, and gazed round with smiling interest.

"This is very cheerful, Mrs. Parkins. You have a nice little home here."

The woman flushed with pleasure. "Thank you, your leddyship," she said. "Can I do anything else for your leddyship?"

"Nothing more, except to tell me whether you and Parkins have all you want. I like to make everyone near me happy," replied the sweet voice of her visitor. "Perhaps a basket of things from the Manor kitchen will be acceptable; warm soup on a cold evening is very comforting!" and her ladyship's smile sent a grateful glow through the lodge-keeper's wife.

Digitized by Google

"It's very good of your leddyship, marm!" she murmured. "The very words Parkins said to me the other night was that 'e wished 'e 'ad a little something 'ot for 'is supper."

"Had he been out long?" queried Lady Maitland.

"Yes, your leddyship; sometimes 'e goes round the grounds with one of the gamekeepers. And that night it was that 'e saw a man in the spinny talkin' to a woman!"

"Why did he not stop the man, Mrs. Parkins?" said her visitor; "surely it was dangerous to leave them?"

The woman hesitated. "You see, me leddy, Parkins was not armed, and for all 'e knew, the man might 'ave 'ad fire-arms. But 'e didn't waste 'is time, your leddyship, for 'e picked up something on the very spot afterwards. A pearl brooch, 'e must 'ave stole it, Parkins thinks, yer leddyship. But 'e 'as it to give to the squire."

"Surely, Mrs. Parkins, your husband is not going about with that brooch in his pocket!" exclaimed Lady Maitland. "It would be fatal if it were lost, as it will be most useful in the evidence, should the man be caught."

The woman smiled proudly. "Yer leddyship need 'ave no fear of that. Parkins brought it straight in 'ere, and puts it in the very last place where any thief would look for it!"

"And where is this wonderful place, Mrs. Parkins?" replied Lady Maitland graciously.

"There, on the mantel, inside that vase, your leddyship, and there it will stay until the squire 'as it. Shall I show it your leddyship?"

Lady Maitland shook her head, and stifled a yawn, prettily. "No, I don't think it had better be touched until the proper time, Mrs. Parkins." Then she said, "I am afraid it is getting rather late, and unless Ivy comes soon, I must be going. I wonder can you find someone to run up to the Manor and ask for the parcel I left on the oak settle in the hall? It is work for Ivy."

"Yes; your leddyship," the woman said eagerly. "I will find someone, or go myself; if your leddyship will excuse me leavin' you!"

She smiled graciously, and watched the lodge-keeper's wife hurry away. Then, with a sudden gesture, Lady Maitland rose from the chair, and took something down from the mantel. She emptied what it contained into her hand, smiling as she recognised the object of her search. She replaced the vase, slipped her hand into her pocket, and, after a slight pause, left the lodge, and strolled slowly up the drive. Half way up she saw Mrs. Parkins coming down.

"I stood by the gate after you had gone, Mrs. Parkins," her ladyship smiled, "then grew tired of waiting for that naughty girl! You must tell her to do that work quickly for me." Then, with a gracious gesture, she dismissed the woman.

When she was in her dressing-room, Lady Maitland unlocked her jewel-case and flung something into it, locking it again then putting it away. "I have not done a bad morning's work, after all," she murmured, thoughtfully, "and yet it was a very simple thing that I did!"

She changed her dress and went down to lunch, at peace with the world and herself. In the hall she met Agnes, now well again.

"Ah, Agnes, dear!" she said sweetly; "I wonder whether you are going out for a drive this afternoon? If so, will you do something for me?"

Agnes looked at her doubtfully. "What purpose had she for asking a favour of her?" She felt that something was beneath all this openness—that her step-mother had a reason for wishing her out of the way.

"I'm not sure," she replied curtly; "I did not intend going out. What do you wish done?" she added curiously.

Lady Maitland shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, since you are not using the carriage, I will do my commission myself," she replied carelessly. "It was merely to leave a small parcel of miniatures at Mr. North's place, 'The Hollies.' He is going to London to-morrow, he told us yesterday, and offered to do anything for me, so I thought it a good opportunity to give him the miniatures that I wanted copied. He knows a good place, I believe."

Agnes' face fell. After all, she had listened to a very innocent conversation yesterday, or—and she bit her lip—was her step-mother laughing at her?

At dinner, Sir Trevor turned suddenly to his wife. "Pearl, dear, I forgot to inquire whether you brought back that brooch, or whatever it was, from the lodge this morning."

Lady Maitland started, and looked apologetically across the table.

"Dear, I'm so sorry, but I entirely forgot to ask for it! I went down to the lodge, and chatted with Mrs. Parkins while waiting for Ivy, to give her instructions about the needlework; but when she did not come in—being probably otherwise engaged," and she shot a swift glance at Jack, who flushed hotly, "I could not wait any longer and came away."

"Never mind, my dear," he replied kindly, not liking to see her blame herself; "I will go down this evening after dinner."

Lady Maitland smiled. "Very well, Trevor. Perhaps, after all, you are the best person to receive anything of that nature."

But, deep down in her heart, she laughed at the memory of the locked box upstairs.

* * * * *

"Mrs. Parkins, I want to ask you something; and if you do all you can to help me, you shall be a bridesmaid at my wedding!"

"Lor'! Mr. Jack!" smiled Mrs. Parkins, as the son and heir to Maitland Manor settled himself down easily in the very chair that had been occupied the day before by his lovely step-mother; "'ow you do go on, sir! But if there is anything I can ever do for you, sir—me and Parkins, that is—we would crawl on our 'ands and knees to do it! That we would!"

Jack laughed, and puffed at his cigarette for a few seconds. Then he spoke, and this time he did not joke. "I don't want you to crawl on your hands and knees, Mrs. Parkins—that would only worry me. But I wish you, instead, to crawl back, mentally, fourteen years, and tell me what you remember about that day I found Ivy under the lodge wall."

"Goodness gracious, Mr. Jack!" exclaimed Mrs. Parkins; "whatever makes you ask me such a question now?"

He leant forward and touched the hard, horny hand that lay on the woman's lap. "I ask you that, Mrs. Parkins," he said, gravely, "because I have a great interest in the subject; because one day I hope to make Ivy my wife; but she refuses to let me say anything about marriage until she learns the worst—or the best—about her birth. So I am going to find out what I can; and I begin with you."

During his speech, the lodge-keeper's wife had gazed at him open-mouthed. That he, the future squire—Sir John Maitland, of Melton—should stoop to woo the little foundling that Sir Trevor had had brought up with Miss Muriel, was a surprise so startling, that it took her fully several minutes to recover.

"What! Mr. Jack!" she murmured; "are you serious, sir? Whatever will the squire and 'is lady say?"

"I marry to please myself, Mrs. Parkins," and a note of hauteur crept into Jack Maitland's voice. "My father and step-mother think it is only an infatuation on my part, but they don't know me yet! Now, to come to the subject," he continued; "the first thing to ask you is whether you still have the clothes that Ivy was found in? Although it was I who picked the little mite up, I was only a boy of eleven at the time, and can barely remember anything but the fact."

"Well, sir," she murmured thoughtfully, seeing that he was in earnest, "I can't say as 'ow I did keep the few things she was found in; they was mostly ragged, sir, although it was plain to me, even then, that Ivy was no common child! And when Sir Trevor persuaded 'is lady to let the girl stay with me, and go up to the Manor every day to learn with Miss Muriel, I just settled down with 'er, quite happy like, bless 'er heart! Why,

Digitized by Google

sir, she's grow'd up almost as lovely as 'er leddyship herself—if I'm not makin' too bold," she added hastily.

"Lovelier, to my mind!" Jack murmured. Then he said aloud: "So you have nothing belonging to her, Mrs. Parkins, not even a few beads that were round her neck, or a jacket with a mark, or—anything that might lead to a clue?"

Mrs. Parkins shook her head. "I don't remember beads nor nuffin, sir, but I'll 'ave a look in my old box to-morrow," she added quickly, seeing a cloud on his face. Suddenly she started and exclaimed excitedly:

"Stop, sir! I forgot! There *is* one thing that might 'elp you, if you are bent on findin' out the past! But you must promise never to let on to Ivy that I told you, for the dear bairn don't know 'erself, she's that innercent."

Jack paled, and his eyes grew anxious. What was he to learn about his poor little darling?

"I promise you," he replied quickly, "that she shall know nothing from me!"

Mrs. Parkins paused. "You see, sir, it was little more than a year after Sir Trevor brought 'ome 'is second lady to the Manor, that you found Ivy outside the lodge. Well, she was such a tot, only three, that I took no notice at first to think about looking for anything about 'er particular; for we was all took up with 'er leddyship's wonderful beauty and goodness in the village. But one night, sir——"

She paused to breathe, for Mrs. Parkins was a plump, short-throated dame, and quick speech was not easy to her.

"Go on," said Jack impatiently, his fair brow suddenly becoming moist. "What happened?"

"Nothin' 'appened, sir. But in combing the little love's beautiful, curly 'air one night, I come across a mark, on 'er forehead, right up under 'er curls, 'idden away-like, and the sight of it—faint and red—gave me and Parkins quite a turn!"

"What mark?" said Jack hoarsely; "for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Parkins, don't keep me in suspense! Why should a mark or scar give you a 'turn'?"

"Because, Mr. Jack, sir," replied the woman impressively, leaning forward and sinking her voice to a whisper; "because the mark on little Ivy's brows was the same as you see on them poor critters what figures in pictures in the magazines sometimes. It was a government mark, sir, Parkins said, the very spit of a broad arrow!"

(Another long instalment next week.)

"I do my spring cleaning at all seasons of the year." "How is that?" "I am a watchmaker."

The Visitor (viewing the new baby): "Do you think he is going to resemble his father?" The Mother: "I shouldn't be surprised. He keeps me up every night."

Miss Scraggs: "Yes, once when I was out alone on a dark night I saw a man, and, oh! my goodness, how I ran!" Little Willie: "And did you catch him, sister?"

Professor (to class): "Now, who can tell me the most wonderful achievement of the present century? Miss Morris, I see your hand raised." Miss Morris (proudly): "My sister Nellie has taught her pug dog, Thistle, to smoke."

A mistress told her maid that she must not always do things on her responsibility, but first ask permission. The next day Betty walked into the parlour, and said politely: "Ma'am, the cat is busy eating up the duck in the pantry. May I send her away or not?"

Little Dot: "I made a doll's swing to-day, an' I asked Ethel May to lend me her doll to try it with, an' she wouldn't do it. She's just the meanest, stingiest thing I ever saw." Little Dick: "Why didn't you use your own doll?" Little Dot: "I was afraid it might fall!"

"I must confess," explained a young woman, "that I grow weary of hearing those people talk about their family tree." "I have observed," replied Miss Cayenne, "that family trees are very much like ordinary trees. The old substantial stock is not shaken by any breeze. The more recent and unimportant twigs do all the rustling."

Your Editor Chats.

I would draw your special attention to the fact that I am offering two billiard tables, together with cues, balls, and all other accessories, as prizes in the new Competition which begins on the next page. The billiard tables will make a welcome addition to any room about 13ft. square, and will go on an ordinary dining-table. As regards the Competition itself, it is quite the most fascinating one we have had in *Short Stories* recently, as readers will see.

The last list of sentences but one in the Buried Names of Stations Competition appears on page 725; the last list, together with the closing date of the competition, will be published next week.

I am giving you another long instalment of "The Bond Between" this week. I do not doubt that my readers enjoyed the prologue and chapters which were published last week, and have been anxiously awaiting this number to learn further developments in the story. Anyone who has not yet started it can do so by reading the comprehensive summary of last week's instalment on the first page of the paper.

I have just received a most interesting letter, from which the following is an extract:—

"*I do so wish I had had the opportunity of reading* 'The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl' *earlier in my life. Like Maud Cardew, I was seized with the desire to make a name in the world, and left my country home for London, where, unfortunately, being ignorant of the ways of a big city, I fell into some of the pitfalls that are so abundant. Happily I came through all right, but only after terrible experiences, of which I now shudder to think. Though I have not been quite such a success as Maud Cardew was, I have made as good a position as I desire. I do so hope you will print this letter, so that girls, thinking of going to London or other big cities, who only read the* 'Confessions' *from the story point of view, may re-read them and take to heart the advice contained therein.*"

Comment on this letter is, I think, unnecessary.

Particulars of the competition especially for ladies, about which I told you last week, will be found on page 717.

It is not really much trouble to buy a postal order or stamps, put them in an envelope, stamp and address it, and then post it, but yet how many people find it so. Just because they won't take this small amount of trouble it means that a number of little slum children have to forego their one red-letter day in the whole year—the day which they should spend in the country. It only costs ninepence to give one child a happy day, and that is a sum which I am sure most of my readers could afford.

As soon as you have read this column, put the paper down, go out to the nearest post office, buy nine penny stamps—or a postal order, if you can afford more—write your name and address on a piece of notepaper, put this, together with the stamps or postal order, in an envelope, which stamp and address to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. After you have done that you will feel that you can sit down with a clear conscience to enjoy reading the rest of the paper. I hope all my readers will act on this piece of advice.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN.
FIRST PRIZE,
£25.

CASH DOWN.
SECOND PRIZE,
£10.

CASH DOWN.
THIRD PRIZE,
£5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*
And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

• • • • • • • •

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink) in the space left for that purpose the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:
ABGHIIMMNR... Birmingham.

FIRST LIST.

1. **AGGLOSW** .....
2. **ABEFLST** .....
3. **DFOORX** .....
4. **EILLOOPRV** .....
5. **AAENSSW** .....
6. **BDILNU** .....
7. **DEORV** .....
8. **HMOOPRSTTU** .....
9. **DEELMS** .....
10. **KORY** .....
11. **ALOPTW** .....
12. **ABDEEENR** .....

Name..... Address.....

.....

Digitized by Google

DR. PERCIVAL'S PRESCRIPTION.

Telling of the Happiness a Lost Photograph Brought.

"I cannot tell what's the matter with the girl," remarked Mrs. Folliott crossly to her husband at the breakfast table. "Once upon a time she was punctual at meals, cheerful as a lark, and altogether a happy, light-hearted creature. And now she is quite changed. She has hardly a word to say for herself, moons listlessly about the house, and gives me a lot of anxiety."

"Try a month at Brighton," suggested old Folliott, who also had noticed his daughter's altered demeanour. "I expect West Kensington is getting on her nerves."

"Charles, don't be flippant. I am informed by Dr. Percival that the air of this locality is quite admirable, and as for your suggestion about Brighton, you seem to forget that Maude was there for nearly three weeks not long ago, and came home looking worse than ever."

"In that case," remarked Mr. Folliott gravely, "perhaps you had better take the girl to see Dr. Percival."

Later in the day Maude appeared, looking intensely unhappy. Her mother made no remark to the girl until she had sat for some moments in silence. She then broke the stillness by saying that she intended taking her to the doctor that very afternoon.

"He can't do me any good," said Maude, in a low, quivering tone. "Nobody can."

"Nonsense. A sound tonic will set you on your feet again, and bring some colour to your cheeks. You must certainly do what I suggest."

It therefore came to pass that Dr. Percival's consulting-room was invaded that afternoon by Mrs. Folliott and her daughter. That worthy physician, who had known the girl since infancy, took considerable interest in her case; but after sundry professional queries, admitted that he could find nothing radically wrong.

"Needs a tonic, perhaps," he said, as he seated himself at the table and wrote a prescription.

When the visitors had taken their leave the doctor picked up something that had fallen from Miss Maude's reticule when she took out her handkerchief. It was the photograph of a young and exceedingly good-looking concert singer, Noel Vane, who was rapidly making a big reputation in the musical world.

On the back of the portrait were written these words in Maude's girlish hand—

"O darling, darling, if only we could meet."

"Oho!" pondered the doctor, with a roguish smile, "so that's the cause of the young lady's illness, is it?"

Presently an inspiration flashed through his genial brain. He sat down and wrote to Mrs. Folliott as follows—

"Dear Mrs. Folliott—*Since handing you my prescription this afternoon it has occurred to me that what your daughter needs quite as much as physic is change and amusement. I happen to be on the committee of a concert to be given at the Town Hall in aid of our local hospital, and I have much pleasure in inclosing a couple of tickets for the entertainment, which I hope you will both be able to attend. I further inclose a programme of the performance, and hoping to see you there, remain—Yours very faithfully,* "Claude Percival."

Now, when the letter was read to Maude, she showed little interest therein, until her eyes encountered the programme which the doctor had forwarded. Then a flush came upon her cheek, for in large, bold type, she saw the name "Mr. Noel Vane."

"I—I shall certainly go, mother," she exclaimed, and Mrs. Folliott was amazed to perceive the sudden change that had transfigured her daughter; "and, do you know, I—I feel better already."

"Then that tonic has begun to work wonders very quickly," exclaimed Mrs. Folliott.

* * * * *

"Miss Folliott. Let me present to you Mr. Noel Vane, whom you have heard this evening."

Maude flushed with delight. A moment later she and the young tenor were chatting in a corner, and she was telling him how his voice had delighted her at all times.

"So pleased to hear you say so," he remarked, eyeing her with a glance that held deep admiration. "Er—I am singing at another concert in this neighbourhood next week, and should be delighted if you and your mother would come."

Maude murmured her thanks, whilst Mrs. Folliott, who now strolled towards them, was much gratified at being introduced to the leading singer of the evening.

In the days that followed Maude made steady progress in the direction of health. Mrs. Folliott commented on the "tonic" more than once, and told Maude that she was overjoyed at its success.

Maude smiled. She did not venture to disillusionise her mother by pointing out that the medicine had been used to water the plants, and that not a single drop had found its way down her throat. Yet such was the case, and it was the sequel to the doctor's prescription which was working the change in her, not the prescription itself.

Young Noel Vane soon afterwards became a frequent visitor at Folliott House, where he was made exceedingly welcome. And in the fulness of time Maude sought her mother, and said shyly—

"Mother, I'm engaged to be married."

"Indeed," cried the elder lady, assuming her glasses with an imperious manner. "This is a trifle sudden, I imagine. May I inquire who is the gentleman?"

"It's—it's Noel Vane," replied Maude, with a blush. "We—we always liked each other from the first."

Mrs. Folliott was considerably relieved. She had always feared that Reggie Howard, an impecunious city clerk, had won her daughter's affections, and it was a relief to find that her suspicions were wrong.

Next morning Dr. Percival happened to be passing the house as Miss Folliott emerged, drawing on her gloves.

"Aha, good morning, good morning, my dear," he exclaimed heartily. "You are looking quite well again."

"I *am* quite well again," she replied with a happy smile.

The doctor's acute gaze fixed itself upon a certain ring which lay upon her third finger, a ring that he had not noticed when she had consulted him three months before.

"Engaged, eh?" he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Let me congratulate you."

She thanked him, and went on to tell him what had happened. The twinkle in the medico's eye deepened as the story was unfolded.

"I'm glad I prescribed that concert for you," he said at length, "and that reminds me that there is a certain photograph, belonging to you, which I picked up in my surgery. I ought to have returned it to you long ago."

Maude blushed very red.

"Oh, doctor!" she cried. "I had been wondering where I dropped it. Then it was you who——"

She broke off suddenly, as the true explanation of the doctor's conduct flashed across her brain.

"It was very, very good of you," she said gratefully, and then added with a laugh, "What do I owe you for your services?"

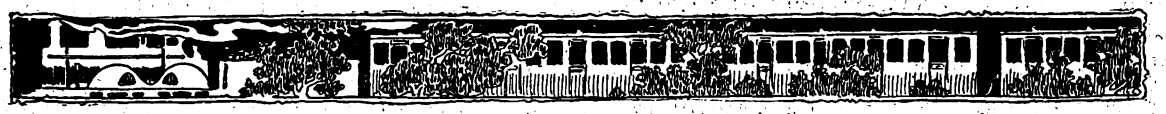
"A slice of wedding cake!" replied Dr. Percival promptly.

And in due course the fee was paid!

P. Beaufoy.

Digitized by Google

Begin reading now



Seizing the rope with both hands, he frantically endeavoured to get free—but without avail.

The Abduction of the Millionaire.

Being the third of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

The train steamed out of the station and stopped.

"We are creeping to-night," said Stourbridge.

"Harford, it's your turn for a story," declared Mr. Carter.

"Oh! I am not going to shirk my share of our little *causerie*," he replied.

And this is the tale he told:

Benjamin Pimento came of a money-making race, a race which, through long ages, has been noted, not for any special nationality, but for annexing every nation's wealth.

Benjamin's immediate relatives had not kept up the reputation of his race, in much the same way that some thoroughbred horses, instead of gracing a racecourse, find themselves in a hansom cab.

His parents had evidently transmitted their whole stock of wit, capacity, and method, unused, to their offspring. They were too apathetic for the keen, hurrying world into which they introduced young Benjamin.

It had outrun them in the eager chase for gold, and they were left dazed and bewildered at the starting post.

Thus they were living in poverty, instead of enjoying their natural birthright—wealth.

But Benjamin was a true Pimento—he was not destined to pass his career in the narrow straits of that struggling couple to whom he owed his existence. The blood of his forefathers ran strongly and swiftly in his veins, and that he would return to the fold, and prove his breed, was shown at the early age of three.

His mother missed him one morning, and an active search was at once commenced, but it was not amongst his infantile playmates that the boy was eventually discovered. He had found his way to the back of a tumble-down wooden shed, and was holding up his little pinafore, in which to place the loose, rusty nails. His small fingers were busily employed pulling them one by one out of the old rotten edifice.

When asked what he was doing, his natural business talents were displayed by announcing that he was going to sell them to the ironmonger. These propensities developed with age, and from picking out rusty nails in the rotten shed, he rose to collecting old clothes from those who had no further use for them, and selling them to others who had. The trade was a profitable one, and for a time he gave it his fullest energies, since the buying and selling pleased him. In fact he grew to be one of the cleverest and most distinguished members of the Old Clothes Exchange.

In this line he would certainly have possessed himself eventually of a fair fortune, but his ambition soared far above being cramped by the walls of Houndsditch. He longed for something better—his soul yearned to be great—and honoured—looked up to by all men. He wanted to make a position for himself—to fashion his life in a loftier mould. He had brains, and would use them, so he determined upon sailing for the land of gold and diamonds. There he might gather stores of rough gems as he once did rusty nails.

He went out confident of success, brimful of hope and energy. Youth is ever sanguine of prosperity when it first embarks on the sea of fortune. But as for collecting diamonds like nails, Benjamin was disappointed. Yet he found by obtaining them from the natives who had no right to possess them, their cost was small and their sale price large.

Benjamin Pimento did not labour in vain, but by these means soon became rich. With his brilliant business talents and cash capital, he grasped the many opportunities offering in the new land of gold.

Good fortune seemed to lie in his path, and in an amazingly short time he found himself a millionaire, and returned gilded to the great City of London.

But money was not all that he desired. He still had some vast ideas of progress to attain the goal of his ambition. Unlike so many of his race, who only live for greed of hard cash, Benjamin Pimento determined to become a factor in finance, which would soon obtain for him the social position he coveted.

Already the matrimonial market had raised him to a higher rung on Society's ladder. He had married the youngest daughter of a patrician family, whose pedigree was longer than their banking account. The exchange was fair

Digitized by Google

enough—wealth for birth, and the fair bride was not above loving her self-made husband. She spurred him on to loftier aims; she also lived chiefly for the esteem of men. They were well-matched, these two natures, each craving for distinction, and coveting the good opinion of their fellows.

Benjamin's policy, tact, and self-possession had through many a crisis held him in good stead; he was known to be a man of his word, a just master, a true friend.

He opened large offices in the City, and attempted to rival the Bank of England by making his own Consols and Bank. By this means his name became well-known, stockbrokers and West End speculators worshipping at his shrine.

One of the consequences of this notoriety was that he laid himself open to various attempts at fraud.

His partner, Mr. Foster, a shrewd man of the world, whom he had chosen with great judgment, protected him from many wiles, but their name was legion.

They had been discussing these attempts one evening before leaving the office, and had come to the conclusion that someone connected with their staff was divulging business secrets.

"It's very serious," said Foster, wrinkling his brow, as he followed Mr. Pimento downstairs.

"Can you come to the Gaiety to-night? I am dining first with Lord Brackwell, and taking him on there. Look us up if you have nothing better to do. Box A."

"Thanks, I'm afraid I can't manage it. I am engaged to-night."

"See you in the morning, then," said Pimento, as he stepped into his mail-phæton, gathered up the reins, and dashed away with his splendid roans.

Mr. Foster watched him, perhaps a trifle enviously, as he hailed his humble hansom.

"He's a good fellow," he said to himself, "and deserves to be rich. It must be rather gratifying to be run after and gaped at, to be a millionaire and honest—almost an anomaly! I don't suppose there is a more popular man in the City than Ben Pimento, even the rich can stand him."

And that was saying a great deal for the diamond king.

Lord Brackwell was a friend who wanted nothing out of Pimento; he was not one of the aristocratic but impoverished blood-suckers, who only too frequently settled like leeches on Ben and his wife.

He admired his sterling qualities, found his stories of South Africa diverting and amusing, for Ben could be good company, and was very well informed. Besides this, Lord Brackwell was a second cousin of Mrs. Pimento.

They dined together at the "Berkeley," where Benjamin Pimento was a well-known figure.

"You look tired, old man," said Lord Brackwell, with the familiar ease characteristic of him. "You overdo yourself—think too much, eh? There is such a quantity of matter packed into your brain, enough to break it. I avoid the City always; it seems such a nerve-destroying hole."

Pimento smiled.

"Yes, I have a fair amount on my mind for the moment, but nothing connected with finance could ever seem irksome to me. I was born to it, you know; it is the sap of my life, the foundation of my being. I meet with a good many difficulties from time to time. At the present moment Foster and I are ferreting out a veritable snake in the grass. As yet we have said nothing, but I can't stand underhand dealings. I would far rather be brought into contact with highway robbers than office thieves. The first defy, the others cringe, which I hate."

"But the good old days of roadside desperadoes are over; we are no longer attacked on the Queen's highway with a horse-pistol at our heads."

"There are crimes enough without that. It is as well that Claude Duval is out of date."

The two friends strolled late into Box A.

Many eyes were turned in Pimento's direction, for the diamond king was quite a celebrity.

"I like the Gaiety, it does not tax the intellect," said Lord Brackwell. "I can't stand a heavy drama after dinner—it is too indigestible."

"Will you come on with me to the club?" asked Ben, as the curtain fell, and he shrugged himself into his huge fur overcoat, for it was a bitter winter's night.

"Thanks, but I have promised to meet my wife at a ball, she wanted to leave early, so I think I shall go straight on."

As they came out into the vestibule Benjamin's footman, accompanied by another man servant, handed him a letter.

Mr. Pimento tore it open, seeing Foster's writing.

"DEAR BEN,—I am sending this to the theatre to catch you coming out. I *must* see you *at once* and *alone*. I have business with someone which will open your eyes. Come immediately. The bearer of this will bring you in my friend's carriage."

"I say, Brackwell," he exclaimed, "take my brougham, won't you? I have a very important affair to settle, and am going on in another conveyance, as I don't know how late I may be detained."

Then, turning to his own footman, he said:

"Tell them not to expect me at home. I am called away on an urgent matter."

"At it again," laughed Brackwell. "Always at fever-heat; burning the candle at both ends; business night and day. What a brain!"

"Good-night."

"Take care of yourself, Ben; you will crack up if you don't look out."

"Physically, then. I hope—not financially," and with these words Pimento was gone.

He followed the strange attendant to a carriage, the door being politely, though hurriedly opened, and he stepped in unobservantly, his head full of Foster's mysterious words:

"Something that would open his eyes!"

The carriage door was shut, and the vehicle rolled quickly away.

Ben threw himself back, and wondered what the nature of the business could be, for Forster was not in the habit of writing so peremptorily about anything.

So entirely engrossed was his mind since the receipt of the letter that he had not noticed the blinds of the brougham were drawn, and that he was in darkness. Suddenly awaking to the fact, he sat upright, and attempted to raise them, but, lo! and behold, his efforts proved fruitless. Much annoyed, he lit a match. Then a blinding, paralysing terror deadened his senses as he glanced round. No blinds, no windows, no door handles visible; only a padded prison of familiar shape.

He rose to his feet half in anger, but more in dread, and shouted vociferously for help. His voice seemed to re-echo like thunder round the walls, only to come back and choke him. The movement continued, the carriage sped on unchecked—no response. He

Digitized by Google

yelled himself hoarse, he beat and kicked where the doors and windows should have been, flinging the whole weight of his body against them, merely to find them of unanswering iron.

Gradually the conviction broke over him, it dulled his nerves till he almost swooned, his pulses fluttered and stopped, he sank back on the seat numb, speechless, till gradually the throbbing life welled back into his veins. Here was he, a millionaire, trapped like a beast of prey in the heart of the City.

He stared with bloodshot eyes at the brougham. He was seated facing the horses in a tiny stronghold compartment. Escape was impossible; he turned giddy and faint again as he realised his position. Why was he there? What was the scheme? He had no money to speak of on his person; a watch and chain and half a dozen sovereigns; that would not pay for the coachman's livery. It was like some ghastly delusion.

The darkness closed over his soul, he longed for a ray of light in that harrowing hour of gloom. But there was not so much as a chink to relieve the blackness. He might have been hidden from sight in a vault down in the earth—underground, instead of passing through the brilliantly-lighted streets of the great Metropolis.

A moment since he had been watching the latest dance, hearing the last new song, in the very midst of life. Now, surely death itself had been preferable to the uncertainty, the maddening horror, of his weird captivity.

The fiercest resistance would have been perfectly fruitless; it was useless to struggle, to scream, to protest. There was no one to listen or heed. He waited in unspeakable perturbation for something to happen.

Presently the carriage stopped. His heart sank. Sounds as of screws being unturned reached his eager ears, while a tremor of apprehension shot through Pimento's trembling form. His utter helplessness appalled him.

The unscrewing ceased, for a moment all was still, then a slight shake and a drop, and he found his carriage moving at right angles, still evidently on wheels. Several yards appeared to be traversed quite smoothly, again a stoppage, and with it the momentary cessation of Pimento's heart.

Then, to his utter amazement, the door of the carriage flew open, and he sprang out to find himself in a handsomely-furnished room. He stood for a second staggered, bewildered; he brushed the cold sweat from his brow, and a sigh almost approaching relief escaped his lips.

Looking round dazed, but hopeful, the words which were almost too good to be true broke from him involuntarily:

"Some joke of Foster's!"

A joke! The silent walls seemed to repeat that unlikely assertion in ribald jeers. Was that suspicious box in which he was detained—a joke? Ah! foolish fancy, how easily you mislead the despondent mind, that longs to sooths its panic and dismay by even the thinnest fabrication!

He turned to inspect his large cage. It was just as he expected, an iron compartment, shaped like a very small brougham, and capable of being removed at will on to smaller wheels. By this means it had been run into the room, which was equally alarming, being utterly bereft of doors or windows. He looked eagerly for some way of escape, but, alas! there was none, absolutely no trace of any outlet whatsoever.

Purple velvet curtains from floor to ceiling covered only *apparent* windows. Benjamin grew gradually more awe-struck and perplexed. He felt every inch of the wall; he tried them with hands and boots, but no secret spring answered to his efforts.

At last, wearied by unsuccessful attempts, he drew Foster's letter from his pocket to ascertain if he had been deceived by a clever forgery. His eyes ran anxiously down the page, he scanned the letter, word for word, with wrinkled brow. Yes, sure enough, the handwriting was miraculously similar, but *not* Foster's genuine style. He could see that at last—the daring imitation, the audacious signature, copied to the life.

He ground his teeth, crushing the false message in his hands with a muttered imprecation. All doubt disappeared; the scales fell from his eyes, as he realised at last unmistakably that he was the victim of foul play. As yet the motive of this plot had to be revealed. It was all as strange and inexplicable as ever.

Suddenly he was roused from his unpleasant reflections by the silent lowering of an iron curtain, which descended from the ceiling in front of the carriage, shutting it out from the apartment.

"Was it going on its silent way to seek another unwary occupant?" The grim thought crossed Benjamin's distracted mind.

"Poor fellows!" he muttered compassionately. He began to wonder who his unseen foes could be—why they had brought him there with such reckless daring. Surely they never intended him to leave alive! Yet they could not obtain his money without his help, and he remembered no one who would wish to murder him from malice or revenge.

A few hot words, and in the far-off land many a stand-up fight and midnight adventure. But Ben could recall no enemies who thirsted for his blood or vowed to track him down and take his life; he had never done any especial harm. Since his return as a millionaire he had tried to make himself popular and beloved. His generosity became a proverb among his friends—"As lavish as Pimento," "As charitable as 'Ben.'"

Then why was he here in this lion's den? He stretched out his arms and called loudly on his tormentors:

"Where are you—*what* are you?—fiends—scoundrels. Come out and face me; say all that you have against me, and I will answer you as man to man. What! you dare not? There is nothing to fear in a weak, unarmed, defenceless prisoner. Surely you will tell me your intentions—give me some trial? Can't you explain this dastard's trick?"

Pimento was on his mettle at last, and determined to show a bold front.

His words, though they fell on dead walls, evidently reached some unseen ears.

A voice, which he could not locate, answered, addressing him by name—"Mr. Pimento."

He looked swiftly round. No sign, no form, only the words.

He waited impatiently.

"Yes," he cried fiercely; "I am here—Benjamin Pimento—continue."

His tone was one of lofty command, though his blood ran cold and his knees knocked together.

"You are in our power."

Bah! how well he knew it.

"Do what we bid you, obey implicitly, and all shall be well with you."

He started, and replied with fresh force and energy:

"What do you want? Is it money?"

Again the voice made answer:

Digitized by Google

"Sit at the writing-table, and commit to paper exactly what I tell you, word for word—no more, no less."

He turned, and saw at the far end of the room a large desk, on which were paper, envelopes, pen, ink. The thick nib that he always used was placed in readiness. Chance, he thought, as his eye fell upon it. He pulled forward a high-backed chair, and sank into it exhausted. The weight of his arm as he raised the pen felt like lead, his fingers seemed paralysed, with every movement he glanced furtively behind him.

He pulled the empty sheet towards him, and waited for the voice to speak again.

It came distinctly.

"Date your letter to-day, Monday night, nothing more, and commence:

"Dear Foss."

Pimento dropped his pen in surprise and disgust. It rolled across the paper, making a black smudge.

It was the familiar term of "Foss" that had startled him more even than all the unnatural events of the evening, this being the way in which his private and confidential letters to his partner were always addressed.

It was clear this diabolical scheme was the work of one "in the know."

"Write on," said the voice gruffly.

"I wish you had been at the theatre to-night," continued the dictator. "I have a splendid piece of business on. It will startle the City. Our consols and banks are not in it."

Again the pen rolled from his quivering grasp, this time upon the blotting paper.

Ben flung back his head, while great drops of perspiration stood out on his face.

"Need I mention them?" he groaned.

But the voice inexorably repeated: "Our consols and banks are not in it. Mr. Frank Moleyns will call upon you in the morning about eleven o'clock with a letter from me. Be prepared with £100,000 in cash for him. I shall not be able to accompany him, but will ring you up on the telephone at that time, and speak to you myself. Withdraw all assistance from the Stock Exchange to-morrow."

Benjamin Pimento leapt to his feet as if he had been struck, his eyes aflame with indignation, his breast swelling, his teeth clenched. He gasped for breath; when his words came they were choked with fury.

"I can't do it," he cried, livid with anger, resentment, dread. "The money is bad enough, but the other affects my *honour*. I have publicly stated that the market shall have my assistance, and not to do so would ruin my character in the City. They will put me down as a trickster."

A jeering laugh was the only reply from behind the wall.

"Write it."

He brought his fist down on the desk with a thud that resounded in the room.

"No," he hissed, and there was a ring of determination and deadly earnestness in the assertion.

There was silence. Ben sat staring at the paper without showing any inclination to proceed.

His mind was made up. Nothing should induce him to pen that scandalous sentence. He had risen step by step on to a pinnacle, his word was his bond, nothing should cast him down.

As he thus mused, he did not notice a rope fall over his head and tighten round his neck, each end passing through the opposite walls of the room. Seizing it with his hands, Benjamin endeavoured frantically to wrench himself free, but with no avail. So far he could breathe, but the unpleasant pressure on his throat warned him how easily that fleeting breath might be arrested.

The terrors of death compassed him about. He thought of the wife who loved him, the home in which she was the joy and sunshine. Could he give up all for the sake of his honour? It was a hard bill to pay.

"Thieves—villains—murderers!" he gasped, in a half-strangled whisper.

The voice said in its calm, calculating tones: "You are powerless to stop the tightening of this rope, write what you are told, and it will slacken. This is your last chance."

Life is dear, life above all things when death has laid his cold hand upon its victim. Benjamin Pimento was only mortal after all. Compliance being thus a sheer necessity, he wrote the fatal command:

"*Withdraw all assistance from the Stock Exchange to-morrow.*—*Yours ever*, Ben."

The voice continued:

"Address the envelope to your office, and place it on the bracket in front of you."

Reluctantly he obeyed. His head fell between his hands, he ground his teeth in agony and despair.

He stared through his fingers at that shameful epistle. The bracket revolved through the wall; his letter had gone beyond his reach—beyond control. Death or dishonour—dishonour or death! The words rang in his ears.

"It will be posted to-night," he thought, pacing with silent tread on the thick carpet. "What *will* Foster think? My writing, my orders! All that I have lived for—the position I have worked, fought, struggled to obtain—irretrievably lost! I shall be written down as a low-class speculator, who will stick at no meanness to affect markets!"

He paused in his steady march, for another movement attracted his attention—a table which revolved through the wall, and was spread with a most *recherché* supper, and a notice on it:

"Eat and drink, for to-morrow (if you behave yourself) you will not die. The couch in the corner will serve for your repose, which we trust will be undisturbed."

So those dare-devil desperadoes had not forgotten the courtesies of life; they would press their appetising fare on the unwilling guest, and lodge him in the luxurious apartment upon a bed of cushions and eiderdowns.

They had provided lavishly for his comfort, though he gazed on the elegant dishes disdainfully.

How could he eat? He turned from the table, revolted by the sight of food. But his throat was dry and sore, he fancied he still felt the rope on his windpipe, and, filling a glass of champagne, he drank it down feverishly, and another and another.

Then he fell wearily upon the lounge, overwrought by the miseries of the night, and tossed in mental torture till the day dawned, when his haggard eyes closed in the heavy, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

When he awoke and a flood of thought rushed in upon his dazed senses, the wretchedness of his position returned tenfold. With another day fresh humiliations were forced upon him, and the cruel voice (when he had made a farce of breakfasting) ordered Benjamin Pimento once more to the desk.

"Remember," it repeated, "write every syllable, or your fate is sealed."

Again that objectionable forcing of their knowledge upon Ben.

"Dear Foss,—*The bearer of this, Mr. Frank Moleyns, is the gentleman I wrote to you about last night. He will call about eleven, when I will ring you up on the telephone.*"

A last wild hope rose into his heart as he penned the words that from getting on to the telephone he might possibly be able to slip in a word of caution. At any rate it would show Foster who he was.

So he clung to this little grain of comfort till the voice informed him it was then eleven.

"You are required at the telephone," it solemnly announced.

Benjamin was startled from a reverie into which he had fallen, planning an impossible escape.

"Where is it?" he asked breathlessly.

As he turned to look, the wall at his right to about his own height and width receded, forming a niche in which he saw the mouth of the telephone.

Pimento walked up to it curiously, and stood in the niche, whereupon the rope again dropped over his neck, and the voice, now close to his ear, whispered:

"You must repeat my very words, no others. Any attempt to do so, and your speech will be silenced for ever."

Digitized by Google

The rope appeared to palpably tighten as if in warning.

"Do not think there is any chance of their discovering your hiding place by this telephone. We shall connect it with a wire over the house whose number is far from here."

In all his troubles Pimento could not but remark their forethought and cleverness.

"Remember," continued the voice, "we hear what is said to you, for we have a connecting wire, and your answers must be exactly what we whisper in your ear or you will never leave these walls."

The electric call bell rang, and the voice said loudly—

"Number 37,804."

Yes, that was his number.

Soon another ring of the bell announced the connection, while the familiar voice of one of his clerks asked—

"Are you there? Who are you?"

The hidden whisper said—

"Connect me with Mr. Foster."

Almost immediately his partner's tones saluted his ear.

"Hulloa! Is that you, Ben?"

The whisper answered "Yes."

"Yes," repeated Ben.

"Where are you?"

"Never mind," said the whisper. "Has Mr. Frank Moleyns called?"

"Yes, he is here now," came the reply.

"Can you recognise my voice?" continued the whisper, which Benjamin Pimento passed on.

"Perfectly," from Foster.

"Then give him that £100,000 at once in bank-notes."

"I have drawn it for him, and will hand it to him now."

The whisper said—

"When he has got it tell him to speak to me."

Almost immediately a totally strange voice addressed Pimento.

"I have got the £100,000 and will at once use it for the purpose arranged between us. Shall I explain the matter to Mr. Foster?"

The whisper answered—

"No; I will do so as soon as I can get into the City. You get off with it at once. Tell Mr. Foster to speak to me."

Foster's voice was again heard.

The whisper dictated—

"Send that fellow Moleyns off at once with the money, and don't keep him gossiping."

He could faintly hear Foster's farewell to Moleyns and the £100,000.

Again Foster's voice was at the telephone.

"I must speak to you about the other matter. You promised, as you know, to 'take in' any quantity of your Banks and Consols. Now that they find you are breaking faith with them, these stocks are falling heavily, and we are being roundly rated for our deceit. Pray withdraw now what you wrote me."

The rope tightened.

The whisper said—

"Tell them you won't do so."

As Benjamin hesitated the cords nearly choked him. He began gasping the words which at once loosened the cruel pressure.

"Tell them I shall not do so. Good-bye."

The connection was rung off, the rope withdrawn.

Pimento staggered back. What a villain all his friends whom he had told to buy the shares would think him. His character in the City would be ruined for life.

The voice resumed its former position, and told him to make himself comfortable for the day.

"Can't I leave now?" he moaned. "Are you not even yet satisfied?"

"Quite," replied the voice. "But we must have a quiet day without your interference, to turn the notes into gold and to allow sufficient fall for the shares."

Ben groaned. "Sufficient fall for the shares!"

He cared little for the £100,000 compared with his damaged financial honour.

The day dragged wearily by; at nightfall the revolving iron shutter gradually rose, and his carriage reappeared.

"Get in," said the voice, "and fear not for your safety."

He quickly complied, the door was shut, the wheels moved, and stopped. There was a lifting and a screwing, followed by the welcome rattle of wheels over stones. The drive seemed short, shorter than he had expected.

The carriage stopped, he eagerly waited for the lifting and screwing, but it did not come. He was evidently in some large thoroughfare. Still no movement of the carriage. What could it mean?

Feeling assured of the proximity of passers-by he determined to make one bid for his liberty.

With a yell and a bang on the door, which was immediately opened by someone passing, to his intense astonishment he jumped out.

At that instant a newspaper boy passing shouted—

"Evenin' paper! Great panic in the City!"

Where was he? The carriage stood still, the horse being held by a man at its head.

Pimento looked round, recognising the Café Royal, Regent Street, a short way off. Collecting himself in a moment, he sprang like a tiger at the man by the horse.

The passers-by, as well as the victim attacked, evidently took him for a lunatic, and called "Police!"

On a constable arriving, the horse-holder explained that he was employed in the public-house across the pavement, and the coachman had asked him to hold the horse while he had a drink, for which purpose he went inside, and had not yet come out.

Benjamin followed hastily, dashed inside, but found the man had drunk his glass of beer and left by an opposite door, leading into a side street, where all clue was lost.

The carriage and horse were taken to Scotland Yard, all that was left to Benjamin Pimento for his £100,000. But even these did not serve to disclose the plot, which remains a mystery to this day.

Ben's intimate friends believed the story as told, but the financial world looked upon it as ridiculous, and credited him with inventing it, as a cloak to cover his disgraceful means of getting back his shares cheap. The social public smiled and said: *Cherchez la femme!*

(*Next week: "A Strange Encounter."*)

WHO WANTS A HUSBAND?

A Competition for Ladies Only.

The Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* has decided to offer his assistant, Mr. P. Doubleyou, as a prize to his lady readers. Mr. P. Doubleyou is tall and well-built, has regular features, fair hair and blue eyes, a broad, thoughtful brow, and looks the Briton to perfection.

Ladies between the ages of seventeen and seventy are eligible to compete. They must, however, be either spinsters or widows.

The fact of entering the competition does not in any way bind the successful competitor to marry Mr. P. Doubleyou if she doesn't like him after the meeting has taken place.

All expenses in connection with the marriage, including the bride's trousseau—which she will be allowed to choose herself—and white silk wedding dress, will be defrayed by *Pearson's Weekly*. Mr. P. Doubleyou will be granted a month's holiday for the honeymoon, of which all expenses will be paid.

Full particulars as to how you may win this prize will be found in the Whitsun Holiday Number of *Pearson's Weekly*, now on sale. Price twopence.

Digitized by Google

CHERRIES AND PILLS.

Telling of the Conquest of Science by Love.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

"Oh, come, mother, that's not fair, you have been gloating over that letter of yours with the most intense satisfaction depicted on every feature, and yet you are mean enough to keep the contents to yourself. I protest!"

"Hush, Joey," remonstrated the elder sister, "you should not be so flippant."

"Nonsense, Loo, you need not pretend to be so aggressively faultless, for you are just longing to know the contents of that letter, only you are such a fraud, you can go on placidly absorbing bacon and eggs, and toast and butter while curiosity devours you. Now I can't, that's just the difference between us!"

Mrs. Braxton and her daughters were sitting over the breakfast-table, while this light skirmish of words was going on between the two sisters.

Mrs. Braxton had very aristocratic tastes; when her first baby girl had made her appearance, the proud mother had insisted on giving her the high-sounding French name of Marie-Louise, to which she always religiously adhered despite its length, though many other people used the pet diminutive of Loo.

When, five years later, a second child was added to the nursery, nothing would content Mrs. Braxton but to call the new stranger Josephine.

Mr. Braxton mildly protested, then comforted himself by calling the child Joey. It had been a bitter disappointment to him not to have a son, and as the youthful Joey developed the most mischievous boy-like tendencies, he lured himself into the belief that she really was a boy. She was the companion of all his leisure hours, which unfortunately were few, as he was a busy city man.

Marie-Louise, who much resembled her mother, was the latter's favourite. Then came the sudden failure of Mr. Braxton's business in the city, through no fault of his, but through the culpability of his partner.

Mr. Braxton's health broke down under the harassing strain, both mental and physical, the doctors prescribed change of air. Mrs. Braxton proceeded to Mentone with her husband. Alas! all to no purpose, for hardly had they reached the South of France when Mr. Braxton died.

Nothing remained to the widow but to return to England and try to settle their affairs. Mrs. Braxton and her children had only a very small pittance left upon which to live, and they retired to a small place in Wiltshire.

Marie-Louise and her mother found it very hard to get reconciled to their life and surroundings at the Gable House, in this small, out-of-the-way village of Woodford. The society of the place was composed of the Rector and his family, the Doctor, and a few gentleman farmers.

It was now two years since they had been "buried alive in this hole," as Marie-Louise was wont contemptuously to style the Gable House, and the London-bred girl pined for some excitement, some change in their miserable, dull life, when a bright thought struck her. Why not advertise for a boarder? She at once submitted her idea to her mother.

"But, my dear child," the latter argued, "what girl would care to come and vegetate in our parts?"

"Girl! Mother, why, surely you did not suppose I meant a lady boarder; a gentleman, of course, is what we want, some nice man from London who needs relaxation, country air, and perhaps a little shooting. All these advantages he could get here, besides the society of cultured ladies."

"Child, child, how you do talk on! What about the risk of bringing you two girls into close contact with a strange man of whom I should naturally know next to nothing."

"Pooh, mother, you need have no fears on that subject. I am well able to look after myself, and as for Joey, why, no man will trouble his head about that awkward, romping school-girl, such a chit of a child."

"Well, but, Marie-Louise, how are we to get this boarder?"

"Oh, advertise, of course. Much as I hate this old place for its being so far from London, it is most picturesque with its projecting gables and lattice-windows, where ivy and roses, clematis and jessamine creep all over the premises. Most men coming from chambers in town would simply rave about the ideal poetry of the whole thing."

"In fact, for anyone but you, this is a very paradise of earthly bliss," said the mother smiling and coming round gradually as she always did to every suggestion of her favourite daughter.

"Of course it is, mother, and then just think of the inexhaustible fund we can draw upon to attract antiquarians and lovers of the relics of the past. Think of Stonehenge, Old Sarum, Salisbury Cathedral, all within, so to speak, a stone's throw of the Gable House."

So the matter was settled and the notice sent up to the *Morning Post*. When Joey heard of this, she vehemently protested.

"Oh, mother, Loo, how excruciatingly horrid to have a boarder, a strange man prowling about our place. We shall feel as if we must never talk about anything freely in the presence of this intruder!"

"You will certainly have to keep guard a little over your vocabulary of slang such as boys use in the public schools," sneered her sister.

Joey knew her protestations were not of the slightest use.

Several weeks passed and the advertisement remained unanswered.

"Well," burst out Joey, one Sunday evening, "it is the first time an earnest prayer of mine has been answered."

"What on earth does the child mean?" queried Mrs. Braxton.

"Oh, nothing, mother, only for several Sundays now I have inserted a clause in the Litany:

"'From a boarder or any other noxious reptile, Good Lord, deliver us!'"

"Josephine," severely exclaimed her sister, "you are profane, nay, almost blasphemous!"

And now, the letter Mrs. Braxton was so intent on reading, even to the neglecting of her fragrant morning beverage, was from a gentleman, asking to come and spend a month at the Gable House. Smiling, Mrs. Braxton at last laid the letter down:

"My dear girls, here is some promising and pleasant news."

"Oh, I know," groaned poor Joey, "it is from some horrible man who is coming to inflict himself upon us. I shall feel

Digitized by Google

inclined to put crackers under his pillow or do something dreadful!"

"I hope a daughter of mine will always remember she is a lady!"

"Yes, mother, but it is so tame being a lady; now if I were a country wench, I could just do as I like."

"But, mother, do tell us," impatiently broke in Marie-Louise, "who is he? What does he say? When is he coming?"

"Gently, gently, my dear, I cannot answer a string of questions all at once. First of all, he is not quite a stranger and that quiets my scruples about his associating with you two girls——"

"Don't be afraid, mother dear, *I* shall not give him much of my society!"

"Don't be such a chatterbox, Joey, and let mother tell us all about him."

"Well, my notice in the *Morning Post* was seen by a former school friend of mine; she married long before I did, and we lost sight of each other, though we heard of each other's wedding; only our paths in life lay in different ways, and we never met. However, she is a widow now and has a son who is one of the rising doctors in London——"

"Oh, good gracious, a quack who will chase us round the house with physic-bottles and pill-boxes, it is even worse than I thought!"

"Josephine, be quiet at once. He is a rising young doctor, in fact his mother says he is one of the shining lights of science in the medical world. He is sadly in want of a change, wishes especially for peace and quiet, and his mother on seeing my name strongly urged him to try this out-of-the-way spot where he could have absolute rest.

"He is wonderfully clever and learned, deeply read, and Stonehenge and Old Sarum are helping to attract him here. We are to wire back 'yes' or 'no' if we can take him in to-morrow."

"Oh, goodness, I never thought the evil day was so close at hand!"

"Mother, this is too delightful and exciting. What is his name? Of course, he is unmarried?"

"Oh, Loo, surely you are not going to set your cap at a man who will pay us so much for his keep, who will come to our house as he would to a wayside hostelry!"

"Josephine, really your nonsensical remarks are too silly. Mother, do tell her she must in future be more careful with that glib tongue of hers."

"Oh, don't worry, Loo; I shall be mute enough when that wretched pill-giver is here."

"Mind, girls, I wish to impress on you that this gentleman is to be treated absolutely as a *guest*," Mrs. Braxton laid great stress on this word, "there is to be no question of his being a boarder, that would be most indelicate. You are to tell all our acquaintances in the village that we are expecting a guest. We must, of course, get the spare room ready at once and telegraph to Doctor Rocklin that we shall be quite ready for him to-morrow."

"Rocklin, mother, what a sweet name!"

"Yes, Gilbert Rocklin."

"I wonder if he is good-looking!"

"Oh, Loo, I shall sketch you his phiz in half a minute. Bald pate from overstudy and excess of brain development, blue specs. to show he is a 'savant,' slight stoop of the shoulders, resulting from constant poring over his books."

"A truce to your folly, Josephine; there are serious household matters to be discussed and carried out before our guest arrives."

The whole house was turned inside out the next day preparing for the stranger, whose advent was so distasteful to poor Joey. Mrs. Braxton donned her black Sunday silk and her most coquettish lace cap; as for Marie-Louise, she arrayed herself in a most becoming pale lavender frock, which "suited her style of beauty," she asserted.

Joey made no change in her everyday toilette. Disgusted with all the fuss made over the expected arrival of "the wretch!"

Standing beneath the tree, and gazing up at her, was a very good-looking young man.

as she mentally called him, she bent her steps into the orchard with a novel well tucked away into the bosom of her dress. She promised herself the delights of a whole afternoon's reading.

The orchard at the Gable House was quite an ideal spot; the trees were generally well-laden with fruit as each season came round, and the orchard sloped right down to the river Avon, which meandered along between its green banks perfumed by the exquisite fragrance of the tall meadow-sweet, which seems to grow here in greater profusion than in any other part of England.

This happened to be the month of June, the loveliest month, perhaps of any of the twelve; the

Digitized by Google

whole of Nature seems to bloom and bud afresh, and we are not yet scorched by the burning rays of the July or August sun.

Joey made straight for the farthest end of the orchard; she stopped under the spreading branches of a veteran cherry-tree, whose gnarled trunk proclaimed its great age.

Nimbly as a young squirrel she climbed into the tree, and soon ensconced herself comfortably among the branches. She buried herself in her book and was soon lost to all else besides. She never realised exactly how long she had been up there, when some sort of mysterious instinct warned her she was no longer alone in the orchard.

Lifting her eyes from her book she looked down. To her horror she saw a man (in spite of her dismay she was quick to notice he was a very good-looking young man) standing right beneath her tree and gazing up at her with an amused twinkle in his handsome, honest, brown eyes.

Surely this gentleman who looked so aggressively youthful could not be the swell physician from London; but, then, who on earth *could* he be?

He was the first to break the embarrassing silence.

"What a cosy seat you seem to have up there!"

"Oh, the monster!" thought Joey, "to pass remarks on my position up here!" Still she tried, in spite of adverse circumstances, to be dignified, and she addressed him in a freezing tone:

"You have the advantage of me, sir, as I have not the honour of knowing who you are!"

"Well, yes, I suppose I am trespassing really, but I was not aware this was private property till I came unawares upon this tree, bearing such unexpected and charming fruit."

Joey blushed, and then felt angry with herself for being so idiotic. He pretended not to notice and calmly proceeded:

"I lost my way coming from the station, wandered along the banks of your river, which is a dream of beauty, and quite unintentionally, I assure you, stumbled into your orchard. I was seeking the Gable House."

"Oh! then you are really Dr. Rocklin?"

"Yes, certainly, very much at your service."

"Oh, no, thanks! I do not want your services at all!"

He laughed outright.

"Nay, don't alarm yourself, I shall not feel your pulse and prescribe for you against your will. Besides, the roses on your cheeks are evidences enough that you do not need my services."

Again Joey blushed, feeling wild with herself all the time for doing so.

"May I inquire how you know my name, when I am quite in the dark as to yours?" he queried.

"Of course I guessed who you are because this is the Gable House, only you have come in at the back instead of the front."

"Indeed!" And the young doctor seemed unnaturally elated at this piece of information.

"And so, *you* are Miss Braxton?"

"Oh, dear me, no! I am not Miss Braxton," and Joey laughed at the mere thought of being mistaken for her sister, "I am only Joey; my elder sister, Marie-Louise, is beautiful."

"And, Miss Joey, may I ask what *she* is, then?" and again she noticed the merry twinkle in his brown eyes.

"I? Ah, well, mother says I am an insignificant little schoolgirl!"

"Indeed! There is evidently some truth in the saying, 'one is never a prophet in one's own country.' So you are Miss Braxton Number Two, is that it?"

"Well, I suppose so, only no one ever calls me so—I am Joey, always Joey, to everyone!"

"I wonder if I might ask why they have presented you with our Colonial Secretary's Christian name. I never heard of a lady called Joey before!"

"Oh, that was my poor father's doing! You see he wished me to be a boy, and, failing that, he gave me a boy's name. My real name is Josephine."

"How very Napoleonic!"

"Yes, rather; I hate that pompous, French-sounding name—all those who love me call me Joey."

"Then I expect scores of people use that name."

She opened her large blue eyes to their widest extent. Was he unkindly making fun of her? No, he looked the very picture of innocence. She could not help thinking that, after all, his coming to the Gable House was not exactly the calamity she had dreaded. Only now she really wished he would betake himself to some other part of the premises; how on earth was she to descend from her tree if he would persist in remaining here? He seemed to read her thoughts, for he said abruptly:

"Won't you descend from your pedestal? I am at a disadvantage here, and you have to talk down to me!"

"Oh, please, Dr. Rocklin, would you mind going to the summer-house, just beyond those laurel-bushes, and fetching a basket so that we can gather some cherries?"

He gave her another of his quizzical looks from his merry brown eyes, and poor Joey was miserably conscious that he saw through her little device.

"Certainly, Miss Joey, if you pay me sufficiently high, I shall do your bidding."

"Pay you—how?"

"Well, bribe me, if you prefer it. Throw me down some of those cherries which are within your reach and out of mine."

Joey laughed, how boyish he seemed in spite of his learning and science. She plucked a large cherry, and, holding it between her finger and thumb, cried out merrily:

"Catch!"

"Shoot straight!" came the laughing retort, and he opened his mouth to receive the tempting morsel.

"Oh, for shame, Miss Joey, you aimed at my nose—I know you did! Let's try again."

And again and again Joey pelted him with cherries, which he sometimes ate, sometimes threw back at her. They both thoroughly enjoyed their little game, and were as elated as a couple of school-children out for a holiday.

At last Joey exclaimed:

"Haven't I bribed you enough? Do go for that basket!"

"Are you tired of our nice little game?" and he looked up at her half reproachfully.

"Oh, no, but—" she faltered in an embarrassed way.

"Yes, I see—quite so; you are weary of your exalted position," and, with a mischievous backward look, he strode off in the direction of the summer-house.

She did not lose much time in scrambling down from her tree, and when he returned she was busy picking up the fallen cherries, looking as demure as possible.

"Now, Miss Joey, if you had only asked me to help you down this would not have happened," and with his stick he pointed to a huge rent in her frock.

"Nor this!" and again his stick pointed, but this time it was her hair to which looked perilously near to falling, pins and hair seemed ready to part company for good.

She hastily put up her hand to prop up the falling structure, but too late, and in billowy waves of soft auburn silk, her beautiful hair fell over her shoulders, to her utter confusion.

"Shall I go for another basket?" he gravely asked.

"Oh, Dr. Rocklin, you are simply horrid—go away!" and helplessly she tried to stick in a rebellious pin here and there.

"Am I really horrid? You mean what you say, Miss Joey?"

"Yes, certainly, before you came I never called you anything, but the *wretch!* and I think I shall stick to it even now."

"Indeed! Why call me names before ever you laid eyes on me?"

"Oh, because I hated the idea of your coming here at all; I thought that your presence here would spoil all my pleasant home life."

"Well, in that case, I had better take the next train back to London if my presence is *so* distasteful to you."

"I said *before* you came," Joey murmured. "You see," she went on, "I had always associated doctors with pill-taking, and as pills are always nasty——"

Digitized by Google

"Well, and now that you know me, do you still associate me with pills, nasty pills?"

"No," and she looked up at him merrily from under her long lashes, "I shall always associate you now with—cherries!"

"Ah, thank you, that's better! What book was that you were reading?" and he picked it up from the long grass where it had fallen when he had startled her by his unexpected appearance.

"'A Heart of Stone,' good gracious! how can your mother let you read such a book?"

"Mother never interferes with what I read."

"This is a highly improper book for a child like you to be reading."

"But I am not a child!" Joey indignantly protested.

"You know I am leaving here the day after to-morrow?" he asked abruptly.

"Very well, then, it is not the right sort of book for a young lady of your mature years."

"But, why not? It is so amusing. I have only just read the opening chapters, but it bids fair to be a delightful novel."

"Ah! you have only just begun it?"

"Yes," and she held out her hand for the book; "please give it back."

But with a quick movement he eluded her grasp and flung the offending volume right into the river Avon.

"Oh! how wicked of you! and it belongs to the Lending Library, too!"

"Never mind, I shall settle for it. Far better it should float down the Avon than poison the mind of a pure, innocent girl."

"I do not see what right you have to interfere with my reading," and she still looked at him with indignant eyes.

"No right at all, Miss Joey," he said gently, "except the righteous indignation of anyone who sees a noxious reptile ready to contaminate by its touch the fairest flower of a garden. Won't you forgive me?"

Joey was mollified by his pleading tones, and by the pretty compliments.

"Well, yes, I suppose I must forgive you. And, Dr. Rocklin, please, I want to ask you something," she said hesitatingly.

"Professionally?" he laughed, as he saw her move hastily back a few paces from him.

"No, of course not professionally. But, would you mind not telling mother and Marie-Louise how—I mean—where you found me in the orchard, because——"

"Yes, of course, I can quite understand. Your people do not approve of these bird-like flights of yours!"

"Dr. Rocklin, please, be generous. I may trust you not to betray me? You will say nothing?"

"Certainly!" and he felt elated at the mere thought of sharing this secret with her; it would make a bond of union between them.

They had by this time reached the lawn in front of the drawing-room windows, where Mrs. Braxton and Marie-Louise waited in state to receive their guest. To their amazement they now saw Joey calmly walking side by side and pleasantly chatting with the tall stranger who must be Doctor Rocklin.

As they neared the glass door opening out into the garden Joey hastily bid her new friend good-bye for the present.

Digitized by Google

"Please excuse me, Dr. Rocklin, but if mother sees me with my untidy hair I shall catch it."

The young man entered the room alone. Both ladies came forward eagerly to greet him. He made profuse apologies for his unofficial arrival by the back premises.

"But the fact is I lost my way, and wandered into your orchard without even knowing that I had reached the Gable House. There I had the good fortune to meet your daughter."

"Ah, yes, Josephine! She is such a child, you must have found her schoolgirl chatter very wearisome."

"No, indeed, I found Miss Joey's unsophisticated ways so fresh and delightful."

"Why, dear me, she is barely out of the schoolroom!"

Still, Dr. Rocklin perversely kept his eyes fixed on the door, and seemed but an indifferent listener to his two hostesses, who were, nevertheless, doing their level best to entertain him.

At last the door slid gently open, and Joey glided in; she had donned a white muslin frock, and had smoothed back her hair. He rose at once and courteously advanced a chair for her.

She glanced up at him gratefully, she was so unaccustomed to these attentions; no one ever seemed to pay heed to her. After tea, Dr. Rocklin was shown to his room, and then Marie-Louise was free to pour the vials of her wrath on her luckless younger sister.

* * * * *

Happy days now dawned for Joey, Dr. Rocklin sought her society on every possible pretext, it was continually—

"Miss Joey, would you mind taking me to Stonehenge?" "Could you spare the time to accompany me to Old Sarum?" "Would it be importuning you to ask you to take me on the river this afternoon?" and so on.

Marie-Louise levelled veiled sarcasms and biting sneers at her younger sister, but the young people were far too much absorbed in each other's society to pay much heed to her spiteful allusions.

His month's stay was quickly drawing to a close, and still he had not spoken to her, a sort of nervous dread held him back. "Suppose," he thought, "she does not reciprocate my love, and that in speaking out to her I lose her for ever!" True love is diffident, and tortures itself with these agonising perplexities as to the reciprocity of our love.

At last he felt he must speak; it was within two days of his leaving for London. They had wandered out immediately after supper at Gilbert Rocklin's wish, to gaze on Stonehenge by moonlight. It was indeed a grand sight to behold the silver orb shedding its glimmering radiance on these massive, century-old columns, the impenetrable mystery of which no human being can fathom.

Gilbert and Joey seated themselves on a fallen pillar, and discussed the ancient Druids, and how on this very stone altar, which still partly subsists, human victims had been slain to appease the wrath of the cruel deities who demanded that blood should flow to prove the zeal of their worshippers.

Suddenly Gilbert stopped talking, she looked up at him inquiringly.

"You know I am leaving the day after to-morrow?" he asked abruptly.

A swift look of pain shot across her face, but her innate womanly reserve was quick to warn her she must not show him how much she dreaded the approaching parting, and so she averted her face. He noticed the movement, did not guess the reason, and he sighed.

"I suppose my staying or going is of little import to you?"

Still she did not answer nor turn her face towards him.

"Well, Miss Joey, thanks to your pleasant companionship, my stay here has been a very happy one, a sort of bright oasis in my life which is like an arid desert of science and work."

"I have been happy, too, Dr. Rocklin, thanks to you," at last she ventured timidly to say. These few words seemed to give him sudden and desperate courage.

"I can't help it, Joey; don't be angry with me. I must speak out before I go. I know it is no use, but I love you."

She did not look at him even then, but softly on the night breeze were borne to him the astounding words—

"So do I!"

Quick as a flash of lightning he possessed himself of her hand.

"Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for not letting me know of this before!"

She looked at him demurely, and then a mischievous smile lit up her features.

"Not very likely I should! I was not aware that ladies proposed to gentlemen, except in leap year."

"But, Joey I have loved you from the very first moment I set eyes on you in the cherry-tree!"

"How strange, because I think I—well, I certainly liked you from the time I pelted you with cherries!"

"And I never suspected it!"

"Ah!" and she smiled with a superior air, "that's because until now you have addicted yourself far more to science than to love!"

"Well, I like the latter infinitely better than the former!"

"Do you really! Well, I must confess I appreciate cherries far more than pills!"

"Joey!"

"Yes?"

"I want to kiss you!"

"Oh, what a thing to suggest! Why, it would be profane to do so in these holy precincts. The souls of the Druids and of their slaughtered victims would rise from their long rest to anathematize us!"

But, in spite of her laughing protest Gilbert had his arm round her, and, drawing her towards him, imprinted a kiss on her unresisting lips.

And so, amidst the hoary vestiges of the Celtic religion, was enacted the old, old story which repeats itself over and over again through the passing centuries.

Lily Butler.

"There is always a way out of a scrape." "What's that?" "Letting your whiskers grow."

Baulso: "How did you manage to get through the crowd? I had to wait for an hour." Cumso: "I was smoking that cigar you gave me."

Lady: "Yes, Mr. Brown, I think poor pussy has had a stroke of apoplexy." Mr. Brown, M.R.C.V.S.: "M—m, I think not; looks more like a stroke of boot-jack."

"Did you know," said the man who was reading an article about the contraction of metals, "that a clock ticks faster in winter than summer?" "No, I never noticed that about a clock. But I know a gas-meter does."

"I want to look at some canes," said a magnificent young man to the shopman, "and I am in a hurry." "Yessir, yessir," responded the shopman, very much flusterted. "Here, James, show the gentleman some hurricanes."

An absent-minded man once received a letter. He knew the handwriting; he wanted to read it in haste. It was very dark, so he struck a light, tore a piece of paper, and lighted a candle. But the letter was gone—he had used it to light the candle.

C.: "I suppose Brown and his wife attracted the attention that newly-married couples usually do?" B.: "Oh, no! Brown married a widow, you know, and to avoid being suspected of being on a honeymoon trip she took one of her children with them."

Mrs. Dorcas: "I do think the *Ladies' Spare Time* is the best magazine I ever saw. In the current number it shows you how to make a lovely pair of slippers out of an old flannel shirt." Mrs. Newed: "But wouldn't that be difficult?" Mrs. Dorcas: "Not at all. If you make them too large you have only to soak them in water till they shrink to the proper size."

Digitized by Google

Last List Next Week.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The last list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

<---CUT THROUGH HERE--->

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

ELEVENTH LIST.

61. Your bay horse shows great promise, you'll surely win several prizes with him.

62. The whole prairie was covered with a bushy growth of small thorn and prickly pear trees, so that it was not easy to travel over it.

63. They patched up that old leak in the waste pipe; it had been a good deal of trouble, letting water fall through to the rooms below several times.

64. On our last cycle ride we did a record up and down hill, without having a spill. We were not long over it, either.

65. Don't stand on that bridge, it is likely to give way, the hurry and rush all day of trains have loosened the supports.

66. The Great North Road is one of the finest out of London. It runs through bigger cities than other main roads do.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

Digitized by Google

He Matched the Dog.

"How could Penelope marry that bowlegged man?" "She doesn't mind it, he matches her dachshund."

How Should He Know?

He: "I wouldn't cry, dear." She: "You don't kno what you would do if you had a new five-shilling handkerchief."

No Encouragement.

"What's worrying you, Harry dear?" "I'm afraid I'm not worthy of you, sweetheart." "Oh, well, keep on worrying."

He Put It Kindly.

Molly: "What did he mean by telling me I was as bright as the morning?" Dolly: "I suppose, dear, he meant—you were as plain as daylight."

It Was Much Brighter.

Rev. Dr. Thumper: "Does not married life seem brighter to you?" Mrs. Newbride: "Yes, rather. Our wedding presents included twenty-five lamps."

Papa's "Summary" Manner.

"You must not be discouraged, George," she said. "Papa may be abrupt, but his heart is as warm as a June day." "Yes," replied George, "I've noticed that his manner is very summary."

Evils Never Come Singly.

Mr. Bing: "It's remarkable, Miss Smith, how, when I follow you out of the ballroom, all the other men tag after us." Miss Smith: "Well, you know the old proverb—that evils never come singly."

How Theatres Should Be Arranged.

She: "Theatres ought to be arranged with the women all on one side, and the men on the other." He: "Why?" She: "So that when men go out between the acts they can tramp on each other's toes."

Had Seen it Before.

The Marquis (at the swellest ball in London): "Surely I have seen your beautiful face before, Miss Saintlou Cureall?" Miss Saintlou Cureall: "Mor'n likely. Pa used it on all his patent medicine ads., as 'After taking.'"

Feminine Amenities.

Clara: "I understand that Mr. Featherley paid me a very pretty compliment to-day?" Ethel: "Yes; what was it?" Clara: "He said that among the most beautiful young ladies at the party was Miss Clara Smith." Ethel (with a cough): "Yes, I noticed you among them."

Like Her Sister.

The addresses of a young man having been declined by a young lady, he paid court to her sister. "How much you resemble your sister," said he the evening of his first call. "You have the same hair, the same forehead, and the same eyes——" "And the same noes!" she added quickly.

Announcing the Engagement.

"How did Eleanor announce her engagement to the family?" "She just wiggled the finger that had on the diamond ring."

Still a Woman.

"So you discovered that female burglar in your house?" "Of course; she stepped on a baby's rubber doll, and thought it was a mouse."

Hadn't Far to Go.

Gerald: "If you don't marry me I shall go to the dogs." Geraldine: "You won't have to go far. There's one waiting for you at the gate."

How He'd Make a Name.

Jones: "I think your boy will become a very distinguished man if he lives long enough." "Yes? What do you think he will be distinguished for?" "Longevity—if he lives long enough."

A Fortune in his Grasp.

"Would you believe," said a thriftless young man to a friend, "that I had a fortune in my grasp last evening!" "How so?" asked the friend. "I shook hands with a girl whose fingers were covered with diamonds."

To Help the Sailors!

Mrs. Unsofist: "They say that the *Terrible* can steam twenty knots in an hour." Mr. Unsofist: "That's what she can do." Mrs. Unsofist: "I suppose they steam them so that the poor sailors can untie them more easily."

That Accounted for It.

Agent: "I think I can sell this place for you, but I can't get the £5,000 you ask. You'll have to take £4,998." Owner: "That's queer. Why should the extra £2 stand in the way?" Agent: "My customer is a woman."

Resigned to Fate.

"Come back!" Her cry smote the empty air and was lost. "Perhaps——" She bowed to the decree of Fate. "——it is better thus." Upon closer inspection she discovered that the umbrella he left was silk and not alpaca, after all.

His Chance.

Ethel: "They say that when De Broke proposed to Carrie, she tossed up a coin to decide whether or not she would accept him." Maud: "And the coin said no?" Ethel: "She never knew. Lord De Broke caught the coin when it was in the air, and rushed out with it."

He Wasn't Very Heartbroken.

A loveloRn swain, after conversing a while with the object of his affection on the interesting topic of matrimony, concluded at last with the emphatic question: "Will you have me?" "I am sorry to disappoint you," replied the lady, "and hope my refusal will not give pain; but I must answer 'no.'" "Well, well, that will do," said the philosophical lover; "and now suppose we change the subject."

Only His Bicycle Tyre.

She: "For the last four miles back I have been hearing soft, weird, far-away music. I wonder what it can be?" He: "It's my tyre leaking. It got flat before I started, and there was no pump to be had, so I got a blind accordion player to hitch it to his instrument with an old gas stove tube. He played 'Home, Sweet Home,' with variations, in it four times before it got hard. Now it's oozing out."

Plenty of Squeezing Then.

"Now, Algernon," said Miss Fussanfeather, as she was tightly held in the embrace of her *fiancé*, "they tell me that men get tired of squeezing after they are married. Will you promise me not to give it up after we are man and wife?" "Oh, I assure you it is not necessary to make any such promises," replied the young man. "I guarantee you'll have all the squeezing you want to do to get along on thirty shillings a week."

Digitized by Google

The Affair at No. 24.

How a Family Quarrel Nearly Ended in a Tragedy.

THE family affair at No. 24 Bracewell Terrace might be now described as a comedy-drama, although it approached the domain of tragedy at one period of its development.

The details of the affair, and how it tested the love of Horace Maxwell for Violet Harrison, did not become public property all at once; the facts leaked out one day one by one and only recently have the occupants of the other villas in the Terrace fully understood what happened. Their enjoyment of details is, however, marred by the fact that the house has had a change of tenants in the meanwhile.

The position at No. 24 at the beginning of the affair was, it seems, well known to some of the residents in Bracewell Terrace, and the following conversation, carried on at No. 23 (which was exactly opposite), states it accurately.

"It may work well but I doubt it," remarked Mrs. Clarke to her friend from No. 11. "I remember a case like it, and there was trouble over that. So there will be here, you mark my words."

"I don't think that I properly understand it," rejoined Mrs. Thomas, a meek creature entirely under the influence of Mrs. Clarke.

"Oh, it's very simple," asserted the latter. She was quizzically dubbed "the detective of the street" by certain other residents. "This is how it stands:

"Mrs. Baynes, at No. 24, has a brother; his name is Horace Maxwell and he is between three and four years younger than she. He fell in love with a Miss Violet Harrison, whose father was reputed to be very well-to-do, brought his daughter up like a lady, and thought that Maxwell was not good enough for her. Maxwell made up his mind to get on in his profession and Violet was willing to wait.

"Then old Harrison died, and it turned out that Violet would have to earn her own living. Maxwell would have married her there and then, but it was hardly the correct thing to marry immediately on the death of her father.

"Maxwell would not let her go out as a governess or in any other capacity, so it was arranged—chiefly by him and Mr. Baynes, his brother-in law, that Violet should live with the Baynes. She could help in the housework and gain an insight into household management, of which she has very little knowledge, I assure you.

"That seems a very good idea on the surface, but the fact is"—here Mrs. Clarke assumed a confidential air and tone—"Mrs. Baynes does not think so much of Miss Harrison as her brother does and is cross because he did not bestow his attentions on another young lady, a friend of hers."

"I see," said Mrs. Thomas reflectively. "That means trouble, very likely. Yet Mrs. Baynes ought to be glad, for her baby must occupy a great deal of her attention—young babies always do!—and it should be a comfort to her to have someone there to look after the house. I don't think much of the servant they've got, and my girl tells me that the girl at 24 won't stop."

"My opinion of Miss Harrison, from the glimpse I caught of her, is that she wouldn't mind performing any duty and would take up the servant's work if the Baynes should be without a maid for a time, which is likely enough if their girl leaves. But if Mrs. Baynes has taken any sort of a dislike to her, of course, trouble is sure to arise!"

There was one point which Mrs. Clarke forgot or did not know; that was that Mr. Horace Maxwell would be compelled by circumstances of his profession to undertake trips to South Africa two or three times during the ensuing year and was to bid farewell to his sweetheart within a week, prior to starting on the first journey.

Violet Harrison had been in the house of her prospective relatives for nearly a fortnight when the above-mentioned conversation took place.

She had welcomed the suggestion when first made and she had entered the Baynes' household with the firm belief that she would be as happy there as it was possible for her to be anywhere, but during the last two days she had begun to have misgivings. She could not quite comprehend the attitude of Horace's sister; it puzzled and slightly worried her.

The sisterly sympathy which she had expected from Alice Baynes was not forthcoming to the anticipated extent; something in Alice's manner jarred upon Violet's sensitive feelings, yet it would have been very difficult for her to have defined her complaint against Alice.

"It is all my fancy, I expect," murmured poor Violet, trying to be cheerful even while her heart was heavy. "I won't say anything to Horace; that would look like ingratitude; but I wish he were not going away!"

Violet Harrison was a pretty girl and had a gentle disposition; she was the kind of girl who would make a perfect helpmeet for a strong man—she would comfort him, encourage him, and make him good; his home would be a place of happiness; but she herself was not fitted to do rough battles with less sensitive natures, and she wanted the strong arm of a man to shield her. Viewed from this standpoint, there could have been no better match than Horace and Violet.

"I shall be away about two months, dearest!" said Horace Maxwell, as he said "Good-bye" to Violet on the day before his departure. "I am thankful that you are under this roof, and I shall be more thankful when I can conduct you to our own house! My sister is one of the kindest women you could

Digitized by Google

find ; my brother-in-law is a good fellow ; so you will be all right."

"I shall do my best to repay them for their kindness, Horace," said Violet simply, keeping back the tears with an effort. "Take care of yourself and come back soon—for my sake !"

Horace's answer need not be recorded ; let it be a secret between two loving hearts ! On the next day he left for Africa and Violet strove to banish all dismal thoughts and to believe that she was misjudging Alice.

Tom Baynes—good-hearted, easy-going fellow !—felt exceedingly comfortable for the next week ; things were going fairly well in his household, which had not been the case since the advent of the baby, and he was glad that Violet was there to help. He quite enjoyed himself in the evening and wondered why his energetic wife was not more contented than she appeared to be.

"It makes things easier for you, eh ?" he queried one evening when they were alone. "I am glad of that ! The baby worried you and the household worried you, and now—"

"And now it looks as if it would not be any better !" interposed Alice rather sharply.

She did not altogether appreciate the suggestion that she was having an easier time ; she liked to be regarded as an over-worked, over-worried woman, and she was losing this consolation.

"The girl has given notice, I am certain to be left alone for a time, as girls are so scarce, and Violet isn't much good. You see, she has never been trained in housework and—what are you laughing at ? I can tell you that housework cannot be performed properly unless you have been trained to it. My mother trained me !"

"Oh, we shall get over it !" said Tom cheerfully, anxious to change the subject. "I am sure that Violet will help, and you must wink at a few things ! Isn't she a quiet, inoffensive kind of girl ?"

Tom Baynes was beginning to wish that some of Violet's inoffensiveness could be transferred to his wife and some of her aggressiveness infused into Violet, just to equalise matters.

"She has a temper hidden away for use on occasions !" snapped Alice. "You may be sure of that !"

Things went on more or less satisfactorily till the general servant left, and then the baby was taken with some infantile ailment and the course of domestic economy did not run smooth. Violet had to do most of the household management, while Alice looked after the child and varied the monotony by grumbling at Violet's doings.

The baby's illness did not make Alice any better disposed towards her future sister-in-law. Irritated by the trouble, she vented her vexation and worry as a sort of safety valve on Violet. To do her justice, she did not comprehend the extent of her actions ; it was a case of want of thought quite as much as want of heart, but the results were the same.

The crisis was reached when Tom arrived home one evening and found Alice in the wildest excitement. The baby had been taken worse and the doctor had given his opinion to the effect that some kind of irritant poison had been imbibed by the little one. A trifling quantity of noxious fluid, or an apparently insignificant amount of powder mixed with its food, would be sufficient to do the mischief where so young a child was concerned.

"But the worst remains to be told," said Alice desperately. "Who gave the poisonous stuff to the little cherub ? Why, Violet !"

"Nonsense !" was all that Tom could gasp, so overwhelmed was he by this intelligence.

"I wish it *was* nonsense !" cried Alice in tears. "It is true enough ! I went into the kitchen after the doctor was gone, to tell her. She prepares the food. Of course, the doctor thinks that the irritant was in the food when bought, and I did not dare to undeceive him, for the credit of the family !

"Well, Violet was out in the garden. On the table stood some milk—just a drop that was left, and it tasted dreadful, almost enough to choke you. The smell was bad, too, but not the smell of ordinary sour milk. No ! I am convinced that something has been done !"

Tom Baynes looked grave ; the matter was assuming a serious aspect.

"Before we say anything, Alice, we must make inquiries !" he declared.

"I have already made inquiries !" said Mrs. Baynes decisively. "I called Mrs. Amer in to look after the baby and I went to the chemist. I remember that Violet went to the chemist last night, ostensibly to buy something for her headache, and I wanted to know what she bought.

"The chemist told me that he did not see the features of the girl very well, as he was shutting up and all his lights were out save one, and he didn't take particular notice, but he thought my description of Violet tallied. Naturally, I didn't say it was Violet to him !

"Well, she bought some poisonous stuff he sells for beetles and such like. I asked no more questions ; a small dose of that stuff, a grain or two, would be sufficient. Tom, that girl is bad, thoroughly bad ! I never trust such quiet, innocent people !' What are we to do with her ?"

"I'll have her in and question her, and if she cannot give a good account of herself, she must go !"

Tom Baynes' face became severe ; an attempt to injure a baby was a crime that merited heavy punishment.

"Violet, my wife has told you what the doctor said. You prepared the food. Have you any explanation to offer ?" inquired Tom, in coldly judicial tones.

Violet looked at him without comprehending. She turned her eyes to Alice and then back to Tom, and her lips parted as if to speak, evidently to ask what was meant. A sudden change came over her features as the force of the questions struck her ; she raised her hands as if to ward off a blow and cried :

"Oh, no, no ! Surely you do not think I did it ! Surely you do not wish to say that I wished to hurt the dear little thing !"

To an outsider, the ring of sincerity would have been recognised and her innocence practically established, but the parents were too interested to judge properly.

Alice was convinced ; Tom was exceedingly sorry that Violet should be implicated, but he felt that she had been animated by some motive, some feeling, which he could not understand, and his next utterance was more severe than the preceding.

"There are certain facts which require explanation," he went on, "and you should be able to explain them easily if there is nothing in them." He repeated what his wife had told him about the milk and the visit to the chemist.

"On your own statement," he continued, "the milk was perfectly good when you had it, yet there is no question that something had been done to it in the short space of time it was in this house. You bought beetle poison ?"

"I did not buy anything !" declared Violet with a sob. "I went out for the purpose, I know, but I thought the shop was shut, so I walked about for a minute or two and came back ! I did not do anything so wicked as to tamper with the baby's food ; why should I ?"

"I can't answer that question !" said Tom mournfully.

"It is all deceit !" cried Alice. "You have done wrong and now you must try to make out a good case for yourself ! The chemist is prepared to swear it was you, and the milk shall be analysed ! You will leave this house to-morrow !"

"You cannot charge me with acting so basely !" cried Violet, aroused now by the gravity of the charge. "There is no motive for me to act so, when you have been so good as to let me stay here. I will demand a proper investigation ! You shall not brand me as a criminal like this !"

She stood before them with flashing eyes and clenched hands. The trace of moisture in the lustrous eyes gave added power to their expression and the colour that suffused her cheeks made her look prettier than ever.

"It is wicked of you to condemn me like this !" she continued. "Oh, if Horace were here !"

After that outburst she broke down and sobbed. Tom whispered to his wife ;

Digitized by Google

"It looks black against her," he said, "but it isn't absolutely proved, and Horace will think that we might have sifted the matter thoroughly before accusing her. Better let her keep in her own room till we have investigated matters. She insists on an investigation, so if we send her away, we shall only make the affair public. Keep her here and sift the whole thing more privately!"

He carried his point and Violet accepted the arrangement; she was determined not to rest under a cloud if she could do anything to clear herself.

The milk was submitted for analysis; the preliminary report was that there was undoubtedly some noxious chemical in it, but a proper examination would be necessary to prove what it was.

The position was decidedly awkward; Violet feigned illness and kept her room, and Alice managed to engage the services of a charwoman. Such a condition of affairs, however, was intolerable, and there is no telling what would have happened if Horace had not arrived unexpectedly, nearly a fortnight before the appointed time.

"I kept you in ignorance in order to surprise you all!" he cried in high glee. "What's the matter? Where is Violet? Is there anything wrong with her, Alice? Tell me, quick!"

Alice led him into the best room and told the whole story as coherently as she could, ending with: "The baby is getting over it!"

"Attempt to poison the baby—fiddlesticks! You are mad, both you and Tom!" cried Horace angrily. "I don't care if the evidence is as black as night," he added, as his sister interposed a remark about the weight of evidence. "I won't believe it!"

In spite of his outburst, Horace was painfully impressed; despite his unwillingness to believe the evidence, he was forced to admit, to himself, that the whole matter had an ugly appearance. Yet, Violet was incapable of it!

"Let me go into the kitchen and see for myself," he said. "Some whitewash fell off the ceiling or something natural happened!"

At that moment Tom came home and, after a few words, Horace went to the kitchen, followed by husband and wife.

"There!" said Alice, pointing to a cup on the table. "There stands a cup with some milk, just as it was *then*. This cup is in the same position as that one was! Now——"

She began to cough, as did Tom and Horace.

"That stupid woman has pulled the damper out, and the coke fumes are coming into the kitchen!" said Tom angrily.

"Violet made that mistake once or twice," said Alice. "Coke burns well in that grate if you manipulate the dampers, and it isn't nearly so expensive as burning coals there."

Horace was looking at the grate meditatively. Then he went to the cup of milk, as an idea struck him, and sipped it.

"Taste that!" he cried. "Isn't that the same poison as you found in the other?"

"Yes!" returned Alice, looking at his searching eyes with a chill at her heart.

"Yes," said Horace bitterly. "You were so positive that you almost made me doubt the sweet girl's innocence! It's all as easy to explain as A. B. C.! The fumes of the coke have spread about the room and have impregnated the milk. Milk will take up vapours and infection more quickly than anything, and, of course, there is enough poison in those fumes to upset a child who took that milk made up into food!"

"Where is Violet?" was Horace's next remark.

He strode from the kitchen in time to catch her as she ran down the stairs, slipping in her eagerness to get to him as soon as she caught the sound of his voice.

It will be well to draw a veil over the two scenes—the happiness and reunion of two lovers, and the spectacle of Mr. and Mrs. Baynes making their apologies.

It was fortunate that Violet was a sweet, forgiving girl and that Horace was too pleased at the prospect of not having to go away on any more trips to South Africa.

The family affair had taught Alice a lesson; she insisted on Violet remaining with them that she might atone for her harshness, and she did her utmost for the girl till the time came for Horace to claim her as his bride. **F. Brewster.**

MOSELEYS FOOD

"MADE IN A MINUTE."

Moseleys Food is scientifically prepared *in vacuo* from selected cereals by a new process during which the starch is converted into a readily digestible and soluble product.

It possesses remarkable recuperative properties most fully demonstrated when there is difficulty in administering or retaining nourishment.

Preventing constipation without causing diarrhœa, Moseleys Food is an excellent substitute for Mother's Milk and may safely be given from birth.

It is neither malted nor peptonised and unlike many cereal foods will not create a tendency to rickets but can be used with marked benefit for that complaint.

Reference to Medical Men if desired.

SAMPLE 6D. TIN FREE ON APPLICATION.

MOSELEYS FOOD Ltd., Sample Dept., Stockport.

Digitized by Google

TWO IS COMPANY.

The Story of a Plucky Girl's Love Affair.

THE sun was sinking slowly in the western sky, leaving behind it a glory which transformed the earth.

A girl sat alone on a sand dune out of sight and sound of hotels and humanity.

Clasping her knees with her slim, brown hands, she gazed seaward with rapt, dreamy eyes, feeling rather than seeing the beauty of the scene.

Behind her lay the bay, a gleaming, golden thread, bordered by long stretches of marshes which gave out a sweet, dank odour.

Before her the breakers rose and fell with a dull thud and roar, and far out as eye could reach stretched the broad Atlantic, glowing with the splendid opalescent lights of sunset.

"Heavenly," said the girl to herself. And then, aloud, "I wish I could have the Gorgon's head for just about five minutes with eyes before and behind."

"What a cruel wish, Miss Allen," answered a voice not five feet distant. "I have been standing here transfixed by the brilliancy of your hair and the picture you form against that grey background. Would you have me stand for ever?"

"Sit down, Mr. Franklin, and stop casting reflections on my hair; it isn't kind. Besides, it isn't half so red as the bridge of your nose."

"It is the sun which casts reflections, not I, Miss Allen. But I am afraid one is company and two a crowd."

"Not at all," said the girl cordially. "I put off sentimentality with my teens. Besides, I love mankind too much to send you away," she added archly.

"I see you don't forget old haunts, Miss Allen, when putting away childish things," he said as he dropped down on the sand beside her.

"No, nor old friends," she answered, with a note of affection in her voice. "Tell me," she went on, "what have you been doing since we parted three years ago?"

"Ranching, in the first place, and getting back my strength, in the second. Ah! it is a glorious life, Miss Allen; the finest in the world."

"That is what you said about painting and Paris, if I remember rightly," she said quizzically. "Have you forgotten our talk on this very spot the day before you left that summer?"

"Never," he said; "nor you, nor anything pertaining to that miserable, delightful summer. How good you were to a cranky old invalid! By Jove! what a sweet little thing you were, anyway!"

"That was three years ago, Mr. Franklin. I was but a child," she said, with assumed dignity.

"Let me see, you were eighteen then. I shouldn't call you decrepit even now. But tell me about yourself. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing interesting; just living and learning," answered the girl, pushing back her red-gold hair.

"Indeed, is that all?" the man asked teasingly. "Mabel, does that ring mean anything?" he asked suddenly, as he caught a glimpse of diamonds on her hand.

"A great deal," she said, mischievously.

"Mabel, you are not—? Please explain yourself," he begged.

"It means," said the girl, "self-denial amounting to poverty. It means worry amounting to brain fever and three wrinkles. It means effort amounting to hard work but happiness, and it means money amounting to fifty pounds."

"Tell me about it?" urged Franklin.

"Well," began Mabel, "once upon a time there was a girl who had a fairy godmother in the shape of a great-aunt. This aunt made the girl many beautiful presents. She then lent her a valuable ring and told her to be very careful with it.

"The girl went to the seaside one summer and gave it to her young cousin to take care of one day when she went in bathing. When she asked him for it, it was gone and, although they searched diligently for it for days, it was never found. Of course, the girl felt that she must replace it, and she did.

"My aunt never suspected for this ring is exactly like the other, and I never told her about it until it was all paid for. Mother found it out sooner and wanted to help me, but I wouldn't let her."

"But, my child, how did you ever save up fifty pounds?" asked Franklin, knowing Mabel to be a little spendthrift.

"Of course, I couldn't take it out of my allowance, for that was spent. One must dress, you know," she said, looking down at her pretty, flimsy gown.

"Go on; I am absorbed," urged Franklin.

"At first I thought of a dancing class, for it was the only thing I could do."

"Except swim," put in Franklin.

"I wrote invitations by the dozen," went on Mabel, "but each child had some excuse. They either belonged to other classes or were too busy. I did finally get about a dozen, however, and we had great fun over it.

"Arthur played the violin and Nan played the piano. We took up the drawing-room carpet and cleared out most of the furniture so there was plenty of room. It kept things pretty lively and did us all lots of good. Mother would always come and give us some sort of refreshment, and the boys loved it. When we stopped I had earned twenty pounds."

"Capital!" applauded Franklin, watching the colour come and go in the face beside him.

"After that I plunged into all sorts of things. Fancy-work first, but it was out of season. Then picture-frames and menu-cards, which sold very slowly. They brought me in about five pounds."

"Go on, please," said Franklin, as the girl paused.

"Now comes the sad part of the story. I turned literary and wrote stories galore; wrote about all the sad things and all the funny things that I had ever heard. I pored over encyclopedias and books of travel for local colouring.

"I searched through old newspapers for thrilling and exciting incidents. I spent all my substance in stamps and paper and I received each story back about a week after I had sent it, with the editor's thanks."

Franklin laughed until the tears came to his eyes.

"I am sure, if you had told your stories, Mabel, instead of writing them, you would have made a small fortune," he said, when he could speak.

"It does seem funny now," admitted the girl, "but it wasn't a bit funny then. Sometimes I would give up in

Digitized by Google

despair, go to my room and—well, never mind. You're not a bit sympathetic."

"But I am, dear," he said, taking one of her hands and looking down into her saucy face. "I was thinking how brave and plucky you were to stick it out. Aren't you going to finish?"

"Yes," she said shyly, withdrawing her hand, "for this story ended happily. One day I was calling on a friend who had a Swedish girl visiting her.

"The talk drifted to art work of different kinds and the Swedish girl asked me if I knew anything about poker work, I didn't, and on the impulse of the moment she offered to teach me. I started the next day and in a month under her tuition had done some really lovely things. She said I had good hands for it, and you know grandfather was a sculptor. It all worked out beautifully.

"A cousin of mine was going to Brighton and offered to take my work with her and exhibit it at one of the big hotels. In a fortnight they were sold and I had orders for more. After that it was smooth sailing."

Mabel paused and they sat in silence, looking out at sea. Against the horizon a ship was sweeping majestically southward with all sails set. The moon was beginning to assert her silvery sway as the pink glow faded and the spirit of peace seemed to move upon the waters.

In the sweet beauty of the evening the two seemed to come closer together and then the girl began to speak again.

"I think it was all meant for my good. I used to be so restless before when I had nothing to do. Last winter I felt that I had a purpose in life. Don't think I advocate the new woman: but I do think we would all be better and happier if we had something definite and positive to do."

"Yes," agreed Franklin, "and that since you have been talking I have discovered your true vocation. It is myself. I need you. Would you, could you take me up, make a home for a lonely man, be the light of his eyes, the satisfaction of his heart?"

His voice was very tender, and as he leant over and looked into Mabel's face, she thought him the most irresistible lover in the world.

"You cannot be in earnest," she managed to say.

"More than I have ever been in my life, Mab. It is not a new thought. Three years ago, when you were the merriest, happiest child in the world, I began to dream of it. I believed myself to be a hopeless invalid, but the hope of coming back to you has been before me and I believe has helped to make me strong. Mab, you must, you shall love me!" and he caught her up in his arms.

"I do, I do," said a muffled voice from his breast.

"I see two's company and fwee is a cwowd," piped a small voice from behind, "but muvver says come home to supper. It's nearly over."

M. T. Wilkins.

Edith: "Oh, Ethel, what shall I do? Jack says he supposes it's all over between us, and that he'll send my presents back." Ethel (experienced): "Tell him to bring them."

"It is very kind of you, madam," said the tramp, "to give me such a splendid dinner." "Don't mention it, you poor man," said the kind-hearted woman. "But I will repay you," said the tramp gratefully. "I'll tell all my pals that you are a flinty-hearted termagant that ain't never known how to cook nothin' decent, so's they'll give your house the go-by and won't never bother you."

MUSIC FREE.

12 New Songs, Piano or Violin Pieces, free on approval, at wholesale prices. State kind required, and if songs, for what voice. N.B.—Agents wanted for our Tested Pianos and Organs. "Piano and Music Buyer's Guide," post free.

TURNER'S WHOLESALE MUSIC STORES, London Rd., Preston.

BORAX

Starch Glaze.

Starched Articles

are wonderfully improved in appearance if a pinch of Borax Starch Glaze is in the starch. It imparts a lustrous gloss and a flexible stiffness that no starch of itself can give. It makes linen, laces, and muslins look like new. It prevents the iron sticking, and saves all that wearisome and excessive ironing which discolours and wears the articles. With it any home laundress can obtain the finest laundry finish in an easy and pleasant manner. Without it—no matter what starch is used—disappointment is certain.

Sold in 1d. packets at all Grocers, Oilmen, and stores.

Facsimile Packet

FREE SAMPLE PACKET & SOME NOVELTIES if you name this Paper and your Grocer.

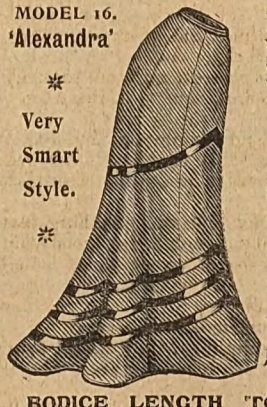
By Special Appointment — Makers to the King.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham

A GRAND BARGAIN

Our goods always come up to what we say about them, and sometimes more. Opinions differ on most things, but all who deal with us agree that for downright good value we cannot be equalled. All our energies—all our facilities—all our advantages, are turned to your profit. We are universally known as the house for "Reliability in Dress Wear." For a short period, as an advertisement, to get you interested in our exceptional values for all classes of goods, we make this special Bargain Offer.

MODEL 16.
'Alexandra'
*
Very Smart Style.
*



Very Stylish, Latest Fashion, Tailor-Made Dress Skirt (as Illustration) for the Marvellously Low Sum of

3/6 each, or **2** for **6/9**

Postage **5d.** *each extra.*

Made of our "Specialité" Unspottable Serge, trimmed with four rows of Extra Quality, Silk-Finished Braid; Perfect Fitting, with Pleated Back, and very full flounce for ease in walking. Inside extra well finished. Cannot be excelled at the usual retail stores at less than DOUBLE THE PRICE. State size of waist, and front length of skirt, when ordering. Over 28in. waist 6d. extra.

BODICE LENGTH TO MATCH, 2/-.

Write to-day for Illustrated Bargain Catalogue.

T. & J. ROBERTS, The Great Warehousemen, Moorhead, SHEFFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Last Instalment.

HELD APART.

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER, author of "The Golden Dwarf," "The Daughter of Mystery," etc.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO.

"What Could We Prove?"

Adeline, Lady Tarleton, was dead—dead suddenly and horribly. A maid had entered her boudoir upon some errand and found her, face downward, on the floor. When the startled servant raised the prostrate form and beheld the features of the dead woman, she shrieked and ran. The odour of almonds was in the air, and prussic acid, though a swift, is not a merciful poison.

Edward Stormont, hastily summoned to his sister-in-law's room, bent over her for a moment, and then rose. He had seen death too often not to recognise it.

The small phial from which she had taken the drug lay at his feet. Near was a sheet of paper, written upon. He picked it up. It was not in the dead woman's handwriting, but a bolder and more masculine one. Its first words riveted the explorer's attention. It was plainly a letter, and ran:

"My Lady,—*I've done the job, as agreed—how you will soon hear—and am off. This time the girl is done for and no spoof about it. But you'd best look out for yourself. That newspaper fellow has put two and two together and has as good as tried to have me arrested. Luckily that fool of a promoted bobby who's been hanging round was too thick to see it and I slipped through.*

By the bye, J. thinks I did for Hannah, and, what is worse, has twigged that there is something rummy behind the girl, whose existence he has somehow tumbled to. He's a smart hand, but do you make no mistake—if they come on me about H., I shall tell them who—I'll bet a thousand—did the trick. It didn't take me long to guess, once I had time to think things over. But you'd done me no great harm in stopping the old cat's breath—she was getting to be a drag on me—and I knew I could make you part just the same. Besides, I could have proved nothing about Hannah, you'd been too clever, and I didn't want to frighten you to no purpose.

Burn this. You shall hear from me later where to send the balance of the cash, so no more at present from—

"You Know Who."

Edward Stormont concealed the letter in his hand—it had stricken him with a horrid chill. A cluster of curious servants were whispering at the door—he sent one of them with a message to Paul Jerome, and, closing the door, covered the dead woman's face and lowered the blinds.

The war-correspondent came in quietly, perceiving, without astonishment, the grim tragedy that had taken place. The footman's outcry and blanched visage had prepared him for the worst.

The explorer gave him the letter. Paul Jerome read it deliberately. Then he sorted out a folded sheet from his pocket-book, opened it, knelt down by the still form on the floor and studied the fingers of one hand. He was making a cool comparison.

"Yes," he said, "it is best as it is, Stormont. I myself had put Ussher upon a clue which might ultimately have enabled him to hunt her down to a fate worse even than this. Needless to say, I did not anticipate that result."

He showed the explorer the finger-prints and told him all. Edward Stormont bent his head comprehendingly.

"Davenal was her maid," he observed, "at the time of Moira's supposed death. Heaven knows what happened then, but it is evident that Davenal knew enough to blackmail her Doubtless the woman's exactions led to her fate. Adeline must have grown desperate, as, now, confronted by possible, if not probable exposure, she must have grown terrified."

He re-read the letter. "'This time the girl is done for and no spoof about it,'" he repeated; "strange! Was she herself cheated by her assistants and the child preserved without her knowledge and consent? It is not impossible. And then Hannah Davenal's death may have been, in reality, the penalty of her deception."

The explorer drew out a match-case and lit a corner of the ex-steward's letter. It burnt steadily.

"No one must ever know," he said; "think of Irene."

The war-correspondent shivered.

"You are right," he answered, and together they watched the blazing document. When it was all consumed Edward Stormont dropped it on to the hearth and ground the ashes to powder with his foot.

"Will that avail to conceal anything?" asked Jerome, gloomily. "What of Hartigan?—he may be caught, and, not being actually a murderer, will probably elect to speak. Besides, will you not have to thrash out the question of Moira's identity? We seem to have taken it as demonstrated that she is your daughter, and, indeed, the circumstantial evidence is almost conclusive. But if she were put out of the way in order that your wife's fortune might pass, at your death, to Lady Tarleton, that object has been legally effected. Irene is now your heir; to make Moira so, you will have to reveal all."

Edward Stormont brooded over the problem. Then a light broke in upon his sombre visage.

"Guy loves her," he said, "and you love Irene. Let things be as Fate has made them. The dead past shall bury its dead."

"But——" began the war-correspondent. The explorer checked him.

"What could we prove at best?" he asked, "would not the law scoff at our fantastic tale of an empty coffin and a dead child that did not die. No. let well alone, when I die you will be the husband of a wealthy woman, Guy and Moira will have plenty with the Vanbrugh rent-roll and my private savings. I shall know myself, if few others do, the richer by a daughter, and Irene will be able to weep innocently for her mother."

He put away his match-case.

"Come," he added, "let the law don its spectacles and see what it can see. We will leave ourselves in Mr. Ussher's hands."

Despite the tragedy of their surroundings, Paul Jerome's lip twitched. The half-formed smile lost itself in a sigh and he went out of the room with the explorer.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE.

A Question of Secrecy.

"Thank you kindly, sir, 'tis well meant, but you'll let me say 'no' all the same. I'm not a poor man, sir, if I were, I've given you my word to be silent, and anyone in Groudle—man, woman, or child—will tell you that John Davenal's word can be trusted. And I'd rather there was no mention of money between *us*."

The speaker laid a slight but unmistakable emphasis on the

(*Concluded on page 734.*)

Digitized by Google

ALFOS CO REG'D

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

ALFOS CO REG'D

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 898. 10/6

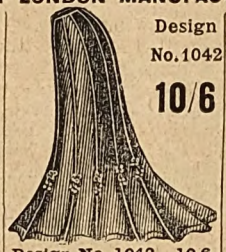
Skirt, 5/6

Design No 898. 10/6.

Eton Coat and Skirt Costume, made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'S **Specialite Serge, Venetian Cloth,** or new **Zibeline Cloth.** Colours: Grey, Black, Blue, Green, Navy, Oxford, Fawn, Brown, Purple, &c. Stylish Coat, fashionable sleeve, lined throughout. Trimmed tailor stitching and metal buttons. Fashionable cut skirt. Price complete only **10/6,** carriage 6d. Skirt alone **5/6,** carriage 5d extra. Send for one. Lace collar shown on this Costume 1/6½ ex.

This Costume is also made in Brown Holland for **8/11**; carriage 6d. extra.

WRITE FOR OUR **NEW SKETCH BOOK** AND **Catalogue of Bargains** Containing hundreds of Illustrations of Latest Novelties for the Summer Season, Sent with Patterns, post free. Call or write.



Design No. 1042. 10/6

Design No. 1042. 10/6. Latest Fashion in Costume Skirts. The new kilted Skirt with pleated seams, the top of each kilt being finished off with drop ornament. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new Zibeline Cloth or in Specialite Serge or Venetian Cloth, all colours. This fashionable Skirt is lined throughout and well made. Price only **10/6,** carriage 5d.

Design No. 456. 13/9.

Stylish Costume. Special value for 13/9. The bodice has a blouse front with tight-fitting back and is lined throughout; trimmed tucks, silk strappings and small buttons. Skirt also trimmed tucks, silk and buttons to match bodice. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new **Zibeline Cloth** (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect), or in their world-renowned **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth,** all colours. Patterns post free. Price only **13/9**; sent carriage paid 6d. extra. In sending order please give bust measurement under arms, length of sleeve, size of waist, and length of skirt in front.

Design No. 456. 13/9

PATTERNS POST FREE

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles,** and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc,

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6-0-0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN,** The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS **2½%** repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT *Managing Director.*

Icilma

THE ONLY GUARANTEED AID TO BEAUTY.

Nature's remedy for Complexion and Skin Troubles, whether caused by heat, cold, age, irritations or accident. Send 1d. stamp for postage of Free Sample & Booklet with Guarantee.—ICILMA, (Dept. 127) 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

30/- REAL SILVER KEYLESS WATCH

for **11/6** only. **1/6** Deposit secures it.

Simply send your full name and address and enclose **1/6** P.O., also three penny stamps for postage, to secure one of these marvellous bargains; you can pay the balance by small instalments of **1/-** weekly.

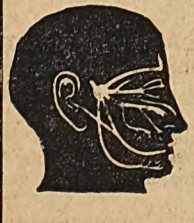
LADIES' or GENT'S

Real silver government stamped ¾ plate jewelled movement, **1/-** discount for full cash with order. Postage abroad **1/-** extra.

H. STANLEY & Co. (Dept. 12)
Bankrupt Stock Buyers,
284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS



Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

"In pain? Try ZOX."

Digitized by Google

last syllable. Edward Stormont leant forward in the chair that faced the diver's—for John Davenal, no longer confined to his bed, sat by the sunny window of his room.

"You're right, Davenal," he said, frankly, "and I beg your pardon for thinking that, by making it your interest to keep it, I could add an iota to the value of your simple word. But, you see, I am quite a stranger to you, or I should have known better. Strange that we should be strangers, you and I—I whose blood runs in Moira's veins, you whom she has called 'father' for sixteen years."

John Davenal flushed. "It was a sweet lie in my ears, sir," he answered, "and, after all, I thought her my own flesh and blood, as you may say, believing her Hannah's child. But it seems wicked now, sir, that she should have been like my own child all those years while you, her true father, should have been wandering up and down in the earth, for want of just such an innocent life to cherish. And it's a sore shame to me, to think of my own sister's sin against you."

The explorer's face darkened. "No more of that, Davenal," he said; "quite possibly Moira owes her preservation to your sister and this fellow Hartigan."

"Like enough, sir," agreed the diver, "and though it can have been but for their own evil purposes, it makes it less awful to think of. But Hannah must have been a terrible woman, sir. However did she manage to keep the poor child fed and quieted while it was supposed to be lying dead, how did she contrive that it should have air when it was closed in that wooden shell and leaden casket, before she and Dennis, as they must have done, got it out and brought it to me?"

"It was not impossible," replied the explorer, rising; "some powerful sedative, daringly administered, and a cool, resourceful mind, were all that was necessary. The leaden casket is most ingeniously pierced with holes and no doubt the wooden shell was too. They must have carried off the latter with the child, wrapped up, I suppose, parcel-fashion. The child would be safer so, under the influence of the narcotic."

"Aye, sir," assented John Davenal, "and that was how it came to be flung into the Bay from off the breakwater, to lie there till, as I surmise, sir, Sir Guy's yacht, settling, broke it up and cut the plate in half so queerly. If it hadn't been for that plate, Moira might never have known another father than me."

The explorer bent over the diver. "Do you regret it, my poor friend?" he asked.

John Davenal started at the kindly expression.

"No, sir," he said; "it is better so—for Sir Guy and her. But I'm sorry she isn't going to have her rights in law—it seems a sort of injustice to the little lass."

Edward Stormont changed the subject hastily. "Not it," he retorted; "and besides, I have your promise, remember."

"Yes, sir," was the answer, "you have, and I'll keep it, safe and sound. And, after all, as you say, sir, there is the other poor young creature to be thought of, especially now that her ladyship has committed suicide. Then people do talk terrible, and mayhap the law wouldn't be satisfied in the end."

"That is just the position," said the explorer, evasively; "and now, if you will let me, Davenal, I am going to run away. I have still many sad things to do and to endure before the grave can close over one who has wrought both you and me great and lasting wrong. But enough of that; a day will come when we shall smoke a lonely pipe up at the Tower and listen to the echoes of wedding bells."

"Aye," replied the diver, rousing into cheerfulness; "love can drown a heap of unhappiness when it comes to its own."

"Yes," said Edward Stormont, bitterly, "if only the heart be young, Davenal. But when hearts are old they must sit down as best they may with their sorrow and loneliness. Nor Time nor Love can give me back those sixteen stolen years of Moira's girlish life. But a truce to our jealousies. I am tiring you and up at the Tower Irene will be waiting for Moira."

He opened the door of the diver's bedroom and called:

"Moira," he said, "we must be going off. Come and say 'Good-bye' to my hated rival."

There was a quick step on the stair and Moira ran up and into the room. The two men looked at her with a passion of suppressed tenderness in their bearing. She went to the diver's side.

"I have been trying, for the twentieth time," she remarked, with a little sigh, "to explain to Kit without—without explaining. Have you finished your talk?"

"Yes," said the explorer, smiling; "it ended with the usual topic—our jealousy of each other."

Moira smiled, too, and then sighed again. Then she took a hand of each and put them to her lips.

"I am very rich," she answered, unsteadily; "what other girl in the world has two such fathers?"

The hands she had kissed met and clasped. There was a tear on the joined fingers—it had come straight from Moira's heart.

* * * * *

And Mr. Ussher? What did his stolid official mind make of the ravelled skein left to him by Lady Tarleton's suicide? Paul Jerome cannot be sure how far the detective succeeded in reading the riddle, for he himself was forced to adopt towards the former an attitude of determined, if skilful reticence, and he who denies confidences has but little chance of obtaining them.

A criminal trial might have done much to open the lips of both. But the astute Mr. Hartigan was not pursued with any real vigour; there was a singular poverty of evidence against him in respect of his crimes, both achieved and attempted.

Lady Tarleton lies in the Lennox mausoleum, her darling object, after all, accomplished, for the Lennox fortune, in due time, will go past its rightful owner to enrich the daughter of a murderess. Well for Irene that she does not know, well for Paul Jerome that his ingenuity is able to cope, in some degree, with Irene's curiosity.

Part of the truth Irene had to be told, part her own quick wits discerned. But she does not speak of her mother, even to her husband; she guesses that the unfathomed past holds for her as much of terror as of mystery.

Yet she is happy, happy in her friendship with Guy and Moira, happy in her husband and her children. Jerome and she have built a dainty modern bungalow on the hill below the Tower—the great old gloomy place could never have been a home for them, and Irene, at least, shunned it with a nervous dread.

By now their new dwelling has ripened its red walls and gabled roofs in the sun and the sea air of Groudle Bay. When Edward Stormont is not to be found there he must be sought for at the Close, whither the years have brought a second Edward and a little maid with her mother's red-gold hair and a pair of limpid, steel-grey eyes. As they look up into Edward Stormont's something flutters at his heart. For the eyes of the little maiden are the eyes of his long-dead wife.

The End.

A USEFUL BOOK.

POULTRY KEEPING

And How to Make it Pay.

By F. E. WILSON,

Contributor to "Poultry," etc., etc. Price 1s.; post free 1s. 2d.

Some of the nineteen chapters are:

Chap. I. Making a start—Number of birds to begin with, etc. Chap. II. Natural and artificial hatching—Setting a hen—How to test eggs, etc. Chap. III. The rearing and management of chickens. Chap. IV. Houses and runs—The kind of house wanted, etc. Chap. V. Foods and feeding—Feeding in summer, winter, etc. Chap. VI. Poultry for profit—Best egg-producing breeds, etc. Chap. VIII. Breeding for egg-production. Chap. IX. Poultry for exhibition. Chap. XVII. Ducks—Duck-rearing a profitable industry, etc., etc.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "Poultry Keeping," for which I inclose the sum of 1s. 2d.

Name .....

Address .....

Digitized by Google

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 BROWNIE is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2¼ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

E.P.P.S'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ARRESTED!

If your attention has been **arrested** by this, please send for our **latest Catalogue, No. 10** of bicycles, and **No. 9** of cyclists' accessories. Superior goods, **startling bargains.** **Symonds' London Stores, 124-128, City Road, London.** Also 240, Edgware Rd, W.; 47-49, Newington Butts, S.E.; and 14, Peter St., Manchester.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

GIVEN AWAY with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 490),

A Paper Pattern of this

BLOUSE.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Nervous Sweetheart.

"WHAT are you to do," asks "PUZZLED," "when a girl writes you the most affectionate letters, but who is silent when you meet, and never says a word about love? When I try to kiss her, she always tells me I mustn't, and in many other ways she will not even give me a chance. When she meets me, it is for such a very short time that we cannot talk about ourselves, and she always has other engagements. Do you think she really loves me!"

* * * * *

Probably she does love you, if she writes you the letters you mention. I expect she is a little bit afraid of showing her love for you when you meet, and perhaps is so inexperienced in men's ways that she does not know how to act. That would account for her conduct when with you.

* * * * *

You should be very backward in your attentions for awhile. When she does meet you, treat her just as an ordinary friend, and talk about ordinary subjects. You don't want to rush right into talk about love, as it seems to embarrass the girl. When you get thoroughly used to each other's society, you can make your own declarations, and by that time she will know her own mind about things. You have evidently been taking her too much by storm, and it has made her feel embarrassed.

♣♣♣

A Shop Assistant's Trouble.

"ALEX" (Glasgow) is in perplexity. He is a shop assistant, and very much in love with a young lady. He, however, could not possibly marry her at present, as his salary is very small. Now a month or so ago her father died, and left the girl's mother and herself in very straitened circumstances. The only relief they could get would be to go to Canada where they have a brother who is doing well. But this would be a great blow to "ALEX," who would thus be either compelled to marry the girl and share with her simple poverty, or to lose her perhaps altogether. How should he act?

* * * * *

There are two courses open for "ALEX." Either he must take steps to at once improve his position at home, or find some means of accompanying the mother and daughter to Canada. In the first case, he had better make a clean breast of his position to his employers, asking them for a "rise." If they refuse, then he had better save, by hook or crook, enough money to emigrate to Canada. When there, he should have little difficulty of getting work where he could be near the girl.

* * * * *

As a Scotsman, I imagine his chances ought not to be bad in a country where there are so many of his fellow-countrymen, who are only too willing to help a brother Scot. If the brother of the girl is, as you say, doing well, perhaps he might be able to place something in your way. Certainly the experiment would be worth trying.

A Lorn Soldier.

"SUNNY" (India).—Thanks for your letter, and the kind things you say about *Short Stories*, which I am glad to hear is read so much by your fellow soldiers. I can understand how much you wish to meet with a girl, but I cannot do what you ask. I advise you to send an advertisement, prepaid, to the matrimonial columns of one of the daily papers, either in India, or at home.

* * * * *

No doubt many girls would be willing to open correspondence with you, but it would be quite outside my province to introduce readers whom I do not know to each other. Failing that, why not invite one of your friends or relations at home to bring about the introduction? They know you personally, and would be better able to do so than a stranger.

♣♣♣

Boy and Girl Etiquette.

"IF a boy, sitting in a tram, meets while there a girl of his acquaintance, should he pay for her fare when the conductor comes for the tickets?" This puzzles "ARTHUR," who says the question often arises, and he never quite knows what to do.

* * * * *

Unless, "ARTHUR," you have set out on the journey with the girl, it is no affair of yours to pay her fare. If she is a properly brought-up girl she would not let you do it. After all, if she is in the habit of travelling about, her parents will have given her the necessary money, and she ought not to expect you to spend your own, which is as precious to you as is hers to herself. On the other hand, if the girl is going anywhere with you, at your invitation, or is in your charge, then of course you will pay her fare.

♣♣♣

Does He Love Her?

"M. D. S." met a young man the other day to whom she took a great fancy. But she did not show it much at the time of meeting him, as he did not reveal himself entirely to her until they parted. On leaving each other, they arranged to meet again, and "M. D. S." wrote, suggesting an appointment to the man, who did not reply. She then wrote again with the same result. Should she write once more and express her feeling for him, or let the matter drop?

* * * * *

Give him one more chance, and if he does not reply then, you must be assured that he does not wish to resume your acquaintance. In that case, you had better let the matter drop, and forget him. Better end the little affair now in its earliest stages, than later on when the wrench would be harder to bear.

♣♣♣

A Country Mouse.

"EVA" is a country girl, who very rarely visits London. In a month's time, however, she will be passing through the city on the way to a friend living on the other side. Last year she met a man with whom she flirted a little. When parting, he said: "If ever you're in London, be sure to tell me, and we'll have a good time together." Should she ask the man to meet her as she passes through—she has no other friends in London—or would that course be unwise?

* * * * *

Certainly I don't think it would be wise for a girl who knows nothing of London, and who is on the way to visit friends, to arrange meetings with young men she only knows very slightly. But then, I do not know, either, what sort of girl you are, or what sort of man he is. All depends on the people themselves. If you were just passing through London, and knew exactly where you were bound, and the time you must be there, I should not think there would be any harm in his acting as your escort. But I would not recommend your placing yourself in his hands for "a good time," unless you thoroughly know London.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

FOR HER— AND FOR YOU.

A SURPRISE!

There is something *you* will like in The Lady's Magazine for June. We don't want to tell you all about it here, but we want you to get a copy of the June number, now on sale, and see for yourself what wonderful attractions can be obtained for sixpence.

Do not be satisfied until you have read every page.

We feel sure you won't be satisfied *then!*

You will want more, for The Lady's Magazine is so full of delightful surprises.

What are the attractions?

What are the surprises?

Ah, well!—we must not say too much.

A copy is awaiting you at the nearest bookstall.

Digitized by Google

Needs must where INDIGESTION drives.

You have to avoid some favourite dish, or you do not enjoy your food and have to be uncomfortably particular about your diet. **WHY?** Whether you know it or not you are suffering from **INDIGESTION.** Instead of your stomach being the minister of your body's needs, it is impeded in its action by dyspepsia, and you are being robbed of your nourishment, your sleep, your pleasure. Now, if you wish to save yourself from, perhaps, very serious illness you will seek the aid of

BEECHAM'S PILLS

and drive away the **INDIGESTION.**

A course of this famous remedy will, as certainly as water quenches thirst, impart new vigour to the Stomach and Digestive Organs. The Liver and Kidneys will be cleansed and regulated, the Blood purified, and general health soundly re-established.

BEECHAM'S PILLS have done this for many thousands of suffering and distressed people: Why should they not do as much for you?

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Cure Indigestion.

Sold everywhere in Boxes, price 1s. 1½d. (56 Pills), and 2s. 9d. (168 Pills.)

Digitized by Google

NEW COMPETITION JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

No. 754.] Week ending June 13th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

Stealing quietly into his room, she turned on the gas, hissing out: "He shall never marry that chit of a girl! To-night I have my revenge!"

Digitized by Google

SAPON The IDEAL CLEANSER.

Something absolutely new. Death to dirt, but preserves the fabric.

"FOR WOOLLENS."

FREE Packet on receipt of post card with Grocer's name, to SAPON, Ltd., Dept. 68, 33, St. Swithin's Lane, London.

'LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' System

On J. G. GRAVES' System you are absolutely certain of what you are buying before you pay for it.

You only send 5/- to start with

THE "EXPRESS"

ENGLISH LEVER, (Regd.) **50/-** is then forwarded to you. You examine and test it, and, if satisfied, you complete the purchase in nine more monthly payments of 5/-; or, if you prefer to pay the balance in one payment of 45/- within seven days from receipt of goods, a HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT (which you choose yourself) will be sent you. If you are not satisfied, return the watch, and your deposit is instantly refunded.

SPECIFICATION.
First-grade English Lever Movement, Capped & Jewelled, Safety Winding Pinion, Chronometer Balance, Massive Sterling Silver (Hall Marked) Cases. Warranted Seven Years.

Guaranteed BRITISH Manufacture throughout.

THE LARGEST WATCH-SALES FIRM IN THE WORLD.

Send for No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Cutlery and Plate, Fancy Goods, etc., Post Free.

GOOD AGENTS WANTED in spare time. Persons in regular employment should write for terms. Good Commission. No Risk.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

If you wish to EAT WELL

— TAKE —

BEECHAM'S

PILLS.

You will EAT WELL,

because by their specific action on the digestive organs **Beecham's Pills** remove the sensation of fulness and oppression commonly experienced, give the appetite "edge," and restore the stomach to healthy and natural function.

Sold everywhere in Boxes price 1s. 1½d. (56 pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 pills).

Below is Our Great New Serial.

SHORT STORIES

No. 754.] Week Ending June 13th, 1903. [One Penny.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life.

By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The sacred words were droned in monotonous tones by a lean, apathetic curate. The church is empty save for the two principals—Margaret Heath and Vernon Grant—and the necessary witnesses. After the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris.

Digby Scarlett turns over his letters leisurely in the interim between breakfast and sorting a cigar.

"Ah, here's one from my friend and collaborator, the valiant Vernon. I wonder what the Paris postmark means? Any way, it can wait until I have written to ask the adorable Margaret Heath to be my wife."

This done, he opens Vernon's letter, and when he reads the news of the latter's marriage to the girl to whom he has just penned a proposal, he murmurs—

"Twice hit by the same hand, and both blows destined to die with me—to bleed internally. Not bad for a man intellectually my inferior! But the third blow *I* shall get in. My innings begins to-day." Then he leaves for Paris to join the happy couple at their invitation.

Scarlett and Grant at one time had practised copying each other's signatures, and Grant had been very successful in his imitations of that of his friend. Now Scarlett persuades him, for a bet, to sign his name to a cheque for a large amount, promising to make it all right at the bank when presented. This, however, he fails to do, and Grant is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude for forgery, Scarlett not even saying a word in his defence. Mrs. Grant goes to the prison to bid her husband farewell, and tells him that she will never have anything more to do with him.

The First Chapters.

It is the birthday of Lady Maitland, the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland, of Maitland Manor. As a birthday gift her husband says that he has decided to give her a daughter—at present she has an only son, Woolf—by adopting a girl, Ivy Strange, who had been discovered in the grounds some fourteen years before, and brought up with Muriel, the baronet's younger daughter. Jack Maitland, Sir Trevor's elder son, is in love with Ivy.

Lady Maitland resents the adoption of Ivy for fear that thereby her son will be cheated out of his inheritance.

Heriot North, an old friend of the family, arrives on a visit to the Manor, to pay his attentions to Agnes, Sir Trevor's elder daughter. He succumbs, however, to Lady Maitland's charms and neglects Agnes, which makes the latter much incensed against her stepmother.

One evening, when Lady Maitland retires to her room to dress for dinner, she finds there a man—Mike Holland, a burglar. He is gazing at a locket in which are the photographs of herself and a man. Holland says he knew the man (Lady Maitland's first husband) in prison, and threatens to expose her unless she pays him to keep silence. She accepts his terms. A letter is delivered to Lady Maitland by her maid, Mason, in response to which she meets Mike Holland in the wood at dead of night. He again threatens her, but she says she knows that her first husband is dead.

"Even if he is," growls the man, "Sir Trevor don't know that you was the wife of a convict; that might interest 'im, anyway, and you 'ardly wish that little fact to be known to 'im!"

"It does not matter in the least now, if he did know it," she answers coolly; "he would do nothing for the sake of his name and our boy's! I am quite safe! But," she adds, "I am prepared to send you twenty pounds when I hear that you have left Melton for London—anywhere—not before. Now, say whether you will accept my offer—it will not be repeated!"

He hesitates, and his cruel fingers itch to be at the soft, white neck gleaming in the moonlight; but twenty pounds is twenty pounds!

"'Ow shall I let you know I am in London?"

"A telegram with the words 'dress ready to send,' will be enough," she answers briefly. "I will send the money by a friend to the District Messenger Office in Regent Street for you to call for. I shall run no risks; the money will be in gold."

As the gloom hides her from sight, the baffled man sends an oath, strong and venomous, after her.

"Yes, my fine madam, you've scored again, but I'll get my own back one day! To think that after 'anging on all these years, my old pard should kick the bucket just when 'is life 'ad got so valuable!"

Jack Maitland goes down to the lodge at the park gates to see the lodge-keeper's wife, Mrs. Parkins, and ask her if she has any of the clothes in which Ivy Strange was found, as the latter has said she will not marry him until the mystery of her birth is cleared up. Mrs. Parkins promises to look, and then she suddenly recollects something. When brushing Ivy's hair one night she noticed a mark, hidden under her curls—the mark of a broad arrow!

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

THE BOND BETWEEN.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Face on the Balcony.

AFTER his first sensation of horror at hearing of the sinister birthmark on his dainty love's white brow, Jack pulled himself together. On second thoughts it was not so very frightful, and could mean nothing more than an ordinary coincidence; for between the innocent life of Ivy and the shadow of shame there yawned a very wide chasm.

"Why, Mrs. Parkins," he said to that worthy dame, "how do we know how it got there? Perhaps it was marked on the child as a means of identification. Anyway, I intend to use it as an important clue in my search for the parents, or whoever last was in possession of her."

Mrs. Parkins shook her head. "No, Mr. Jack, sir, that mark was put there by no 'and. Ivy was born with it, Mr. Jack; and, beggin' your pardon, sir, I don't see 'ow it will 'elp you much."

"Look here, Mrs. Parkins," he said impressively; "I want you to tell no one of my visit to you this evening; keep it to yourself."

"That I will, Mr. Jack," she replied, "and I will look in the old store cupboard in case there may 'appen to be anything I forgot to throw away."

He shook hands with her silently. She had in former years been an under nurse at the Manor and her homely face had been a haven of refuge to him when some childish terror had sent him to bury his curly head in her ample lap.

"Thanks, awfully, nursie," he said, with a smile, relapsing into the old title. "Oh, by the way, have you mentioned to anyone else what you told me about the mark on Ivy's brow?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Jack," she rejoined earnestly. "Parkins and me was afraid it might make folks look queer at 'er, so we kept it to ourselves, and did not even tell the squire for fear 'e should keep 'er away from Miss Muriel."

"Thank Heaven!" Jack breathed under his breath. Aloud he said, "Well, I know I can trust you to keep it a still greater secret now, nursie. For my sake as well as Ivy's."

As he drew near the Manor swift steps came running lightly down the gravel drive, and when they came in view he saw that it was Ivy and Muriel.

"Ah, Jack," said his sister with a laugh. "I came with Ivy half way to the lodge, as it was dark; but now I am going back, and you can chaperon her!" Then, with a gay "Good night" the girls parted, and Jack turned back with Ivy.

"Darling," he said, "I am going to begin my quest very soon now, and than when all is made clear we will be happy ever after!"

Her hand tightened on his arm. "It seems so vague, Jack" she sighed sadly; "there is nothing to go on—not even a name! I am afraid you will give me up as a bad job!"

"Don't talk like that, Ivy!" he said gently. "For your dear sake, as well as my own, I am going to do what I can, and I have an idea that I may succeed—in time."

She smiled lovingly. "You make me hope again, Jack, that I shall meet my mother!"

"Darling," he whispered, "you *shall!* Don't despair. I shall leave no stone unturned until I have found a clue. I shall go to London the beginning of the week and get the help of a good detective. Now tell me how you enjoyed the evening with Muriel," he went on. "Did you see the pater?"

"Y-es," she replied; "but perhaps it is my fancy, Jack, both Sir Trevor and Lady Maitland seemed just a little distant in their manner."

"Ah, that is because they know I love and am loved by you," he murmured. "I am not altogether in their good books just now, but I have you, and nothing else seems to matter."

At the lodge gates he paused. "Sweetheart, I suppose it is useless to ask if a single memory lingers in your mind about your babyhood?"

She shook her head. "No, Jack, I remember nothing, except strange faces, ever new; and sometimes a great deal of noise, then quiet."

He kissed her tenderly on the brow where the soft, burnished hair lay, hiding the significant birthmark.

"Good night, little sweetheart!" he said tenderly. "Sleep well."

When, a few minutes later, he turned towards the Manor, a woman slipped by him, and would have broken into a run had he not put out one strong hand and stopped her.

"Who's that?"

A voice answered unwillingly, "Mason, sir!"

"Mason," he exclaimed in surprise. "What are you doing out at this hour?"

"It is my evening out, sir," she replied sullenly. "I am always allowed out till ten."

As she hurried on he stood still and looked after her thoughtfully. "It strikes me that that woman was after something she had no business about. But it's no affair of mine, if the servants are given evenings out," he laughed. "At present I have thoughts for just one thing!" But he did not guess how nearly allied to that one thing was the business of Mason!

* * * * *

When Mason entered the Manor she was just a little breathless, but her black eyes were shining and her sallow face was flushed. She waited attentively on her mistress, Agnes Maitland, and then, when her duties were finished satisfactorily, she stole down to the door of Lady Maitland's boudoir.

"May I come in, your ladyship?" she murmured.

"I am too tired to see anyone to-night, Mason," replied Lady Maitland coldly. She was sitting in front of her table, while her wonderful copper-tinted hair was being brushed by her own particular French maid, Félice.

"If you have any message for me put it down on the table."

A sullen admiration had crept into the serving-woman's attitude towards her mistress since the occasion on which she had persuaded Sir Trevor to allow her to stay.

"Excuse me, your ladyship," she answered; "it is not a message in writing, but something I wanted to say."

Lady Maitland turned to the silent woman still brushing her hair.

"Félice, I think I have forgotten that book I felt in the drawing-room on the couch; bring it up to me."

The woman left the room obediently. Then in a quick, abrupt voice, Lady Maitland said:

"Well, Mason, be quick and say what you have to say. I am in a hurry."

Swiftly the woman stooped, and murmured a few whispered words in her ladyship's delicate ear.

"Believe me, my lady, it's true," she said earnestly; "and since your ladyship's kindness to me the other day I would do anything to serve you, your ladyship—indeed I would."

For an instant the white, blue-veined hand toying with a silver scent bottle quivered ever so slightly, then Lady Maitland raised her eyes and gazed at the woman who was eagerly waiting for her to speak, vainly attempting to read her thoughts with her keen, black eyes. But the mind of the woman in the chair was not so easily read.

After a pause, in which she had seemed to pierce beyond the soul of her now apparently devoted servant in that one brief glance, Lady Maitland turned her gaze once more upon her reflection in the mirror, a slight smile curving the lines of her mouth.

"It seems almost a pity, Mason, for so much zeal to be thrown away. In future reserve your energies for your domestic duties, instead of bestowing them upon wild flights of unbridled imagination! I am at a loss to understand why you should come to me at such an hour with such a tale!"

The woman flushed with angry mortification, and her mouth set in an ugly line. She had been almost hungering for a word of self-betrayal from the lips of the mistress who had so cleverly outwitted and baffled her the other day; but

Digitized by Google

now she met again with the same cold hauteur and surprised disdain.

"Your ladyship will excuse me if I ask one question?" she said, obsequiously, lowering her eyes.

"Be brief!" was the curt reply.

"Does your ladyship know that in mending your black lace gown the morning after Miss Agnes walked in her sleep, I missed one of the silver tassels that hang from the sleeves? It was one off the right sleeve, your ladyship, and it seemed as though it had been torn off."

She stopped, as though expecting some exclamation, some sign that her words had been listened to; but Lady Maitland was coiling one of her long, soft strands of hair round her fingers, a bored expression on her face.

"I looked for that silver tassel, your ladyship," she went on, doggedly, "but it took time. It was nowhere in the Manor, nowhere in the garden. But it was my day out to-day, and as I went through the spinny about teatime I saw something shining on the ground. It was your silver tassel, my lady." Once more she halted, but no comment came from the smiling mouth of her mistress.

"Would your ladyship like to know where I found it?" she said, leaning forward, desperately.

"Have you not already told me, Mason?" replied Lady Maitland, calmly. "I am sorry you took so much trouble, because the gown is not worth it!"

"It was lying near the old oak, my lady," persisted the baffled woman; "and after I had picked it up, I—saw what I have told you about already!"

Slowly, and with each graceful action intensified by the loose, clinging *négligée* of soft white, Lady Maitland rose from her table, and faced the maid who had gone to such lengths to find a simple tassel missing from her gown.

Mistress and maid gazed into each other's eyes for the space of a second, and under the steady, contemptuous glance of the mistress, the shifty, glittering beads of the menial fell.

"You are a clever woman, Mason," said her ladyship slowly; "but like all clever people of a certain class, you are apt to spoil the effect of your cleverness, by a too liberal sprinkling of stupidity—and that is fatal to success in any enterprise, you know! Don't let me have cause to correct your conduct a third time; I shall not be inclined to pass it by with silent contempt, as I have done before. Now, leave my room, and send Félice to me."

She turned away, the long mane of warm-coloured hair still clinging to the back of the chair behind her—and in the crafty eyes watching her, there dwelt a strange look, half fear, half hate—wholly wonder!

"Is that all your ladyship wishes to say to me?" Mason murmured in a respectful voice.

"That is all, Mason! I require nothing else!"

"Good night, your ladyship!"

"Good night, Mason!"

When Félice had finished disrobing her mistress and had left her for the night, Lady Maitland stepped across to her husband's dressing-room on the other side of the corridor. It was empty, he had not yet come upstairs. She wondered whether the search had been very long for the lost brooch, and a slight smile flitted across her face, as the memory of poor Parkins' consternation recurred to her.

As she turned to leave the room, a sudden thought made her hesitate. She closed the door and went swiftly towards a cabinet by her husband's dressing-table. It was not locked, and she drew out something small and glittering. She looked at it curiously, the pupils of her eyes dilating until the violet in them grew black under the influence of a suppressed excitement. A slight shiver shook her, and her mouth quivered involuntarily.

"This may be useful," she murmured. "He will not miss it, there is another in the drawer. And I shall feel safe, in case—in case——" Her thoughts trailed off into a tangle of tremulous speculation, and stepping softly from the room, she slipped back into her own.

As she locked her new toy in a sufficiently secure hiding-place at the bottom of a long drawer where she kept her private correspondence, a gentle sigh fluttered to her lips.

"Forewarned is forearmed," she murmured. "I don't think that woman meant anything more than an attempt to surprise me—unless it really were the case, and she did see. But even so—that is powerless to hurt me now—and I shall take care that I keep myself from such petty vampires in future!"

She lifted her head, and a low laugh came from her lips.

"They little guess how strong I am to fight—not with the useless weapons of supplication and fear, but with the two-edged sword of brain and strategy!"

A slight noise from the direction of the window stopped the laugh on her mouth, and sent an expectant look into her eyes.

The long windows that led out on to a balcony had neither the curtains nor blinds drawn, and anyone outside could see quite plainly into the room.

"What can that be?" she murmured. "Surely——"

She rose quickly, and went up to the windows. As she did so, she caught a glimpse of a sallow face disappearing over the balcony. With a splendid courage she flung open one of the long French windows, pierced the darkness with keen eyes, and saw a figure running swiftly in the shadow of the house.

As she gazed, it came suddenly forward under the pale gleam of a moon-streak, and, standing motionless for a moment, turned its face towards the window on the balcony. Lady Maitland raised her hand to her mouth to stifle the cry that rose to her lips. For the figure was that of a man, and the face was one she had hoped never to see again!

NINTH CHAPTER.
The Return of the Wanderer.

The fog was settling down for a three days' stay, and the passengers arriving at Charing Cross by the Boulogne and Folkestone mail, looked cold and apprehensive about reaching their respective destinations in such a sea of uncertainty.

One man alone was glad to see the train slowing into the station, and when he stepped out of the Pullman carriage on to the platform, he gazed round with a sigh of content.

"Well! I never thought I should inhale a fog with delight!" he murmured; "but after sixteen years absence from it, it's just like greeting an old friend. After all, there's nothing like a long stay abroad to make a man a rabid patriot!"

A porter carried his traps to a hansom, then said: "Where to, sir?"

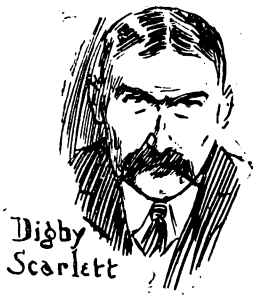
"The Orient Club, Hanover Square," was the reply, and the hansom bowled off cautiously, wending a hazardous way through the maze of vehicular traffic in a London fog.

In one of the long, narrow glasses on either side of the hansom, the man took a keen and swiftly scrutinising glance at himself. Apparently the inspection pleased him, for he leant back with a pleased smile on his sunburnt, refined face, and stroked his long, sweeping moustache with thoughtful fingers.

"Yes; the years have changed me considerably," he murmured. "No one would recognise me now, not even my best friend; or"—and the pupils of his slightly narrow-set eyes contracted suddenly—"even my worst enemy! I shall now feel able to enjoy myself with a free conscience, and revel once more in the intoxication of London gaiety!"

Arriving at the Orient Club, he made arrangements to stay some weeks, and wrote his name in a bold hand in the "Board" book; then was shown to his room. The hall porter gazed at the signature thoughtfully. "That gentleman can't 'ave been 'ere for many years," he muttered. "I don't recollect the name; but then comin' from foreign parts, it's not likely that I should remember 'im."

Digitized by Google



He looked at the signature again. It was an uncommon one, out of the usual rut of names, and the hall porter conned it thoughtfully. "'Digby Scarlett,' it's a name not easy to forget once you've seen it," he muttered.

Upstairs in the bedroom he had engaged, Digby Scarlett was dressing for dinner. He meant to enjoy himself this first evening in London. A long exile from civilisation had bitten him with the desire to indulge in every extravagance.

In the dining-room of the club he looked about with curious eyes. He knew no one; and though his name as a traveller and writer was probably known to most of the men present, personally he was a social pariah—longing for the sound of his fellow-creatures' voices, yet hesitating to take the first step towards acquaintance.

After dinner he picked up an evening paper and glanced down the column of amusements. "Let me see," he muttered, "if I can pick out a musical piece with one or two familiar names in it. I want to see some faces that I know."

But everything was new; all the old landmarks seemed to have been washed away by the tide of time. Just such names as "Irving" and "Tree," with other leading lights remained in the old places; but the gay, fascinating little dancers, and bird-throated choristers had made way for younger and fresher successors.

He put the paper down with a sense of disappointment.

He was beginning to realise how much alone he was, now that he had returned to his native country; far, far more lonely than when in the heart of forests, or on the dusty plain of deserts. For then, the great forests and deserts had drawn him, through the medium of mystery and star-lit nights, into the bosom of fellowship; they knew he understood, and was not one of those fiends of civilisation that wanted to build cities, or hew down their young children for timber.

But, in the heart of London, the unceasing hum of humanity fell with a meaningless roar upon Digby Scarlett's ears. The voice of the people roused no answering note in his soul, for his heart was not with them, and the cry went over his head.

"Excuse me, won't you? But if you are looking for a decent show, there is an awfully good turn at the Empire to-night;" and starting quickly round, Digby Scarlett met the frank, unembarrassed gaze of a good-looking young fellow, with a fair, boyish face, that was peculiarly attractive to the jaded eyes of the older man.

"Thanks for the tip," he smiled, and a gleam of dazzling teeth a woman might have envied threw into sudden contrast the brown of his skin, and inky blackness of the tired, restless eyes. "How did you guess that I was looking for such frivolous dissipation?" he continued; "had I the air of a pleasure-seeker?"

The boy laughed, and slightly reddened. "Sitting behind you, I could not help noticing that you were taking all the theatres in turn down the column, and when you put the paper down and did not move, I guessed that you had found nothing to please you; so I ventured to speak to you."

"I am more grateful than I can say," Digby Scarlett replied. "The fact is, I am feeling very much alone. This is my first evening in London after sixteen years of a nomadic pilgrimage; and I have the odd sensation of being a stranger within my own gates!"

The boy looked at him curiously. The restless eyes, aquiline nose, and burnt-looking skin, all betokened a man of a roving nature, of many moods—some, probably, not pleasant ones. The smooth black hair—grey on the temples—lent him an air of distinction; and the heavy, dark moustache concealed his mouth—the true index to his character. But his voice was cultured, and the note of isolation in it appealed to the boy's imagination.

He drew a card from his pocket, and handed it to the older man. "That is my name," he said, with a simple dignity. "I am also alone in town for a few days; I shall be most happy if you will let me be of any service to you."

The other replied by a vivid smile, and stretched out a long, sinewy hand. "Thanks, awfully!" he said. "I have no such details as 'cards' on me just now; but my name is Digby Scarlett."

The boy's eyes dilated with astonishment. "What! *The* 'Digby Scarlett' of the Royal Society of Antiquaries?" he said, in an awed tone. "Why my father's favourite book is 'Wonders we Walk on,' that you wrote."

A slight flush mantled the tanned skin of the traveller. "I am afraid you over-rate my work," he said. "I am a very poor member of the Society. In my youth I wrote fiction. But I have not yet made myself acquainted with the name of my new friend," he went on, hurriedly, as though anxious to change the subject; and then, looking at the card in his hand, he read, "Mr. John Maitland, Maitland Manor, Melton."

"Ah! I used to know Melton once," he said, musingly; "but that was long ago. It's a pretty county, and if the recollections of my boyhood are right, it had pretty girls in it, too!"

Jack Maitland was silent. The vision of a sweet, flower-like face, rose up in his mind. Who, better than he, could speak of the beauties of Melton?

"I see; I have sent your thoughts back to their native county," said Digby Scarlett, with a somewhat cynical smile; a feeling of envy rising in his heart for the capacity this boy had to love, and respect, a woman.

"Yes," replied Jack, a retrospective smile touching his mouth, "my thoughts did take a momentary flutter to their nest. But that will not prevent me from doing justice to my post as pilot to you in this little village!" he laughed gaily. "May I have the pleasure of accompanying you to the Empire this evening to see the 'turn' I recommended?"

The two men left the club together, and soon were watching a "rose ballet" from the stalls of the Empire.

As Digby Scarlett sat beside his so strangely-found companion, and listened to the hopes and aspirations of the boy, twenty-three years his junior, his sinister mind reviled the fate that had withheld from him the right of fatherhood. His isolation was all the keener because he knew the boy would pass out of his life in a few days, leaving him with a sense of intensified loneliness.

"Will you dine with me to-morrow?" he said, when they rose to go.

Jack Maitland hesitated. "It's awfully good of you, Mr. Scarlett, but the fact is, I am not certain that I shall be at liberty. I have some business to transact that may take all my time."

"Anyhow, I shall see you at the 'Orient'?" queried the older man, almost anxiously.

"Oh, yes," said the boy, flattered by the obvious desire for his society. "And I am very nearly certain that I shall be free."

As they took up their coats, something dropped from an inner pocket of that flung over the arm of Jack Maitland. Digby Scarlett stooped and picked it up. It was an envelope containing some hard substance like cardboard, probably a photo of some sort.

A small group of people separated him from his companion; so slipping the envelope into his pocket, he followed after him, keeping the tall, well-set-up figure in sight until he reached the foyer, and there the fog was so bad, that after a little futile search among the crowd waiting for carriages or for friends, Digby Scarlett hailed a passing hansom and drove to the Orient Club.

"I shall probably find him there," he murmured, "this fog is enough to make a man lose his *head*."

But arriving at the Orient he found that his friend had not yet arrived, and with a shrug of his shoulders, he went to his room.

"I wish the boy were in," he murmured. Then a cynical laugh rose to his lips. "To think that I—Digby Scarlett—

Digitized by Google

should worry about the probably intentional absence of a young boy I shall very likely never meet again!"

He took off his coat, and felt in the pocket for a cigarette; as he did so, he touched the envelope that he had picked up for Jack Maitland. He drew it out slowly, and looked at it. Then a curious light crept into his eyes—a mocking, sinister gleam.

"I suppose this is the photo of the lady of his dreams!" he muttered. "They always carry them about—when they are young! I wonder what she is like. The boy ought to have good taste—he knows how to choose good wine!"

Slowly, and with curious eyes, he opened the envelope, and drew out the piece of cardboard. It was a photograph—he was right in his surmise—and of a woman, too!

Under the light of the electric globes he scanned the picture with puzzled eyes. It was an amateur likeness, badly taken at that; but he could see that it was the picture of a young girl in a muslin dress; her mouth was parted in a smile of tender query, and the shadow of a large sun-bonnet threw a shade into her eyes. But it was a face that made Digby Scarlett—hardened man of the world as he was—draw in his breath with a sibilant sound, and his eyes deepen and glow with startled admiration.

"Truly, 'a face to make an old man glad!'" he murmured. Then, with a sudden exclamation, he drew the photo nearer to him, peering with an intent gaze into the eyes of the girl looking up at him.

"Great Heavens! I see now what made me wonder where I had seen a similar face before!" he murmured. "It is strangely like, and yet unlike! This has the softness of the pearl; while that other had the hardness of the diamond! Yet, if it were not for the lapse of years, I should almost be inclined to think that I was a young man in love once more!"

He laughed harshly. "But, by this time, that other one is probably fat and grey, old and commonplace! I congratulate the boy upon his choice! But I will take the liberty of keeping this 'picture'!" he said, with a bitter smile. "He has the original—I will retain the copy!"

* * * * *

"So you have no better clue than the one I have already received, Mr. Maitland?" And the mild, blue eyes of Detective-Sergeant Gilbert Chase sent a sudden flash of inquiry into the face of Sir Trevor Maitland's son and heir.

Jack Maitland shook his head. It was the morning following the night of the black fog, when he had missed his interesting and celebrated acquaintance, Digby Scarlett. When, after a few hours' aimless wandering, he had found his way back to the Orient Club, the whole place was in darkness, and at breakfast he was told that Mr. Scarlett had already left the club.

Two hours later he found his way to the office of the man, in whose hands he intended to place the tracing of his sweetheart's birth and parentage. The few details regarding the finding of the child by the lodge gates when a baby of three, he had already related to the eminent detective; and, with the exception of the one secret shared alone by himself and Mrs. Parkins, he had kept nothing back.

"I have told you all I know," he said evasively. "It was fourteen years ago, and there is no linen with any distinctive marks to trace by. All the inquiries I have been able to make, I have asked—you know all, except——" He stopped suddenly, flushing like a guilty child.

A slow, persuasive smile flickered in the mild blue orbs of the detective. He had sounded the depths.

"Ah!. I knew the important evidence would come last," he said drily; "it always does!"

Jack Maitland faced him squarely. "I can trust you, I know—and my confidence with you will be sacred."

"For twenty years," said Gilbert Chase, slowly, "confidences have gone in at one ear and out of the other—but never through my mouth! Pray proceed, Mr. Maitland!"

"It is this," replied Jack; "I have found out that on the brow of 'Ivy Strange' there is a—a scar—a mark hidden under her hair. It may mean something to go by—or nothing."

"Yes, yes, of course, Mr. Maitland," said Gilbert Chase, thoughtfully; "it all depends upon the nature of the mark. Was it caused by a knock, or was it a birthmark?"

"I fancy it must have been born with her," he replied, a feeling that he was desecrating his innocent young love in discussing her with a stranger, making him answer curtly.

"Ah, yes; and what is the mark like?" murmured the detective; "has it any distinctive shape?"

Jack hesitated, and, for a moment, almost regretted that he had decided to put it in the hands of a detective; they were such cold, unemotional creatures.

"Yes," he answered abruptly. "It was the mark of a—a broad arrow!"

For an instant the detective's eye flickered with a startled surprise; he was not accustomed to being taken unawares.

"Ah, I see," he murmured. "Have you a photo of the young lady?"

Jack put his hand in his pocket gladly. The worst had come and gone; the rest was in the capable hands of Gilbert Chase. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of surprise. The photo he had cherished for so long had gone.

"What a pity," said Gilbert Chase; "it might have helped me."

"I had it last night," he replied ruefully; "it must have dropped out of my pocket in the hurry of putting on my coat in the fog."

"Well," said the detective, rising, "I don't think I need detain you any longer, Mr. Maitland. If I want you particularly I will send for you, or come down to Melton. Good-day, sir."

When Jack reached the Orient Club he found Digby Scarlett lunching.

"Well?" said that gentleman, with a sudden smile, "what do you mean by losing yourself last night? I was almost worried."

"I'm sorry if I put you out," said the other; "I missed my way, and you had gone out this morning when I came down to breakfast. I don't fancy I shall stay long in town," he went on; "I have a good mind to return to-morrow."

Digby Scarlett sighed.

"Lucky man to have somewhere to return to. I would give twenty years of my life to be in your shoes!"

Jack Maitland blushed with a sudden impulse.

"I wonder, Mr. Scarlett," he began, hesitatingly, "whether you would come down with me to Melton? We can give you some good hunting, and my father would be awfully glad to meet you."

Digby Scarlett hesitated. Then the memory of the photo in the envelope reposing in his inner waistcoat pocket decided him.

"Thanks, awfully, Maitland," he said, with genuine feeling. "I will be delighted to accept your invitation."

The following afternoon Jack Maitland and his new friend started for Melton and Maitland Manor—and what lay beyond.

TENTH CHAPTER.
A Bolt from the Blue.

It was the half hour after lunch, and Lady Maitland was in her boudoir, talking to Heriot North. It was a dainty nest, in which the dominant tone was white, touched here and there by flashes of old gold, and on marble pedestals stood antique vases filled with yellow flowers.

There was an absence of the ordinary knick-knacks and prettiness usually associated with such apartments; nothing seemed wanting in the slightest detail, yet there lacked something indefinable that puzzled and eluded detection. It seemed almost as though the beautiful mistress of the Manor feared to im-

Digitized by Google

press her taste upon a room into which those who were antagonistic to her may come.

There were no draperies to the door or windows; Lady Maitland was wise to avoid them, they harboured mischief. Instead, great jars stood in the window corners, filled with a profusion of blossoms.

Two silver frames held the only photos in the room; one was the likeness of Sir Trevor Maitland, the other of Woolf—her son. But that of the boy was on a small table where the mother could see it from her couch.

The gown she was wearing was of cream cloth, an attractive design in tea-gowns; while round her waist was a girdle of glittering old gold, finishing in two heavy tassels at the hem of her gown.

Like her surroundings the mistress suggested an idea of cold beauty, the white and the gold of the room claiming kindred links with her gown and hair.

Heriot North had returned from town the day before, and had called to pay his respects at the Manor the following afternoon. It was not until he had entered the boudoir with Lady Maitland that he spoke about the subject on which he had called.

As his eyes dwelt upon the tall, lissom figure of Sir Trevor's wife, the thought flashed into his mind that she resembled some mediæval saint in her aloof attitude towards the more ordinary weaknesses of human nature. In all the many times he had seen her, he had always encountered the same placid graciousness, heard the low, caressing voice always strike the same note, even when the barely veiled insolences of her step-daughter Agnes were aimed at her.

She glanced up, and caught his gaze. "Well, Mr. North," she laughed lightly; "about what are you thinking so seriously?"

"I was thinking," he said, "that you were wasting your sweetness on the desert air when you let yourself be imposed upon by such hangers-on to your charity as the specimen of human nature for whom I executed your commission of pity the other day."

A startled gleam flickered to her eyes, as she said carelessly: "Ah, I—I—have not seen the poor creature myself. I have taken over the *protégé* of a friend. Was he very—awful then?"

He laughed. "Just about the most unmitigated ruffian I have ever seen! I am glad you were spared the sight."

"How was it you saw him then?" she asked, a vague wonder in her mind whether she had done well to trust this man after all.

"I had just entered the District Messenger depot," he answered, "and given up the letter containing the gold you had intrusted to me, when I noticed a particularly objectionable-looking man loaf in. My erstwhile police-court experiences as a reporter told me that the fellow had a peculiarly intimate knowledge of the interior of His Majesty's prisons; and as I turned to watch him, to my surprise I saw that the beggar was handed the letter I had left for your *protégé*."

He leant forward earnestly, and said, "Allow me to offer you the advice of a man who has seen more of the 'seamy side' than you can ever imagine, Lady Maitland. Be very careful of the characters of the people to whom you give your charity. I should have every inquiry made in future, if I were you."

She shivered slightly. If he only knew that the *protégé* against whom he warned her had returned to Melton, and was still watching for some opportunity of meeting her, Heriot North would wonder still more at her strange propensity!

She had imagined every possible reason for the man coming back to the place where his liberty was in jeopardy, but could evolve none from the many points she had raised. Now she only waited for him to make some sign.

What had happened that he should be so careless of his safety? was the question she had asked herself over and over again.

She looked up, and saw Heriot North gazing at her with a strange questioning in his eyes.

"I will certainly avoid all promiscuous charity in future, Mr. North," she said gaily; "but I will be glad if you will not mention this particular case to my husband. He may think me foolish, and—I should not like to vex him. The man was recommended to me as a worthy subject! But come," she laughed, "let us talk of something else. Had you much time for theatres in town?"

He roused himself with an effort. He had been thinking what a symphony she made in the white and gold, and the firelight sending ruby tints in and out the waves of her hair.

"I went to the 'Empire,'" he replied; "and it certainly was not particularly gay," he laughed. "The evening I went there was a thick fog on. By the way, is Jack in town now? Because I fancy I saw him at the 'Empire.' I could not swear it was he, the fog hung over everything; but there was someone remarkably like him there, chatting and laughing with some man."

Lady Maitland raised her eyes. "Really? He has been in town nearly a week now, I believe. What was the man like? I wonder if he is a Melton friend."

"I cannot remember," he said carelessly; "I did not see his face."

He rose abruptly. "I must go now. I will look in again soon if I can."

"Won't you come in to dinner?" she said sweetly. "We shall be a family party—only the girls, Sir Trevor, and myself. And it must be lonely up at 'The Hollies' by yourself."

He bit his lip. "Yes, it is. So lonely that I dare not let myself come here too often, Lady Maitland, in case——"

"In case what?"

"'The Hollies' becomes so unbearable that I throw it all up—and go away!"

"You must not say that," she said quickly. "What will your friends do? We are beginning to rely upon you already, Mr. North."

He turned to her passionately.

"'We!' Who is 'we,' Lady Maitland? If, for a moment, I could imagine that—that you—cared——"

He stopped suddenly, something in her cold, proud face freezing the mad words on his tongue.

For a moment there was silence; then he stumbled to the door.

"Forgive me—if you can!" he muttered. "I shall never forgive myself!"

"Mr. North," said Lady Maitland's low, sweet voice; "one moment; I wish to speak to you."

He came back wonderingly, fearfully, to where she stood, a graceful, imperious figure; her eyes shining with sad pity and a gentle dignity in her manner.

"Mr. North," she said slowly, "I want to show you something. Look! You see those two photographs—my husband and—my child?"

He bowed his head dumbly.

"Well, Mr. North," continued the sweet voice, "between those two human banks the river of my life is flowing, evenly and peacefully. I have no desire for it to leave them behind and merge into the cruel, open sea of wreckage. I am happy—now; and"—her voice broke slightly—"help me to remain so. Be my friend—my loyal, true, disinterested friend," she continued, an undercurrent of eagerness making her speech falter. "You don't know how much I need one!"

She put out her hand and he took it in his with trembling fingers.

"Your kindness is more than I deserve," he murmured. "But if ever you will give me the opportunity of proving my devoted friendship, I will not fail you! For once in my life I have come face to face with a good, pure woman; and I thank God for it!"

Digitized by Google

He turned on his heel, and the door closed noiselessly.

For a while Lady Maitland stood motionless, then a slight smile curved her lips, and her eyes sparkled brilliantly.

"That was a very clever bit of acting!" she murmured. "And yet—and yet, I am sorry for the man. He takes me seriously! But he will be of infinitely more service to me as my friend than—anything else. I wish he had not seen that man. It was awkward! He called me a 'good, pure woman'!" she laughed. "So I am—so I would have been had not Fate intervened!" She clasped her hands passionately, then, after a pause, the calm returned to her face, and she left the room.

Half an hour later Sir Trevor Maitland entered his wife's dressing-room. He had had a long, successful meet. The fox had broken cover early, and had given them a good run, and he was consequently in high spirits. In his hand he had an open telegram.

"My dear," he said, after his wife had dismissed her maid. "this is from Jack, sent from St. Pancras. He will be here to-night to dinner, and brings a friend with him. He did not say *who*, but says for a few days' sport. They will probably be here in a short time now."

Lady Maitland laughed. "Very well, Trevor. I will be glad to see the boy again. Heriot North told me he saw him at the Empire with a man. This is probably the friend he is bringing back with him."

"Look your best, darling," said her husband. "I want Jack's friend to envy me my wife."

Lady Maitland laughed. "I am wearing my white tulle gown; that is sure to fascinate him!"

When her husband had left the room, and she was clasping her bracelets on her wrists, another interruption came. It was Ivy Strange, who asked to be allowed to see her for a few moments.

"Well, Ivy," said her ladyship graciously, looking at the girl's sweet, soft beauty that, waif as she was, gave her the bearing and appearance of an aristocrat. "I have a few seconds to give you, that is all."

The girl came forward slowly; her simple serge dress and felt hat setting off her fresh, pure face and figure.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you at this hour, Lady Maitland, but I have a message for you—a note."

The woman's heart throbbed suddenly.

"A note; who gave it to you, Ivy?" she said sharply.

"A boy in the village saw me coming up to the Manor," replied Ivy quietly, "and asked me to bring it for him, and give it into your hands only. I hope it is not very important," she said shyly. "I am afraid I loitered rather!"

But Lady Maitland was not listening to the girlish excuses. She had torn open the envelope, and was reading with glassy eyes the illiterate words scrawled on the piece of paper.

"The man you got the laugh over is now going to laugh at you. You lied to me. I know that your first husband still lives. I 'ave seen 'im. Send or rite by return to M.H. post office, Chorlton, inclosing five 'undred pounds or I will call at Manor and tell all."

The woman sat crushing up the piece of paper with desperate fingers. Her luck was leaving her. Was that man telling the truth, or was this only a threat? She wondered why he had not trusted Mason with the letter as before. The voice of the girl roused her.

"Are you ill, Lady Maitland? Can I do anything for you?"

Her words set a train of thought working in the woman's mind. Who better than this girl to be trusted—not confided in—but made use of? Servants were never reliable; this innocent child would think no harm, and levy no toll.

She put her white hand affectionately on Ivy's shoulder. "No, dear, not ill; only just a little upset at some news that affects someone dear to me. I wonder, will you write a letter for me, dear?" she went on caressingly. "I will not keep you very long."

"Oh, yes, with pleasure!" said the girl eagerly. "I shall be only too pleased to do anything for you that I can."

Lady Maitland smiled. "And I feel that I can trust you not to chatter like Muriel, or Woolf would about it, afterwards. You are a wise little girl, Ivy, and I think I know someone else who agrees with me in appreciating you!"

The girl blushed. "I will write for you now, if you wish it," she said simply.

"Thank you, dear," said her ladyship. "Sit down at my table and write: 'Am sending half; will forward to London address. Not advisable here for various reasons.'

"That will do. Don't sign it; my—my correspondent will understand," and a harsh laugh came from between her lips. The girl obeyed, then, under Lady Maitland's instructions, put on the envelope: "M. H. Post Office, Chorlton," which was the village adjoining that of Melton.

"Thank you, dear child," murmured her ladyship, and, stooping, she touched the girl's brow with a light kiss. "I will not forget you for this service. I think I will make you my amanuensis, you write so prettily. Now run away and post that for me."

When the girl had slipped away, Lady Maitland took the dirty piece of paper and dropped it in the fire. "I only wish I could do the same with the writer!" she muttered, then, with a bitter smile, she looked at herself in the glass.

"You are to fight! This creature must be silenced! The demands will only go on increasing until the end comes. And how do I know he is not lying? Yet, why should he risk coming back here? But that girl will conduct any correspondence for me." She smiled. "Nothing will be done that can compromise myself. For my boy, I will take all precautions! Now to go and see this wonderful friend of Jack's."

With a tender smile on her lips she went softly downstairs. From the drawing-room a sound of laughter and merriment floated to her ears. Above all she heard the shrill voice of Woolf, talking excitedly to someone.

Lady Maitland paused on the threshold, and sent a quick look round in search of Heriot North. He was not there. Another man, tall and dark, his back turned to her, was talking to Agnes, who was unusually bright and affable.

"Here's mummie!" cried Woolf, "at last!"

There was a lull in the conversation, as attention turned suddenly upon the woman in the doorway, whose violet eyes, under the shadow of burnished hair, seemed to shine and glow like sapphires.

"Ah!" said her husband's voice, "let me introduce Jack's friend, my dear."

The man came forward slowly, a gleam of dazzling teeth throwing up the blackness of his moustache. Sir Trevor Maitland's wife glanced up at him with a swift smile of welcome.

"This," continued Sir Trevor, "is Mr. Digby Scarlett—my wife!"

(Another long instalment next week.)

WHEN a damsel tells a young man that she has dreamt about him the night before, it is high time for him to begin to be careful.

BUSINESS MAN: "I thought I'd surprise my clerks by getting down to the office at the opening hour." Customer: "And did you?" "No; there wasn't one of them there."

FATHER: "Your schoolmaster can't be such a mean, unkind man as you make out. I noticed his son has all the toys he can possibly want." Tommy: "Why, those are what his father takes away from the other boys."

A COUNTRYMAN walked into a newspaper office to advertise the death of a relative. "What is your charge?" he asked of the clerk. "We charge eight shillings per inch." "Oh!" said the countryman, "I cannot afford that. My friend was six feet three inches."

Digitized by Google

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

A Story of Many Passions.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

Marie Furness walked rapidly up the broad stairs of Oak Grange, and entered the room which had been assigned to her as the guest of its owner and occupier, Sir Geoffrey Wilde, Bart.

She was a dark-skinned beauty, with evidences of Castilian origin in the flashing, jet-black eyes, the glistening coils of raven hair, the small, delicately-shaped head and lithe, willowy form, and, most of all, in the dusky olive of the flawless complexion.

The face, even in repose, was sufficiently striking. But, as she swiftly closed and locked the door of her room, its appearance and expression were beyond description.

The thin lips curled, half in defiance, half in scorn. The flashing eyes were cruel, not with passive, but active hatred. Every line of the dark, fascinating face was pregnant with passion—passion that will neither be quenched nor subdued.

With clenched hands and heaving bosom, she began rapidly to pace the floor of her room, her small feet falling almost noiselessly on the soft, rich carpet beneath. And as she walked, the inward working of the mind revealed itself in the dusky face, and showed that the two great opposing forces which govern frail humanity fought in the breast of this beautiful, passionate woman, so strong to love, so strong to hate.

At last the pent-up storm within broke forth in quick, fierce whispers—suppressed, subdued—as if afraid of being overheard.

"I could kill her—yes, kill her!" she said passionately. "And if the worst comes—— Oh, Heavens, I could not bear it—I *will* not! I would rather die than see that pale-faced, passionless graven image, who calls herself by the name of woman, the wife of this handsome, gay young Earl of Deercourt! If I cannot marry him, I swear she shall not! But I must—I must! Surely I am not lacking in loveliness that I cannot command love if I will?"

The cruel lustre of the dark eyes faded away, and a soft, dreamy light took its place. The whole face grew eloquent with love and longing, as intensely passionately potent as the hate and scorn which had preceded it.

Stepping quickly over to her dressing-glass, she critically scanned the lovely oval face, now transfigured with love, which it reflected. And, as she gazed, she smiled reassuringly.

"No," she said softly—"I would not exchange with any woman in all the county. I have nothing to fear on that score. And yet he scarcely notices me, while he dances perpetual attendance on this Lucille Warwick. Oh, how I hate her!" And the small hands clenched, while the lithe form quivered with a rush of fierce emotion.

Her eyes wandered to the window, overlooking the small but exquisitely preserved park of Oak Grange. Far away in the distance the gleam of a white dress among the great old oaks caught her eye, and an involuntary exclamation escaped her lips.

With straining eyes and rigid form she gazed out to the distant trees. Two people were there—a man and a girl—the former tall, the latter slight and graceful—almost, but not wholly screened by the thick foliage of the park trees. And they were standing in the attitude of lovers.

Nor was this all, for the eye of Marie Furness, quickened by jealousy, recognised in these unconscious lovers the forms of the Earl of Deercourt and her rival, Lucille Warwick.

With a sharp pang at her heart, she sank back into a chair, and tried to think calmly and collectedly. Long she sat thus, and when at last she rose the beautiful face was hard and cruel, and alight with the lust of revenge.

* * * *

Downstairs Sir Geoffrey Wilde was sitting, with knit brows and tightly-compressed lips, in the temporary seclusion of the Grange library.

No eye was present to read and interpret the dark, forbidding expression of his face, and in this security he abandoned the mask of polite indifference which was so habitual to him, and, like the beautiful but terrible woman in the room above, gave rein to the passions which dominated him.

Sir Geoffrey Wilde was a powerfully-built, well-groomed man in middle life. His title was unencumbered by the usual responsibilities incumbent on the possessor of such worldly honours—the responsibilities of wealth.

But though the baronetcy was unencumbered, the estates which accompanied it were not. Indeed, he scarcely knew where to turn to satisfy the clamorous demands of certain Hebrew gentlemen whose acquaintance he had contracted in the hour of his difficulties.

On the other hand, the young Earl of Deercourt, who had not long passed his majority, was immensely rich, with estates and personality large enough to satisfy the needs of half-a-dozen baronets such as he.

But this was not all. For, by right of succession, the life of this young Earl of Deercourt was the only thing that prevented him—Sir Geoffrey Wilde—from inheriting this immense wealth. It was, therefore, greatly to his advantage that the present Earl should die without issue. Indeed, the more speedily the Earl—to use his own expression—"hopped the twig," the better for himself.

Finally, Sir Geoffrey Wilde was extravagant, ambitious, and unscrupulous. But though he sometimes even boasted of the first of these three virtues, he was sufficiently a man of the world to effectually conceal the remaining two. And yet his every thought of late was dominated by these twin factors.

Avarice had become to him a veritable god, to whom he looked for salvation from his many difficulties. And to the attainment of that end he was prepared to adopt any course, practise any treachery, consistent with his own personal safety.

Thus, even in crime, he was a coward. But how was this end to be achieved? He, and he alone, must be the Earl of Deercourt, and that before the year was out, or it meant ruin—positive, hopeless ruin—to himself.

"My bad luck!" he muttered savagely. "One miserable life—the life of a mere boy—between me and all these riches!" And he ground his teeth in impotent anger. "The unsuspecting little fool!" he continued. "And he looks upon me as his counsellor and guide!"

He laughed sardonically to himself.

"I wonder what he would say if he knew that the counsel I give him as to the management of his estates was not so disinterested as it appears? I wonder what he would say if he knew that my motive in asking him here is to watch for an opportunity of ridding the world, without risk to myself, of the only obstacle in my path to fortune?"

Again he laughed softly to himself, but a moment later the brows came together again and the whole face hardened to a look of sinister reflection.

"I wish I could see my way out of this," he muttered.

Digitized by Google

"But I must be circumspect. Whatever happens, there are plenty of guests in the house—that is one consolation. I wonder what the fool is up to now? Paying court, perhaps, to that feminine volcano, Miss Marie Furness. But he barely notices her, for all the sidelong flashes of the black, passionate eyes.

"Truly, men are fools in their choice of women! No, I expect it's the blonde, not the brunette—the iceberg, not the volcano." He paused, and then, "Good Heavens!" he muttered hoarsely, "what if the boy should marry!"

He got up agitatedly and walked to the window. And there, under the distant park trees, his quick eye caught the same picture which had caused Marie Furness, in her room upstairs, to utter that involuntary exclamation of rage, and the look that crept into his face too was hard and cruel and full of sinister resolve.

An hour later Sir Geoffrey Wilde was sitting at his ease in one of the big lounge-chairs that occupied the shady verandah which skirted the southern wall of Oak Grange.

His face had again assumed its habitual expression of supreme indifference, and he sat languidly smoking a choice Havana and lazily watching the blue-grey spirals of smoke emitted by his thin, unsympathetic lips. Most of his guests were out riding, while a few were on the river, to which the park sloped down picturesquely in pleasing undulations of rich verdure.

There was a step on the verandah, approaching him from behind, but he did not stir. A moment later, someone stopped almost on a level with his chair, and he heard the soft rustle of a woman's dress. He let the hand fall that held the cigar, and noiselessly turned his head.

Marie Furness was standing on the edge of the verandah, gazing out over the wide sweep of sunlit lawn to the park beyond. Clearly she had not noticed him, for her back was towards him, and he could not but admire—critical as he was in his judgment generally—the willowy grace of the slender figure and the perfect poise of the delicate head.

Presently she half-turned, and, still unconscious of her host's presence, picked up a newspaper that lay on a wicker stand at her side. But it was evident the paper had little interest for her, and Sir Geoffrey, watching her with calm, impassive face, made a mental note of the fact that this "feminine volcano" was in that state of internal restlessness which immediately precedes, or follows, an eruption.

Suddenly the whole expression of the dusky face changed. The eyes dilated, and became fixed on the newspaper in her hand, as if attracted by some irresistible fascination. The bosom heaved convulsively, the dry lips parted, and the breath came quick and gasping.

Involuntarily she lifted one trembling hand to her heart, as if to still the tumult within.

Sir Geoffrey, roused out of his languid apathy, followed with his own the direction of the fascinated eyes, till he had mentally located the precise spot on the paper upon which the eyes were riveted.

Then he noted the number of the opposite page, which was within his line of vision, and, having concluded his mental notes for subsequent investigation, he slowly and noiselessly turned his head on its satin cushion and languidly closed his eyes to simulate slumber.

The act was not remarkable in the man, for, except when it suited his purpose, a strict observance of the first principles of honour was not one of Sir Geoffrey Wilde's weaknesses.

The next instant he caught the girl's voice—dry, hard, bitter, relentless—and, hardened man of the world as he was, a chill ran through him as he listened.

"Ah!" came the whisper, "this—this is my revenge! She shall never marry him! Once rid of her, my path will be clear! This very night I will do what I have to do—yes, this very night!"

Sir Geoffrey heard the rustle of the paper as it fell from the girl's fingers, and a quick, stealthy, retreating footstep told him that he was alone.

For fully ten minutes he remained motionless in his chair. Then he rose and picked up the fallen paper. He was not long in discovering what he wanted. It was an account of the death of a well-known Society man who had been found dead in his bed under peculiar circumstances.

As Sir Geoffrey read what those circumstances were, and connected them with the impassioned words of Marie Furness, he sank back in his chair with an involuntary shudder, not of horror but of fear.

Presently an idea came to him, and he gave a great start. The moisture stood upon his forehead, and he gripped the arms of his chair to steady himself. Then the thin lips parted, a low, mirthless laugh escaped them, and, rising with a sudden bound, he cast the paper from him and re-entered the house.

* * * * *

Evening had closed in over Oak Grange, lights glowed from the many windows, and Sir Geoffrey's guests, returned from their various excursions by river and road, chatted gaily in groups in drawing and billiard-room, or wandered along the moonlit paths of the old park. It was in the latter place that Sir Geoffrey met the solitary figure of Marie Furness.

The overwrought girl, unable to endure the incessant babble of the guests in the Baronet's drawing-room, had escaped to the grounds to think out her plans uninterruptedly. But her watchful host knew of her going, and, having a word or two to say to his lovely guest before she retired for the night, had followed her.

"Miss Furness!" he said in affected surprise as he came up with her. "Surely the gods are propitious at last! I looked for you all the afternoon, but you were nowhere to be found."

The girl looked up quickly and in some surprise.

"I am sorry," she said. "I had several things to do this afternoon—letters and other nuisances—and I spent the time chiefly in my room."

"Ah!" drawled the Baronet, "I never write letters, and, having no inclination to sit astride a horse or wrestle with an oar, I looked for you in the hope of having a quiet little chat. But you were invisible, as angels, they tell us, generally are. I suppose, if it were otherwise, we should not appreciate Paradise when we get there."

A half-suppressed sneer curled the girl's lip, but the Baronet was, or appeared to be, unconscious of it.

"By the way," he continued, "you spoke of your room. May I inquire whether it pleases you?"

"Charmingly, thank you," responded the girl.

"That is fortunate," said Sir Geoffrey, with a smile. "You are not so difficult to please as Miss Warwick."

The girl started at the name, but controlled herself immediately.

"Indeed?" she said indifferently.

Sir Geoffrey carefully knocked the ash from his cigar.

"Oh," he said, "perhaps I, in the capacity of host, should not have mentioned it. But my vanity is, I will confess, a little piqued. Miss Warwick has expressed some dissatisfaction at her apartments, so I have been compelled to effect an exchange."

The girl was listening now with breathless interest, and the Baronet, stealthily watching her from beneath his brows, saw the rapid changes of the dusky face and played his last card.

"Fortunately," he continued, "the Earl of Deercourt came to my rescue, and offered to place his rooms at the disposal of the lady. So the exchange was effected with less trouble than I had anticipated, since, as you may not be aware, every habitable room in The Grange is at

Digitized by Google

present occupied. But this is scarcely an interesting topic." And he lightly turned the conversation into more general channels.

But his words fell unheeded on the girl's ears, and they soon returned to the house and mingled with the guests. But throughout the evening Sir Geoffrey followed the movements of Marie Furness, watching her with lynx-like eyes, for the plan he had conceived depended solely upon her for its success.

At length all the ladies had retired for the night, and most of the gentlemen—among them the Earl of Deercourt—had followed their example.

It was now long past midnight. The drawing-room was deserted and in darkness, and in the billiard-room, three men, tired of play, sat smoking through the early morning hours, and, under the influence of a freely-circulating decanter, conversed in low tones on all conceivable and inconceivable subjects.

These three were Sir Geoffrey himself, Colonel Barnet of the Royal Horse, and Sir Manfred Lewin, K.C., a barrister of considerable renown. They were all three addicted to late hours, and were, therefore, in no hurry to retire.

The door of the billiard-room stood wide open, commanding a view of the stairs. A close observer might have detected an air of restless alertness on the part of Sir Geoffrey, but this passed unnoticed by his two companions.

Suddenly he put his finger to his lips, and, without a word, rapidly extinguished the lights. Then he moved noiselessly over to his companions.

"There's a little comedy going forward upstairs," he whispered. "For myself, I'm not surprised. Come softly, and see the fun!"

The two men rose, and, without a word, all three crept noiselessly up the dark staircase and peered along the dimly-lit passages above.

Presently they saw the figure of Marie Furness, loosely clad in dressing-gown and slippers, creeping stealthily along in the shadow of the wall. Stooping before the door of the Earl's room, she cautiously turned the handle.

The door yielded, and, with one quick glance of the black eyes around her, she entered the room. The men looked at each other in amusement, expecting to see the door close. But, a moment later, the girl reappeared, and, noiselessly closing the door as before, vanished down the long, dim passage in the direction of her own room.

"Humph!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey under his breath. "Not so exciting as I had anticipated!" But there was more of exultation than disappointment in his voice.

"She looked anything but amorous," he said grimly.

Sir Manfred looked uneasy.

"Are you sure it's all right?" he said, addressing Sir Geoffrey. "To me, she looked uncommonly like a woman who means mischief!"

Sir Geoffrey smiled reassuringly.

"Not she!" he said whimsically. "The incident is, perhaps, mysterious, but fraught with little danger to any but herself." And he looked meaningly at his companions.

The men laughed, and, separating, retired to their respective apartments.

* * * * *

Dawn was breaking, clear, blue and cloudless, when Lucille Warwick awoke from happy dreams to the happier realities of consciousness.

The Earl of Deercourt—handsome, gay, and debonair, had asked her to be his wife, and she, desiring nothing half so dearly, had consented. For she loved him with all her sweet, gentle heart, and, in her soft, shy, maidenly way, almost worshipped her handsome, light-hearted lover.

She had learnt the art of self-control, and this, together with the modest reserve that was natural to her, made her appear cold and passionless in the eyes of the outer world. But in her heart a well of infinite tenderness ran deep and undiminishing, that made her love well worth the winning.

Suddenly she became aware of a strong odour of escaping gas which permeated the apartment. Leaping lightly out of bed, she examined the brackets in her room, and found them in no way defective.

Then she remembered that the Earl's rooms were directly beneath her own, and a sickening dread of impending danger to the man she loved took possession of her.

Hastily attiring herself, she ran rapidly down the broad stairs, and stopped at the door of her lover's room. All was still within, but a dense, suffocating fume stole through the narrow crevices surrounding the door, and her heart turned sick within her.

Knocking loudly upon the panels, she ran breathlessly to the door of Sir Geoffrey's room, where she repeated her summons. But no response came to her knocking. All was silent.

In an agony of alarm and dread, and scarcely knowing what she did, she began vigorously to beat on all the doors along the passage, calling excitedly for help, and, in a very few minutes, the whole house was astir.

In a few rapid words she communicated her fears to the other guests, and Colonel Barnet, Sir Manfred Lewin, and several others made their way to the door of the Earl's room. Sir Geoffrey now made his appearance, and, learning the nature of their alarm, accompanied them.

Knocking still brought no response, so without further formality the door was flung open. A rush of gaseous vapour made them recoil, but, the next instant they plunged into the room, threw open the high windows, shut off the rapidly escaping gas from the two brackets, both of which had been turned on to their fullest extent, and, with a sickening fear at their hearts, turned towards the bed.

The young Earl lay there, pale and motionlesss. At first they feared he was dead, but among the Baronet's guests was a gentleman who, purely as a hobby, had studied both chemistry and medicine.

After a brief examination the Earl was pronounced to be still alive, though in a very critical condition. Restoratives were immediately applied to the unconscious Earl, and a groom hastily dispatched on horseback for a neighbouring doctor.

It was not until two hours later that the young Earl, feebly opening his eyes, looked about him. He was still too dazed and ill to speak, but his eyes met those of Lucille Warwick, who had begged to be allowed to remain in the room, and a contented smile crept about the mouth, while his eyes closed wearily.

All danger being now at an end, Colonel Barnet and Sir Manfred Lewin, remembering the incident of the preceding night, gravely recalled it to Sir Geoffrey's memory. With his consent, they went in search of Marie Furness. But not a trace of her could they discover anywhere.

She had been seen in the passage when it was first whispered that the young Earl was dead, and one told how she had been seen to reel when she heard it, and go tottering blindly, with shaking limbs, along the passage.

But there inquiry ceased, and Marie Furness, terrible alike in her love and her hate, the dupe of a deeper and more subtle plotter than she, disappeared as completely as though the earth had swallowed her up.

Slowly—very slowly—the Earl of Deercourt was nursed back to health. As soon as possible he was conveyed to Deercourt Towers, and a fortnight later was on his feet again.

Not a little of his progress towards recovery was due to the loving ministrations of his affianced wife, to whom he owed his rescue from the deadly poison of the escaping gas, and before the year was out a countess' coronet surmounted the gold coils of her hair, and she was happy in the perfect love which her husband bestowed on her.

And Sir Geoffrey Wilde? Baulked in his villainous designs on the life of the Earl of Deercourt, and threatened with ruin which he had not the courage to face, he shot himself on the very day when the marriage of the Earl with Lucille Warwick put an end to all his hopes of succeeding to the title and estates of Deercourt.

Walter J. Mowbray.

Digitized by Google

Brought to Book.

Telling of the Unmasking of Two Cardsharpers.

Starting as a gentleman, by force of circumstances a jack of all trades, by profession a *raconteur*. Such was my record when I arrived in London, whither the fame of my stories had preceded me.

Almost directly I received a letter from Herbert Falkner, millionaire, social lion, and otherwise known for his fine stables and genial hospitality, requesting me to do him the honour of a visit to his country place in Derbyshire. It was my fortune to know a man much in his favour and at the time his guest at Whiteacres, the Derbyshire place.

My initial appearance before Mr. Falkner's guests was to be at dinner, and I spent the last moments before leaving my room in reading over the list of topics I had jotted down for use during the evening. A *raconteur* is expected to fill in every lull, every dull moment. Suddenly there fell upon the quiet of my room these words:

"We must run it up to 5,000 to-night! Do you hear? We must."

I stared round the room. It seemed as if the sound had come through some tapestry in a small recess. Perhaps the tapestry covered a secret door, but there was no time to investigate. A footman was waiting to conduct me to my host.

An interesting party was assembled at dinner; that is, they were interesting to me as types of study. As conversationalists they were failures, for the only subjects on which they talked fluently were cards and horseflesh.

I selected my stories accordingly. The guests were apparently familiar with the customs of Monte Carlo and every gaming place abroad, but I told them tales of the Wild West, where I had spent several years in a mining camp, of games of faro and poker that fairly made them gasp, and after dinner they said I must teach them some points in the game of poker.

Sitting opposite to me at the table was a broad-shouldered, dark man, whose eyes, black and set rather closely together, never left my face. His lips were thin and bloodless, and his long, rather aquiline nose had a cruel curve about the nostrils.

But what most attracted my attention was his odd trick of drumming almost constantly with his right hand, now on the table, now on the arm of his chair, and now on his square chin.

The instant he spoke I recognised the voice I had heard in my room. The man was Captain Marchand, a British officer with a French name.

His wife sat at my right, a handsome woman with a profusion of soft brown hair and beautiful blue eyes, which I learnt in a short time were playing havoc with the mental peace of a young fellow named Chadwick. He was a handsome, boyish-looking fellow, one of those chaps who imagine themselves violently in love with every pretty face they meet.

Mrs. Marchand seemed to have caught her husband's peculiar trick of beating that maddening tattoo with her fingers. It fairly got on my nerves, but no one else at the table appeared to notice it.

She had long, slim, nervous-looking hands, covered with rings, the kind of hands one always associates with an artistic temperament, and they were terribly restless. Never for one moment did she keep them still, but played the tattoo with maddening persistency.

During the evening I was kept busy explaining the intricacies of poker, after which I watched the guests yield to the fascination of the game. Soon little piles of silver and gold appeared and disappeared at the various tables. Excitement grew apace.

Finally interest centred at the table where Marchand and young Chadwick played alone. At the beginning the latter won, and with a triumphant gesture hauled in his little pile of gold. The excitement brought a sparkle to his eye and daring to his tongue, and he kept Mrs. Marchand near, declaring that she brought him luck.

When Chadwick won she clapped her hands in girlish glee, and once or twice I caught a cynical smile on Marchand's lips. Clearly her presence was turning Chadwick's head; he played recklessly.

"I'll make it £400!" exclaimed Marchand.

A hush fell on the room. Then rose Mrs. Marchand's clear, sweet voice:

"How exciting! Oh, Mr. Chadwick, go one better. Make it £500."

The other guests rose and gathered round the table. Falkner stood on the hearth-rug, glancing towards the group with troubled eyes. I heard him say under his breath: "The lad can't afford to lose that amount."

I joined the spectators just as Chadwick called for another card. Then I felt a thrill pass over me. The blood rushed to my face, and instinctively I clenched my fist.

Mrs. Marchand was gently tapping the back of Chadwick's chair. Each tap meant that she was telegraphing Chadwick's hand to her husband.

My first impulse was to denounce them then and there. Then came an inspiration. With something of the Captain's cynical smile, I too, began to drum on the back of a chair, and this was what reached the startled couple:

"You—are—caught."

Captain Marchand turned rigid as he grasped the arms of his chair, and for a single instant his eyes met mine. I smiled grimly, enjoying the situation. The turn of events had a different effect on Mrs. Marchand. She fainted away, at which the Captain's composure returned. He sprang to her rescue, and the table was overturned.

When Mrs. Marchand recovered, the guest clamoured for the finish of the game, but Marchand shook his head, perhaps because I drummed a rhythmic warning:

"Don't play!"

Over an hour passed, and I was sitting in my room, cogitating whether I should inform Falkner that he was entertaining a pair of very clever sharpers, when a servant brought me a message from Marchand asking for an interview in his sitting-room.

I found him waiting for me with an ugly scowl on his face; but his wife, pale and with her hair in artistic disarray, was charming in her new *role* of beauty in distress.

Marchand came directly to the point

"Well, what do you intend to do?"

"Nothing," I replied nonchalantly. "It is your game. If you and your charming wife are suddenly summoned to Paris to-morrow the matter ends. Otherwise, I think Mr. Falkner"—I shrugged my shoulders significantly. "And, by the way, it might be just as well if you refunded to Chadwick the money you've won since he's been playing with you."

"And then?"

"And then I shall have one more good after-dinner story to tell when I return to town—that is all. Mr. Falkner shall never know."

"You are very generous. You can have no idea to what straits, we, my husband and I, have been driven."

With a well-simulated sob she buried her head among the pillows.

"'You will pardon Mrs. Marchand's lack of self-control. As you say, I think a trip to Paris is what she needs, what we both need; and I think," he added, with a smile, "we all need something to drink after the events of the evening. Will you join us in a whisky-and-soda? Come, don't say no."

As he spoke he poured out some whisky from a cut-glass decanter and added some soda with perfect coolness and calm. I did not care about drinking with such company, but could think of no reasonable pretext for refusing, so tossed off the whisky-and-soda with a cheerful "Here's luck!" which had an ironical note in it.

I stepped backward towards the door, which he held open. Then, suddenly, I felt my head reeling and a loud singing in my ears.

When I woke it was morning and I was in my own room, fully dressed, lying upon my bed. Dazed and giddy, I tried to collect my thoughts, and at last the remembrance of the previous evening flashed upon me.

I rose and staggered to the room occupied by Captain and Mrs. Marchand, but, as I suspected, the birds had flown and the nest was empty. Taking advantage of the stupor into which the glass of drugged whisky had thrown me, the clever pair had guiltily absconded, leaving no trace behind them.

Our host heard with amazement my tale of their treachery and trickery, but the scandal never became public. And the only reason for the telling of the story is that during a recent trip to Paris, I recognised in one of the reigning stage beauties Mrs. Marchand, who once telegraphed a poker hand to her fellow trickster at Herbert Falkner's country house.

Douglas Doty.

Not the Only Pebble.

The Love Story of an Everyday Young Man.

"Are you really going to leave us, Grace?"

John Branscombe asked the question in an unsteady voice, and deep anxiety was clearly discernible on his countenance. He was not what people would call a handsome young man; his face attracted by its sterling honesty rather than by its physical beauty.

He was twenty-one, tall, broad-shouldered, and strongly-built; his whole appearance denoted steady perseverance—"plodding," as some would call it—and not the smartness and dash which invariably attracts although it may not always be so reliable as the characteristic possessed by John Branscombe.

Grace Ashurst was seventeen. She was tantalisingly pretty, and gave promise of great beauty as she developed into a woman. She was vivacious, quick in all her movements, with rosy lips and eyes that were constantly changing in expression.

When she assumed a demure air, she was more bewitching than ever, and even when she was angry she only made herself more lovable.

John Branscombe had aroused her anger on more than one occasion by adopting a protective attitude; her flashing eyes abashed him, but the outburst only added fuel to the flame of his love. "I want you, I want you!" he would say to himself, apostrophising the absent Grace; she half-realised that he was in love with her, but her mind was occupied with other thoughts, and she smiled at the thought.

"He would never do for me!" she declared to herself. "I want a man with more—more—oh, more soul! John is too ordinary for me!"

She was going to leave the northern town and take up her abode in the Metropolis for the purpose of receiving a thorough musical education. She had a good voice and the idea of becoming a *prima donna* enchanted her. She had urged her mother to permit this, and finally Mrs. Ashurst had consented, much against her own inclination.

"It would be better for you to settle down here, using your gift (as you could do) for the amelioration of the lot of those less fortunate," said the widow. "Nevertheless, as you seem to have set your heart on it, I will consent."

Her lips moved as though she were saying more, and Grace guessed what was passing in her mind.

"Don't think me ungrateful, mamma!" she implored. "I am consumed by this desire! I do not wish to leave you alone, but you can come to London, too, and we can be happy together!"

"Never mind, dear!" said the self-sacrificing mother, her own feelings driven aside by her love for her daughter. "I will stay here, and you must write often and come to see me as frequently as you can!"

So it was arranged, and John Branscombe learnt of the plan only on the evening preceding Grace's departure

"Are you really going to leave us?" John repeated the question as Grace did not reply.

She was gazing at him with mingled amusement and vexation. What did it matter to him? What right had he to speak in a tone that signified reproach?

"Why should I not?" she asked defiantly.

John was nonplussed. He scarcely dared to suggest that he had some claim to consideration, so he thought of saying that she ought to study her mother's happiness. He remembered, just in time, that this was not a fair remark to make; it was to be assumed that mother and daughter had agreed, and, moreover, it was not a straightforward answer. He was confused and remained silent. Grace laughed teasingly.

"Dumb!" she said triumphantly. "Now, please do not patronise me any more! Yes, I am going away to-morrow, so I shall say 'Good-bye!' to you this evening, Mr. Branscombe, and I shall not see you again for some time. During that period, you will recognise that the fact that we went to school together does not give you the right to act as guardian for ever——"

"I wish it did!" interrupted Branscombe eagerly and earnestly. "You want someone to protect you, Grace! Life is full of dangers and troubles and"—he was trembling with suppressed passion—"and I could guard you, I could devote myself to you."

"But I do not require your assistance, Mr. Branscombe!"

Digitized by Google

she retorted stiffly. "I think I can manage without you!"

If he had been better versed in the subject of love, he would not have made the false step that followed; but he could only see that Grace was going away, that she would meet with men of more fascinating exterior, that she might be attracted to one of these, who would not make it his life's work to secure her happiness. And, above all, he saw her slipping from him, and the thought of life without Grace was intolerable!

"Yes, Grace, you do want me!" he said. It was a mixture of pleading and an effort to convince her that she would be happier with him than with anyone, because he would slave to make her happy. But Grace heard the words without understanding the feelings that prompted them. "You will want me, Grace! You must not go from me!"

"Stop! stop!" she commanded, drawing her small, but exquisitely-moulded figure to its full height. "You are presuming, Mr. Branscombe! You appear to be suffering under the illusion that you are the only pebble on the beach!"

To anyone possessing full knowledge of the circumstances, that speech would have sounded unkind, to say the least; but Grace did not understand, so it was justifiable. To John Branscombe it was a just rebuke for his presumption; he recognised that his emotion had carried him too far. He flushed with shame.

"I beg your pardon!" he said humbly. "I ought to have remembered! Yes, there are others! But—oh, Grace! —they will not love you more than I do!"

He shut his teeth hard in an endeavour to repress the signs of emotion, but without avail. To hide the tears that welled to his eyes, this strong man turned hurriedly, with a farewell wave of his hand, and left the room. Grace caught sight of his face for a second and it banished all resentment from her breast.

"But, really, you know, I am not in love with him!" she remarked apologetically to the walls, and then resolutely shut him from her thoughts.

Mrs. Ashurst would have lived with Grace in London had the state of her health permitted, but the doctor forebade it. She, therefore, took measures to secure the services of an old school friend, and it was in the family of this friend that Grace lived. Thus assured of her daughter's welfare, Mrs. Ashurst made herself contented. She had an income from shares which more than sufficed to keep her and Grace and for the payment of the cost of Grace's musical education.

It was not till she returned for a holiday visit that Grace learnt of the removal of John Branscombe; he had left the place soon after her departure.

"It is said that he has gone abroad," said her mother. "Of course he is possessed of sufficient means to enable him to live a bachelor life without work, so he can reside where he likes."

Grace felt a trifle sorry at the loss of John; it would have been pleasant to see him as a friend; but she soon threw off that feeling.

"It was so foolish of him!" she laughed when she was alone, as she surveyed herself in the mirror. "It served him right that I should tell him that he was not the only pebble on the beach! Yet—he was not a bad sort!"

Then her mind reverted to one or two handsome men who had already paid her marked attention, and her vanity was gratified.

"I shouldn't think of marriage for a long time!" she declared, shaking her head slowly at her own reflection. "I want to make a name, and then—then I can have my choice! It would be nice to have a title!"

She went back to her studies. A year passed away, and Grace heard from her mother a story that showed how nearly she had lost the chance of continuing her education.

"The company in which I was so largely interested," explained Mrs. Ashurst, "failed irretrievably. I was almost killed by the announcement! But Fortune favoured me this time. It seems that my solicitors had guessed something of the kind and had exchanged my shares some time ago. Consequently the failure did not affect us to any extent, and the dividends come as usual; not quite so much, but enough for all purposes!"

"How fortunate!" cried Grace, the colour returning to the cheeks which had blanched at Mrs. Ashurst's first words.

"Exceedingly!" exclaimed her mother in a tone which indicated great thankfulness. "I wrote to express my gratitude, but they said they were pleased to have helped a client and that I had better not say anything about it. I don't quite understand shares and all that sort of thing, so I gave up the attempt to explain to myself how they had managed it."

"I suppose it is all right?" queried Grace, in a wavering tone. "I suppose they hadn't sold the shares long ago and are just paying you the dividend till they abscond or something like that?"

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Ashurst was very decisive. "I would not think of such a thing for a single instant! Mr. Dane owed your father a debt of gratitude, and he is as honest as the day!"

"Have you heard anything of Mr. Branscombe?" asked Grace, a little later. The return to home always awakened the memory of John.

"Nothing whatever!" said Mrs. Ashurst. "He has disappeared completely. In the Colonies, I expect!"

That was rather vague, but Grace accepted it without question. Perhaps he was married? Grace started and frowned as the thought flashed across her mind. Yes, perhaps he was married—why not?

"If so," murmured Grace, "he is probably saying about me what I said to him! He has discovered another pebble!"

It was no concern of hers, but she did not find the reflection very pleasant. It is so natural to want things all one's own way!

The next four years were busy ones for Grace Ashurst; she had developed a magnificent voice, and, at the end of that period, she had made her first public appearance at a small concert with great success.

Her fame spread, people wanted to hear her. Everybody, that is, everybody who cared for music, desired to hear this young singer who promised to rival Patti and glorify Great Britain by the fact that a native-born woman had arisen to assume a place and take the laurels that have so often fallen to natives of other countries!

She appeared in the Metropolis and carried the great city by storm. Newspaper critics were unanimous in their praises; her success was assured. Engagements poured in upon her, all Society was at her feet. Grace Ashurst's triumph was complete!

It was not long before rumours of offers of marriage from possessors of proud titles, and prospective possessors of such titles, were circulated. It is small wonder that Grace felt elated; the stream of success and the halo of the fame were sufficient to produce exultation in one much older than this beautiful woman with the glorious voice!

Grace Ashurst was preparing for a great night, and at its conclusion she was to be the guest, at supper, of a wealthy gentleman, well known for his love of music. It was to be a select gathering; the host and his wife and daughters, with Viscount Critton and a few more chosen members of Society.

The supper was, in point of fact, due to the request of the Viscount, who had induced his friend, the host, to invite the new singer in order that he (the Viscount), might have the quiet opportunity he desired.

The host knew quite well that there would be a proposal of marriage, and Grace herself anticipated it instinctively. She knew but little of the Viscount, but she was prepossessed in his favour and he bore a good reputation. The title had its glamour for her, but she had retained sufficient mastery of herself not to be led away merely by a name.

"I like him!" she told herself. "Love will come afterwards! I do not know that there is anyone whom I like better!"

It was natural that her thoughts should revert to John Branscombe, but it was so long since she had heard of him that the memory of his sterling qualities was dimmed

Digitized by Google

"I might really have fallen in love with him if he had been more—more dashing, just a little more!" she said meditatively. "He was rather humdrum! He might have been more polished if he had moved in Society. But that's all over now!"

And again her thoughts turned to the Viscount.

Almost at the very moment that Grace was thus communing with herself, the object of that communion was having a heated discussion with Mr. Dane, the solicitor.

"My dear man!" expostulated the solicitor testily. "I cannot keep the farce on any longer! It was perfectly understood between us that the money would secure an annuity for just so long. The time is up and the object is attained. Now the truth must be told! The next payment is due and there is no money forthcoming! The farce about the dividends really ended, or ought to have ended, six months ago! It is hardly fair to her to allow her to think that all is well, right down to the last moment!"

"I know it is not!" said Branscombe moodily. "But it must be kept up for a few days, and by that time an engagement will be announced and Grace Ashurst will be settled! You must keep it up, Mr. Dane, out of friendship for me and Mrs. Ashurst!"

Mr. Dane groaned.

"I consider that I have forfeited my reputation by agreeing to this thing, and that is rather a large price to pay for friendship, young man!" he returned. "No! I must tell her! Grace is able to earn a large sum now, and her personal circumstances will make no difference to Viscount Critton, if he is the chosen man!"

"It might make a difference if he knew!" said Branscombe. "Well, if you must tell, you must keep names quiet for the present! So much is certain! Don't tell her for two days," he pleaded.

"I shall tell her to-morrow!" retorted Mr. Dane decisively.

"Then you will not mention my name yet? That much you must promise, and I insist! What difference will that make? Well, it might upset the prospective wedding and I don't want to do that! Oh, I can't explain how!"

Either Mr. Dane could not or would not see the drift of Branscombe's reasoning; at any rate, his face remained somewhat wooden in aspect.

"I'm going to see her to-night for the last time!" said John Branscombe, as he made his way to the railway station. "My work during the past four years as a journalist will serve me in good stead. I can get at the side and watch her at close range. I cannot take a seat in front, as I have done before. I am too far off, and if I get near—in the stalls—she will recognise me. A last look at the woman I love and then away from this country for good! She will be happy, and what more ought I to want? I desire her happiness! I should like to share it, but if the Fates forbid?"

As Grace Ashurst stood before the enthusiastic audience that evening, she did not dream that John Branscombe stood so near her, feasting his eyes upon her, drinking in the last drops of happiness and striving to banish the dull pain at his heart!

She was compelled to respond to a rapturous encore. She was holding the large audience entranced by her pathetic rendering of an old Scottish air, when something terrorised the entire mass of men and women. From the flies there came a burning mass of flimsy material, falling directly over the singer! It would envelop her in its fiery embrace, the awful consequences of which flashed into the minds of all and held them paralysed!

Grace, carried away by her desire to exceed all her previous efforts, did not notice the look that appeared in the faces of those in front of her, and she stood there with the burning mass falling upon her without being in the least conscious of the terrible fate that threatened her. It was all so momentary that no one could call out.

There was one person who saw the danger and was cool and quick enough to act; it was John Branscombe. He darted forward from the side and pushed Grace towards a side box with a suddenness that sent her reeling. Before she could recover from her amazement, the house was in an uproar.

John had saved her from a dreadful catastrophe; for, had the blazing mass enveloped her, the soft material of her dress would have caught and she would have been doomed; but in saving her, he had brought disaster upon himself. The flaming mass fell upon him before he could get out of line; it covered him and, notwithstanding his endeavours to free himself, it burnt him and caught portions of his clothing.

Assistance was promptly forthcoming; three or four men from the wings rushed on the stage and helped him. In the auditorium a panic ensued, but happily it was quieted before anyone suffered serious injury.

A doctor was called and he ordered the removal of the now unconscious Branscombe to a hospital; but Grace, who had recovered from the shock, insisted that the unfortunate man should be taken to the house of the family with whom she still resided. "He saved me," she said simply, "and I will do my best for him!"

It was not till the following morning, when she was permitted to see the patient, that she recognised John Branscombe, somewhat changed but John all the same.

"John!" she exclaimed involuntarily. "It was *you*?"

"Yes!" he said. He could not venture to utter more; he averted his eyes lest she should see the love that *would* come into them.

He was not badly injured; his hands were burnt, his hair and beard were gone, and there was a burn on his right cheek.

"I am a pretty object for her to gaze upon!" he thought. Yet he exulted in it. He had saved her!

"I owe you my life, John!" she said with quivering lips, placing her soft hand on his left cheek.

"Oh, no! Not so bad as that!" he responded cheerfully. "I chanced to be in the way, you see!"

"How was it that you were so near?"

"I wished to see you for the last time!" he replied, with averted eyes.

Then the doctor came in and stopped the conversation; the patient was becoming excited, he said.

Later in the day, Mrs. Ashurst arrived in a state of great nervous strain. Mr. Dane had told her about the dividends and she had heard of the affair of the previous evening.

Her outpouring was so incoherent that Grace could not grasp it at first, but the elder lady grew calmer when she was quite assured that her daughter was safe, and told the other story more plainly.

"So it comes to this. That you really lost all in that failure after all, mother, and that John Branscombe gave all he had to buy you an allowance that would last long enough to enable me to complete my education, and he persuaded Mr. Dane to help him! He wanted to keep his name secret still, but Mr. Dane has told you all. Is that it?"

"Exactly, my dear! And now you must help me to repay him. He has given up all and worked, so that you might not suffer; you must now work to help him and repay him!"

"I will try to repay him, mother, if he will let me! It was he who saved me last night!"

Grace said nothing to John till he was well enough to get about; then she went up to him and held out her hands.

"I know all!" she said. "What can I do to repay you?"

John trembled; he could not reply for a moment; then he said, with a sigh:

"I could tell you!" he cried, "if I—if I were not so painfully conscious that I am only one insignificant pebble among so many better!"

"Don't!" she cried, her eyes filling with tears, her cheeks crimson. "I am sorry that I ever said that! I did not understand!"

He stared at her, doubted if he heard and saw aright; but he could not mistake. He strode towards her and clasped her to his breast.

"Do you mean that, Grace?" he asked fiercely.

"Yes, John! I know now that, for me, you are the only pebble!"

F. Brewster.

Digitized by Google

Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN. FIRST PRIZE, £25.	CASH DOWN. SECOND PRIZE, £10.	CASH DOWN. THIRD PRIZE, £5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*

And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

• • • • • • •

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink), in the space left for that purpose, the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:
ABGHIIMMNR ... Birmingham.

SECOND LIST.

13. AGNIW .....
14. AFIKKLR .....
15. HIILLLLM .....
16. EHPRT .....
17. ACEEHMNRST .....
18. ABCMNRW .....
19. ABDDFORR .....
20. AEIKLLNRY .....
21. DEEFFHILS .....
22. ADEHHLOY .....
23. CEKORS .....
24. AHMORTUY .....

Name..... Address.....

.....

Digitized by Google

THE WEDMORE'S "HOP."

A Tale of a Misunderstanding which was Cleared up.

"My dear, they are as good as engaged; they always were together even before Gertie was in her teens; and two years ago, when she was sixteen, there was a tremendous row. Miss Fox, in her usual amiable way, congratulated both Colonel Moray and Mrs. Clive on the engagement.

"Of course the result was astonishment, indignation, Percy and Gertie called up to judgment, vows of eternal constancy, Gertie sent to school for six months; and ever since then, whenever Harry has been over here, six 'rounds' together at every hop, and all the squares sat out in the garden, whether Mrs. Clive liked it or not. I suppose, now Percy has this money left to him, it will be all right."

So spoke Miss May Faulkner, a Jersey belle, aged twenty, to her companion, Clare Grattan, a girl two years her senior, who had come from England on a visit to the Clives above-mentioned.

The girls were strolling slowly along the St. Helier's broad white sands; they were lagging rather behind the rest of their party, which had split itself up into two other couples.

Clare Grattan's heart was heavy with a dull oppression of pain, the result of a fear become a reality, as she answered:

"Then you think Mr. Moray"—there was a momentary pause before she spoke this name—"and Gertie care for one another?"

"Think so? Look there!"

As May spoke, she pointed to the figures of a young girl and man who were standing almost at the water's edge, their outlines sharply defined against the sunset glow. Their faces were turned towards the sea, away from Clare; but she, looking at the young man's bent head, the girl's upturned one, could fancy only too well the look of Percival Moray's brown eyes. Had she not known it to her own cost?

She had been a fool, she thought, and only that afternoon had been happy in her folly. Clare Grattan had only been six weeks at Jersey, but that time had been fuller and more intense to her than all the years of her yet early womanhood; she had learnt that her own heart at length had grown into love. For the last month she had found herself, whenever she was at a dance, waiting with a feverish impatience for the advent of a tall, slight figure with a bright, honest face, the charm of which it was difficult to analyse, but impossible not to feel.

She had listened every morning, as she sat in the breakfast-room with Gertie, for a cheerful voice calling them from the garden below, and begging them to come out for a practice at lawn-tennis; and she had felt a new, intense pleasure in the rare talks, in which Percival seemed to show her glimpses of that other "soul side" which a man "keeps to show a woman when he loves her." He suited her as no one else had ever done, and she had fancied that he wished to let her know that he loved her.

And yet she had feared sometimes—and, as it had proved, had had reasons for her fears—that Gertie and Percival had loved one another; and how, thought Clare now, could any girl who had once cared for Percival Moray become indifferent to him?

Clare was still pondering, when Gertie turned her steps towards her friends.

"Do you know it is nearly seven o'clock, Clare? We shall have a nice scolding from mamma if we are late for dinner, and we promised to be at the Wedmores' by a quarter to nine."

Clare smiled faintly.

"How horribly fagged you do look! Not at all like dancing. These last three nights have been too much for you."

"Are you tired?" asked Percy of Miss Grattan, bending towards her.

If he had only known the sharp thrill of pain the tone of his voice caused her! She was glad to hear her own sound unconstrained as she answered:

"Not at all, thank you."

"We have come too far along the sands; I ought to have remembered. Won't you take my arm?"

"Oh, no; I am all right."

He said no more, but, turning again to Gertie, called out to two other individuals who had apparently forgotten everything else in the contemplation of a dead star-fish; at all events, they had been gazing at it for full five minutes, when Percy's voice reached them.

"Hullo, Rashton! Come on, it's getting late."

Thus addressed, the two defaulters moved slowly towards the rest of the little group. Their conversation, as they strolled along, was after this wise:

"Be a brick, Miss Wedmore, and try to give a miserable wretch a chance."

"How can I? I can't make Gertie like you."

"Keep that fellow Moray out of the way, so that I may try my luck at least."

"You're doing your very best to ruin it by seeming to flirt with me. Gertie is awfully jealous, mind."

"Hang it! I beg your pardon, I mean——"

"You needn't, I don't mind it."

"I think I have most reason for jealousy. Why, I know that she and Moray were spoons once, even if they are not now."

"Yes, but Gertie can't know that I am only playing confidante."

"Never you mind; only help me, and you shall see what the bridesmaids' lockets will be like."

"For shame, Captain Rashton! bribery and corruption. By the way, I have a weakness for opals."

"I'll make a note of that," answered Captain Rashton, taking out his pocket-book for the purpose.

Digitized by Google

Certainly, to an uninitiated eye, the two had decidedly as much the appearance of flirting as Percival and Gertie had, and a keen observer might have connected that fact with the wrathful flash of Miss Clive's blue eyes, and her sharp, petulant answers when addressed.

Clare did not do so, but imagined that these signs of ill-temper in her friend were owing to some fault of Percy, and inwardly determined, now that she knew of the understanding between Mr. Moray and Gertie, to abstain even from any appearance of intimacy with the former, lest it should wound her friend, whom she knew was a little inclined to be exacting.

"She needn't be afraid, though," thought poor Clare to herself. "I know he is true. If he loved me, I would trust him entirely."

The party broke up at the top of King Street, Florence Wedmore going one way, and the three other girls in the opposite direction.

"Good-bye for an hour and a half," said Florence. "Captain Rashton and Percy, you are to come back home with me and give the floors a last polish."

If Gertie's face could be said to be dark at any time, it certainly was, as she with Clare and May turned towards that quarter of St. Helier's popularly known as "the Shingles."

"What a flirt Florence is!" she remarked, with virtuous indignation.

"'People who live in glass houses,'" answered May. "The idea of you accusing anyone of flirting, Gertie, is rather too fine, considering the way you have always treated Percy."

"Percy and I understand one another," answered Gertie curtly.

"That is a comfort, at all events," retorted May, "for nobody else does. Well, here is our house, so ta-ta for the present."

Two minutes more, and Clare and Gertie reached the latter's home, called the Retreat, apparently because it faced the road.

The dinner that evening at the above-mentioned abode was not very cheerful. Gertie was cross, Clare occupied by her bitter thoughts of what she had learnt that afternoon, and Mrs. Clive, Gertie's mother (Miss Clive was an only child), found it very hard work to maintain anything like conversation.

Directly it was ended Gertie ran up to her room to dress for that evening's dance at the Wedmores'. She was standing in her white wrapper by the toilet-table unfastening the twisted rope of her pretty hair, which shone like gold in the still lingering afterlight, when her eye fell on a half-withered bouquet of passion-flower, ferns, and tuberoses, which was placed in a glass of water on the table.

Some memory connected with it made her cheeks flush, her brain throb, her eyes burn with stinging tears, which she tried to force back by hard biting of her underlip.

"So," she thought, "he neglects me and flirts with Florence! Very well, sir, tit for tat. I'll revenge myself with Percy, and if I don't make you suffer—that's all!"

Meanwhile Clare, in her room above, was trying to convince herself against her heart's assurance that Percy did not love her, and that if he did (illogical but girlish sequence), it was her duty to Gertie to reject his affection, and bid him render it to her to whom it was due.

She would be loyal to her friend at all costs to herself.

A light tap at the door, and Gertie entered, looking very pretty in a soft white silk much smothered with lace.

"How shall I do, Clare?"

"I never saw you look so well," said Miss Grattan, and she spoke the truth. Gertie's eyes were shining like bits of sunlit summer sea; her cheeks were a delicate crimson, her fair hair was ruffled in that sweet order of disorder which best suits a Greuze face and low white brow.

"Will you put in my flowers?" said Gertie, holding up the great pink bells of the belladonna lily for Clare to fasten in her hair.

"Thank you, dear," as it was accomplished, and the little lady pirouetted round, humming a waltz in a manner which caused Clare to exclaim:

"Gertie, are you bewitched? What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," said Gertie, then with a sudden faltering of her voice and a burst of tears, "Oh, Clare, I am so unhappy!"

Clare put her arms round her and let her sob for a few moments in silence, then she spoke:

"I am very sorry; but, Gertie, you needn't be afraid; I am sure he cares for you." Her words were very brave, and her lips did not tremble as she spoke.

"Look there," and as May spoke she pointed to two figures standing at the water's edge.

"Do you think so?" and Gertie lifted her head from where it had rested on her friend's breast. "But why does he flirt so? I am proud, and don't show it, but it pains me dreadfully, Clare. I feel sometimes as if— Oh, why should he hurt me when I love him?"

"Is she trying not to ask me to flirt with him?" thought Gertie's friend, and the hot glow of a wounded pride, far deeper and stronger than that of the younger girl, burnt her pale cheek at the idea that she, Clare Grattan, should be suspected of flirting. It was some little time before she slowly answered:

"I should trust him and be sure he deserves it; and, Gertie"—she spoke nervously and as if frightened lest her friend should be offended—"I wouldn't give him any cause for jealousy by being too much to-night with——"

"There's the carriage," said Gertie, springing up. "I'm very sorry, dear, I can't take your advice, as it's the exact opposite to what I mean to do. I shall treat him just as he treats me."

With which words Miss Clive ran downstairs, and Clare had no opportunity for saying more.

"How good of you to be early!" exclaimed Florence Wedmore, entering the cloak-room as Clare and Gertie were disencumbering themselves of their wraps. "I've put you down to play two waltzes, Gertie, and Miss Grattan for one."

"Oh, I will play as often as you like," said Clare. "I am rather tired, and don't want to dance much."

Florence shook her head.

"I won't victimise you," she said. "Ah, there's the first waltz beginning. I put down Miss Fox for that; she always plays the *Faust*, and thumps so. It's as well to get her performance over before many people come."

Clare sat down at the piano. She was dressed in a simply-

Digitized by Google

made dress, unflounced and untortured by fashion, of soft silk, the colour of the outer leaves of the daffodil, which deepened in the folds of the drapery, with subtle gradations of shade.

In her black hair were set two or three stephanotis stars; the outline of her face was calm and fair—Percy—who had eyes for her alone—thought sad. The heavy-lidded grey eyes were not fixed on her music; her hands moved mechanically.

How different she was from other women! How unlike her dress, her face, her words, to anything he had ever known! He was twenty-seven, and he loved her, loved her, loved her—the words formed themselves to the rhythm of the passionate German waltz she was playing. He wished that he and she were waltzing to it. Anyhow, he would do the next best thing—ask her for the following dance.

Alas, before he could move to her, the waltz ended. Clare was monopolised by another man, to whom Florence introduced her; and Harry himself was discovered by Miss Wedmore, who insisted on introducing him to a red-haired heiress, who smiled sweetly, as she hoped Mr. Moray did not mind dancing polka time—she did not dance anything else.

Percival Moray was a lieutenant of Hussars, whose father lived in Jersey. The boy himself, when a child, became a favourite with his mother's brother, who proclaimed him as his heir, petted him as a child, sent him to Eton, bought him his commission, only asking in return that he should spend half his holidays and leaves with him; and who had died a twelvemonth ago, leaving Percy two thousand a year, and a pretty old house in Kent.

So two months before this evening Moray sold out and came over to Jersey to win his old love; when, to his great disgust, he discovered that he no longer cared for her, nor she for him. Still they went on playing at love till Clare Grattan came on a visit to the Clives, and Percy fell honestly and heartily in love with her.

Nevertheless, he felt he was, in a manner, bound to marry Gertie if she wished it—and it was hardly likely, he thought, that she did not; for the girl was full of wounded pride and indignation against the man she loved, and held the sweet jest up by dancing, talking, and flirting with Percy so desperately, that she deceived both him and Captain Rashton into the idea that she was in love with the former.

It was fully half an hour before Percy was able to gain Clare's side and ask for "the dance you promised me."

She knew it would be far more marked if she refused, so took his arm as the first bars of the waltz sounded.

Clare was fond of waltzing, and Percy's long swinging, yet perfectly smooth, step suited her better than any other. She could not help enjoying the swift motion.

The last slow chords sounded, and they stopped.

"Ah," said Percy, drawing a long breath, "it's warm."

"It is," assented Clare.

"But the garden is cool," said Percy.

"So people seem to think," she answered, laughing.

For everyone had poured out from the ballroom to the cool night air, and white dresses glimmered dimly among the trees on the small lawn.

"They have placed the refreshment table out there," said the young man. "Don't you want some claret-cup?"

The want was supplied, and they sat down on a rustic seat near the table. The lawn seemed nearly as full as the dancing-room had been a few minutes before; and Clare watched Gertie, as she saw her evidently engaged in a furious flirtation with a man whom she knew Percy disliked.

"She must do it to vex him," Clare thought, quite ignorant that Gertie had not once thought of Mr. Moray this evening.

From the verandah sounded the warning bars of a galop, and the lawn began to be deserted. Clare would have risen, but Percy stopped her.

"Don't go yet," he said; "at least, if you are not engaged for this."

"But I am."

"Then let your partner find you."

"No, I really must go. I want——"

"Oh, I know what you want—to avoid me."

"Mr. Moray!"

"I beg your pardon if I am rude; but how have I offended you?"

"You have not."

"Then why do you always try to escape speaking to me? What have I done?"

"Nothing. I——"

"Why do you stop? Oh, Clare, Clare! don't you know that I love you?"

There was silence. For one moment a great pulse of joy throbbed through the girl's whole being; and then came the sickening remembrance of Gertie.

"You must know it," the young man said passionately. "You must have seen! And I thought—Clare, can't you love me?"

There was no one else near to hear the heavily-whispered "No."

"Then what made me think? for I did think—Clare, you are not a flirt like these girls here. Why were you so kind if you never meant to have me? Why did you let me imagine it?"

She could only say, "I beg your pardon," humbly.

"Why should you? Only look straight at me and say, 'I do not love you,' and I will leave you; but not till then."

She could not tell that lie to him who trusted her; as yet she did not wish to betray her real reason and Gertie's pride.

"You don't speak; you do care for me! I knew it, my Clare!"

He would have taken her hand; but she withdrew it.

"How about Gertie?" she said quietly. "Are you not engaged?"

He did not answer for a moment; then said:

"Is that childish bond to stand between you and me? Clare, Gertie and I are nothing to each other now; we have outgrown our fancy long ago."

"You may have; she has not. Percy, if I trust you with her heart secret, respect it. She loves you, and all her gaiety is put on to hide her pain at your neglect. Oh, think how base I must feel—her friend whom she trusted—to let you speak so to me!"

"*You* base! *You*, Clare darling! I've been a thoughtless brute; and I see it now. Forgive me!"

"Yes."

"And love me?"

He spoke timidly, as knowing he would be denied. Her answer came very low.

"I shall have to learn not to do so."

"Then you do?" he said quickly.

"I cannot help it;" and there was the break of a sob in her voice.

"And you ask me to give you up, knowing that? To win my Heaven on earth, and turn away from it? Clare, you cannot."

"I must;" and the bitter agony of the tone only showed the firmness of her resolve. "Percy, you are honourable; don't make me despise you, as I should if you were false to Gertie."

"But, Clare, I love you, not Gertie."

"She loves you," Clare answered, with the sublime unreasonableness of a woman. "And right is right, though it is hard—Oh, so hard!"

"It is something to hear you say that it is hard," he answered, in a smothered tone. "But you don't know how cruel you are to me, or how you have grown into my life. I never meant to love; but this evening when I saw you I felt I must speak and know if you——"

She laid her hand on his.

"And you have made it all the harder for me," he said. "If I had still thought you did not care for me, I might have turned to Gertie; but now——"

"You will do what is right," she answered, while the tears would spring to her eyes.

"Right! Is it right to marry a girl I do not love?"

"You will learn to do so; she is so sweet, you cannot help it."

Digitized by Google

"Cannot I? Clare, your face is the one face for me on earth; you the one woman."

She rose, blindly, nobly wrong in her self-denial.

"I cannot listen to more," she said, in a choked voice; to her own heart she added, "I dare not."

"Clare!" He rose and caught her wrists. There was no one to see; the garden was again dark and silent, except where the light streamed through the verandah. "I only want to say good-bye."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you think I could go on as I am doing now—see you for the next month every day, and know that you love me, and that you will never be more to me than now? It would drive me mad. No; I shall leave here by to-morrow's boat."

"But, Percy——"

"You need not think that," he said, with a sudden fierce burst of anger; "if she and I were alone on this earth, I would never now marry Gertie. You have done her no good—or, rather, no harm. Dear little thing, she deserves a better fate than a husband who does not care for her."

There was a silence; then Percy spoke again, his voice strangely humble and gentle:

"One kiss, Clare, for our good-bye; only one, my dear."

"No," she said; and her tone was both stern and surprised.

He said no more; side by side they returned to the house. Clare's heart was full with the unutterable longing to turn to the man beside her and say, "Stay;" Percy's with a wild turmoil of anger and love. He felt dimly that his love gave him a right over Clare; that her power, "woman-like to weave sweet words," had been exerted wrongly; that her sacrifice was a needless one, which would mar both their lives and for no good.

A hard grasp of her hand, a low spoken good-bye in answer to her whispered "Forgive me," and he was gone.

A hard grasp of her hand, a low spoken good-bye in answer to her whispered "Forgive me!" and he was gone. When would she see him again? Dizzy and faint with dull misery, she sat down in the verandah.

"I think this is our dance?"

The voice woke her up, and she saw standing by her a tall man with a puffy, foolish, good-natured face.

"I am so very tired," she answered; "will you excuse me?"

"Certainly. You look faint, Miss Grattan; may I get you a glass of water?"

"If you will be so kind."

The water did her good; she steadied her nerves, and gazed in through the open window at the dancers. She saw Gertie, glowing and radiant, the prettiest girl in the room, waltzing with Captain Rashton, looking utterly happy, careless and contented.

For one moment Clare felt a bitter anger against this girl, for whose sake she had given up the supreme beauty and joy of life, and who would never know it.

What did Gertie need more than she had at the present moment? Seemingly nothing; and yet Clare remembered the childish tempest of sorrow she had witnessed a few hours ago, and was glad she had been loyal to her friend, even though at so dear a price.

The dance was over. The two girls climbed rather wearily up the bedroom stairs of the Retreat.

"Come in here, Clare," said Gertie, as they reached the latter's door.

Clare's wearied eyes looked piteously at her friend, as her lips repeated for the third time that evening the excuse, "I am so tired."

"Only for a minute, dear." Gertie drew her in, and shut the door, then said: "You were right."

"What do you mean?" asked Clare, stupidly amazed.

"He loves me," said Gertie, pressing her small hands close against the faded pink lilies on her breast; "he always has, and I was only a little fool to think he was flirting with Florence."

"He! Who?"

"Robert—I mean Captain Rashton. Clare, are you ill?"

For Clare's face was white, her eyes closed, the heavily-cut lips closed together.

"No, Gertie; I am quite well. But I don't understand. Don't you love Per—Mr. Moray?"

"Love Percy! I left off doing so more than a year ago. I've quite ceased to care for him. I only used him as a decoy-duck to draw Robert on."

"And in doing so may have unknowingly wrought evil to two people," thought poor Clare.

Percy was to leave Jersey on the morrow; she might never see him again; he might go abroad, and never hear of the real state of things.

But she remembered it was hardly likely that a man possessing both relations and friends in Jersey would not hear very quickly of his old love's engagement to another man; and she wished Gertie happiness very warmly, and was glad in her gladness, staying with her more than half an hour, listening to her diatribes about Captain Rashton.

She was glad to be alone, though, in her own room; alone, free to thank God for the great happiness which yet might be hers.

And was; for less than a fortnight later Clare was stand-

Digitized by Google

ing under the shade of a tall, flowering myrtle, the aromatic scent of which filled the autumn air with bitter sweetness. Percy was by her, very gravely contented, and on her left hand was the shimmer of a sapphire ring she had only worn a week.

"You came back very quickly," she said. "Were you afraid I should forget you?"

"I wanted to be sure," he answered.

"You needn't have been afraid," and her face glowed a little. "Percy?"

"Clare?"

"Do you know I almost think I was in the wrong that night."

"I am sure you were."

She laughed, but her tone was grave as she said:

"Are you angry with me?"

"Angry with you for showing how strong you were to do what seemed right to you? You must think me a brute, Clare!"

"It seemed to tear my heart out to have to deny you; and I see I was wrong now."

"So do I; but I am not sorry for it, Clare, for it taught me"—he drew her closer to him as he spoke—"how far above myself is the woman I love. **T. P. C. Redford.**

CHANGING THE PLOT.

Telling of an Editor, a Writer, and a Story.

The publisher of fiction in paper covers was not feeling very amiable when the young lady novelist called on him.

"I called to see about my story," said the young lady novelist.

"Oh, the one which is entitled 'Marietta's Marriage; or, a Life Story from a Book of Cigarette Papers.'"

"Yes, that's it."

"Well, it's a pretty good novel. But you must bear in mind that as litterateurs we're responsible for the education of the public to a certain degree. We must not be too improbable. Sometimes you have to be a little improbable now and then in order to fascinate your reader, but you can be reasonable a good deal of the time."

"But if you try that, isn't your reader likely to become unfascinated?" she inquired.

"Not if you're judicious. Now, the only objection I have to your story is the incident which represents the heroine as jumping out of a third storey window on to an awning over a butcher's shop in order to escape the abductors who are on her track. It's too much to risk on an awning.

"And besides, it's more than likely any abductor who knew his business would have a confederate posted outside to catch her when she bounced off. Of course, you've got her cornered, and she's got to get away somehow. But I must say it doesn't sound quite artistic to me."

She had been thinking while he talked, and she remarked:

"Suppose we arrange it this way: She was on her way home from the milliner's, where she bought the most fashionable hat in the window. She was walking through the park when she saw her pursuers on her track.

"Without a moment's hesitation she took off the hat, laid it on the ground, and then crouched behind the bunch of mammoth hyacinth blossoms which the milliner had told her would cost two guineas extra. How she rejoiced that she had not carried out her threat to go without, rather than pay so much.

"The men who had so often abducted her before were foiled at last. They came within a few feet of her hiding-place, and one of them paused, but only to remark that he had never before seen a flower-bed and shrubbery in that part of the park. Marietta was saved!"

And the publisher nodded his head approvingly, and exclaimed:

"Now, there's some sense in that. If you make the alteration I will take the story and it ought to have a splendid sale."

O. P. W.

Your Editor Chats.

The final list in the Buried Names of Railway Stations competition will be found on the next page. All attempts must reach this office not later than first post on Thursday, June 18th, addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and marked Buried Stations in the top, left-hand corner.

On page 751 is the second list of "Jumbled Letters" in the new competition, which is sure to take every one's fancy. The re-arranging of the letters will be found to be a most fascinating pastime, and it is one that can be done whenever you have odd moments.

Our new serial story, "The Bond Between," continues to sustain the full interest of readers, and to arouse their curiosity as to what developments will take place as the story goes on. Of course it would only spoil the story were I to tell you now what will happen, but I am sure you will not be disappointed in any way. I hope that all of you who are reading and enjoying "The Bond Between" will recommend your friends to start it now. The summary on the first page will tell them all that is necessary for them to know regarding the chapters that have already been published.

Here is a capital way of helping the Fresh Air Fund. Those readers who have entered the competition which closes on June 18th cannot do better than inclose with their attempts a few stamps for that worthy object—of course those who prefer to inclose a postal order are quite at liberty to do so. A few stamps, however, no one would miss, but yet, when all those received are put together it would mean a day in the country for many little slum children.

It only takes ninepence to give one child a happy day, so if three people each send threepence that means happiness assured for one child. Non-competitors are also asked to contribute what they can—the more the better, and the sooner it is sent the easier it will be to arrange the excursions. All amounts should be sent to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and they will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. Collecting forms can be had on application.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Closing Date June 18th.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Closing Date June 18th.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and fasten it to the other eleven lists. Then put them all in a envelope which you must address to the Editor, SHORT STORIES, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., marking it "Buried Stations" in the top left-hand corner. All attempts must arrive not later than first post on Thursday, June 18th.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

LAST LIST.

67. That part of the river, looking from Twickenham Ferry towards Richmond, has the most picturesque banks.

68. Bigger prices were obtained at the last goatskin sales than is usual. No legitimate reason could be assigned for it.

69. The valley, owing to the terrific rainstorms during the unsettled weather, became a slough and had to be bridged over.

70. A stoker's life is hardly one that would appeal to most people. It is so rough and ready. Shovelling coal all day becomes monotonous, too.

71. What a farce it is breaking up so early. The children have had no lessons to do them any solid good, but the mistress merely ignores that fact.

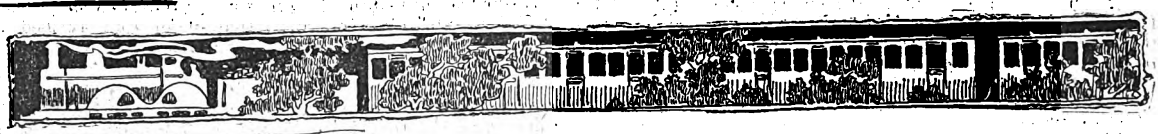
72. There was a great fall in home shares; others opened stronger and maintained a steady rise in price.

NAME..... ADDRESS .....

.....

Digitized by Google

Splendid Series.



"Horace Stewart!" she cried, starting back and raising her hand as if to ward off a blow.

A Strange Encounter.

Being the fourth of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

"Foo again!" said Stourbridge. "That reminds me of a story that I shall tell in due course when my turn arrives."

"Take it to-night," said Bremner. "No time like the present."

"Late one afternoon, when London was enveloped in a veil of yellow mist, a strange coincidence occurred. It was just such a fog as this, and even the muffin-man's bell sounded melancholy through the damp air as he bore his tray of sodden muffins up and down the deserted streets. He had the monopoly of the pavement save for an occasional policeman, blinking in the thick atmosphere with watery eyes.

"A thin, black cat, hearing the milkman's cry in an adjoining road, peered out; but the fog was too much even for her, and she as hastily retreated down the area. The lighted lamps glimmered faintly, becoming momentarily more indistinct. Darkness hung over the City like a pall; all seemed lifeless, silent, ghost-like.

"Barbara was groping for some railings, white with sudden dread, as she drew her long cloak closer round her and pressed her little cold cheek against her muff. The fog had overtaken her, and, after wandering about for over an hour, hopelessly confused, she began to think it would never lift.

"'I have lost my way. I am frightened!' she murmured, contemplating the now orange-coloured gloom.

"A dark figure loomed suddenly in the stifling vapour, and a man, also feeling his way by the railings, stumbled against her.

"'What have we here?' he said, half to himself; then, seeing it was a lady, raised his hat apologetically. 'I beg your pardon. I am afraid I startled you.'

"The sound of a human voice reassured Barbara, after the intense loneliness of her wanderings. She had begun to picture the night wearing slowly on, while she still strayed hither and thither, homeless and alone. Thankful to seek help from anyone, she addressed the stranger in a plaintive voice:

"'Can you by any chance tell me where I am?'

"'That is exactly what I want to know myself,' he replied, looking round in vain for some landmark. He was tall and upright, and though Barbara could not see his face his voice encouraged her. It was cheerful, kind, reassuring.

"'I live in Hyde Park Mansions,' she told him. 'Do you think I shall ever find my way there?'

"'Oh! yes. It seems somewhat hopeless for the moment, but I dare say you are not far off. If you will allow me, I'll do my best to put you on your road. There is really nothing for it but to walk on and trust in Providence.'

"'Thank you,' she said simply.

"Slowly they wended their way through the gloom, Barbara feeling slightly shy and embarrassed, but less alarmed than when she had been unprotected.

"'It is really not safe for a lady to be out alone such a day as this,' he declared. 'The darkness is most bewildering.'

"'It came on very suddenly. I was lunching with a friend, and never imagined anything so dreadful happening when I started to walk home. I feel like a blind beggar without a dog.'

"'I hope I am not leading you astray.'

"He paused as they were passing under a lamp. She gazed up at the blurred light as if in her confusion its dim glow could solve the problem of the premature night, and lead her back to surer paths. The yellow rays fell full on her profile.

"The man, with excusable curiosity, scanned the features

Digitized by Google

of his fair companion ; while she, in her distress, never noticed his handsome, flashing eyes, nor the enigmatical expression which contracted his face. He started visibly at the sight of Barbara's troubled countenance, and hurried on, breathing hard, while his heart beat high, and his pulses throbbed. A moment since, and this episode amused him. He had looked on it as rather diverting than otherwise. Now it changed suddenly, with the dim flash of clouded gas light, into a tragedy !

"His hands were clenched, his teeth set. For a while he did not speak. When next he addressed Barbara his voice sounded husky. She thought it was caused by the fog, which made her own throat sore and smarting.

"'Your English climate is most depressing,' he said, trying to speak naturally. 'This atmosphere eats its way as poison into the system, to contaminate our lungs, clog our souls, lower our spirits. It falls like death on the City ; it is Nature's worst bane. I have just returned from India and the contrast is appalling. Perhaps I feel it more than a hardened Londoner, who has lived through the grime and fog, the bitter cold and cutting wind, year after year. I have been spoilt by the sultry heat for wintering in my native land.'

"He shivered. Barbara could hear his teeth chatter. She glanced up quickly, but his features were not easily distinguished.

"'India !' she cried. 'My husband was stationed there. I spent all my married life at Allahabad.'

"'Really,' he replied slowly. 'How strange ! that is where I was.'

"'Then, perhaps, you knew him, and the sad story attached to his death. It caused a great talk at the time, from its intensely sudden and tragic nature.'

"'His name ?'

"'Major Ramsay.'

"'Ah !'

"He heaved a deep sigh.

"'It is familiar to you ?'

"'Yes.'

"'Then you doubtless heard about the murder ?'

"He winced and bit his lip. Barbara spoke calmly. She waited a moment before he answered.

"'Murder ! that is a hard, an unjust word for it. Not even from the lips of his widow should such an expression be breathed.'

"'There were many differences of opinion on the subject, but mine has never wavered for an instant,' answered Mrs. Ramsay, her voice vibrating with sudden passion. 'Nothing is too hard ! I am not speaking at random, and I have had time to weigh the matter carefully in my own mind. I repeat —he was murdered. Perhaps you have never heard the exact details ?' Her eyes flashed as she spoke. She felt the heated glow of indignation course once more through her veins. A scene, far distant, rose before her out of the annals of the past—a sickening vision miraged in the yellow London fog.

"'My husband,' she said, as if speaking half to herself, 'had been suffering from an affection of the heart——'

"'Yes, yes ; I know.'

"'So did everyone, and we were most careful not to excite him. Any sudden agitation, the doctor said, might mean instantaneous death. A man came to our house one night and quarrelled over the card-table. He and my husband were gambling after dinner. I remember how I lay ill and feverish in my room, weakened by malaria, listening to the clink of money and wondering when it would end.

"'I had just fallen asleep when high words aroused me. I knew the terrible danger that threatened Julian should anything seriously disturb him. The tumult increased. I could hear a volley of imprecations from one of the two men, I knew not which, for I was dizzy with fear.

"'Like one in a dream I rushed into the room, only in time to see his adversary rise and strike him a violent blow. Then,' and her voice grew hoarse with horror, 'my husband fell back *dead* at my feet ! I can remember nothing more, the walls swam round in a sea of blood, the vengeance of Heaven seemed thundering in my ears and I dropped senseless by the body. It was proved that Major Ramsay died from disease of the heart, but the man was his murderer nevertheless.

"'In my spell of unconsciousness I saw Horace Stewart on the gallows, his rightful place. Ah ! I know what you are thinking, that I am vindictive, inhuman, but *you* were not there, *you* did not hear and witness the ghastly tragedy, amidst scattered cards and spilt wine.

"'I have never seen the man since, I pray Heaven that I never may. I should not have told you all this, but you spoke of that miserable place, and the very name Allahabad brings the past back so visibly I cannot help talking of it.'

"'The story is familiar to me, for I knew the unfortunate fellow who was with Major Ramsay that night. He is still living, poor chap !'

"'You pity him ?'

"'Yes, and therefore, if possible, I would justify him. Horace Stewart, till he met Major Ramsay (forgive me if I pain you), lived an honest, open life : his conscience clear, his record clean. No slur blackened his past, and there was not, perhaps, a more popular or respected man in the regiment. Your husband initiated him into the mysteries of a gambling den, imbuing him with the dangerous fascinating taste. He was little more than a boy, and the influence of his superior officer took a deep and evil hold upon him.

"'One night Major Ramsay asked him to his private house, and plied him with wine, of which he himself partook freely. After dinner his host suggested cards, and named high stakes. I know for a fact that he refused, but was finally overruled.

"'While they were playing, the Major, for some unaccountable reason, sprang suddenly to his feet, and accused this young subaltern of cheating. Stewart, in his hot-headed youthfulness and indignation, did not realise that the man who had insulted him was not responsible for what he said. He thought only of the vile slur on his honour, and denied it in language that was straight, if not strictly guarded. The Major, frenzied at his daring to reply, seized up a glass, and flung it in Horace Stewart's face, cutting him severely. He bears the marks to this day.'

"'I remember the blood on the man's mouth,' said Barbara shuddering. She hastened her steps, clenching her hands in the warm recesses of her fur muff.

"'Have you anything more to say?'

"'Yes ; hear me out. Maddened with pain and rage, Stewart sprang upon him. What would have happened next Heaven only knows ! Death intervened. Swift and terrible was the judgment that fell upon Major Ramsay and his unfortunate companion, who stood petrified with horror at the sight of that sudden end. He remembers a young and beautiful woman entering the room and flinging herself between them with a cry which he would have given

Digitized by Google

a whole lifetime not to have heard. It haunts him even now, sleeping and waking.

"'The thought of her frightened eyes and livid lips have never left him. "You have killed my husband!" she moaned, wringing her hands, and, though he was not guilty, he felt that the bane of the slayer was on him. He watched them at his feet, side by side—husband and wife—one dead, the other senseless. From that moment his happiness fled. It seemed as if the woman had pronounced his doom; branded him with her terrible condemnation.

"'In spirit he followed the girl-widow from those Indian shores, praying day and night that she might be comforted. The memory of that fatal evening's work dogs his steps. He seeks rest, but finds none. That event has left its mark upon him, and his friends say he has never been the same since. It is remorse that kills. Perhaps you have never known the real meaning of the word? If so, you would pity Horace Stewart—heart and soul.'

"Barbara, absorbed in the conversation, wandered blindly on with her companion, not heeding time or place. The incident that had brought them together was forgotten in a maze of entangled thought. Present and past blended in a yellow blur, like the shadows that came and vanished through the mist.

"'I think I understand,' she said at last.

"'What?'

"'About remorse. It is the most horrible, far-reaching sorrow of all. A pain that stretches like the long fingers of Time to the very brink of eternity. You cannot stamp it out. Revenge is a sin, and I believe I could conquer this longing to injure Horace Stewart if I thought that he had suffered as I have since my loss.

"'It was the knowledge that I despised my own husband—was cold, hard, cruel to him for his faults—which made his death so bitter for me to bear. I might have tried to influence him—to make him better—but, in my disgust, I wrapped myself in a freezing armour of reserve, and not till the opportunity had passed did retribution take the form of life-long agonising remorse. I wonder'—pausing suddenly—'why I tell you this? I have never before breathed the true cause of my grief to anyone.'

"'Then you ought, instead of harbouring revengeful thoughts about Horace Stewart, to feel sorry for him. I know him, Mrs. Ramsay, as thoroughly as myself. We have never been separated. I have suffered with him, the pain has been mine as well.'

"'Then he is in London with you now?'

"'Yes. May I not take back some message, one kind word from the lips of Barbara Ramsay?'

"'Bring him to me,' broke in Barbara sharply. 'I have grown hardened. It may soften me.'

"She slipped off the pavement as her companion guided her to a crossing. The strong support of his arm steadied her, and they groped their way onwards.

"'It is the darkest hour before the dawn,' he murmured. 'There is hope for you and Horace Stewart. You have both suffered, so you will understand each other.'

"'Do you think so?' she replied, half doubtingly. 'Perhaps when I see his face my hate will overcome my pity. I am afraid of my own bad nature breaking out before the man who brought this burden of remorse upon me. What if a sudden sense of repulsion, a swift reaction, deadens the good and quickens the bad that lies dormant, or holds sway, in every being? Then I should call him a murderer——'

"She ceased speaking, arrested by a sense of something about to happen; she knew not what. The fog lifted suddenly, and her eyes fell full upon her companion as the word 'murderer' was on her lips.

"'*Horace Stewart!*' she cried, starting back, and raising her hands as if to ward off a blow.

"'Yes,' he muttered, with downcast eyes. 'Why did you not guess it from the first?'

"Dazed by this fresh discovery, she drew nearer, as if still doubting her senses, and stared at him fixedly. The shock staggered her! She had conjured up the face so often in connection with all that was most repugnant and horrible.

"'I did not dream for one moment that I had been speaking with *you*,' she gasped. 'It is an insult to the dead!'

"'Yet a moment ago you bade me bring him to you. Now he is here you turn away.'

"The man spoke pleadingly. He grasped her hand, but she drew it back, trembling with indignation.

"'Don't come near me! Don't touch me! How dare you?'

"Her mood varied in a moment. She felt contaminated by his presence.

"'You cannot pity or forgive? Is it too much to ask? Think calmly of all that we have said. Am I unworthy to implore this thing? There is the one link between us still—remorse, undying! Speak to me, Barbara Ramsay. I beg but two words from your lips—friendship, pardon!'

"'No, no, no!'

"She dashed on through the fog, now descending more heavily.

"He followed closely, afraid to leave her. She seemed to be hastening blindly forward, without sense or reason. Her faculties had become paralysed, numb!

"An array of dark objects loomed in the road, but Barbara did not see them in her headlong career. She only wanted to escape from Horace Stewart and the miserable story of the past.

"Suddenly her flight was arrested. She ran into something big and black—a horse with a flowing mane, which reared his head above her hat.

"Barbara, startled and frightened, slipped upon the road, and fell with a cry in front of the vehicle.

"But Horace Stewart, following closely, already seeing the danger, seized the animal's head with one hand and helped Mrs. Ramsay to her feet with the other.

"'Are you hurt?' he cried anxiously.

"'No, but what is it?'

"She wrung her hands, and he could feel her trembling as he took her arm protectingly.

"'A funeral lost in the fog. But don't give way like this! I am not going to harm you.'

"'No,' she said, 'you saved me.'

"'Where are we, governor?' shouted the hearse driver.

"'I don't know,' he replied, hurrying Barbara by a line of mourning carriages.

"The sight of the burial procession filled her with a sense of solemn horror. Even Stewart's company was acceptable at that moment, despite its sad associations. She wondered if after all she had judged him too harshly. Her courage was slowly ebbing away as the prolonged darkness increased. It seemed enveloping her soul and scattering her wits.

"Horace was quick to perceive her growing alarm and hastened to reassure her.

"'I think I know where I am. Only keep near me, and you shall be home soon, safe in the shelter of Hyde Park Mansions.'

"'You are very good,' she faltered, already regretting her cruel words. The remark, so faintly murmured, quickened the pulsation of his heart, for Barbara's presence held some mystic fascination for him. The haunting memory of her face had clung to him so long, that now, though he could not see her eyes gradually softening, he knew instinctively that her better nature was gaining the upper hand.

"'I wonder,' she said at last, 'how many hours that poor body will be before it reaches its grave?'

"'The fog is lifting again; we are coming to the light.'

"Barbara glanced up, relieved. A smile broke over her face, while a sigh of satisfaction escaped her, as she recognised her surroundings.

"'You have guided me well'—she paused. 'Is it by chance that you have brought me to my very door?'

"'Not exactly. I knew where you lived. I have been acquainted with your movements for some time.'

"'Who tells you about me?'

"'One of your greatest friends, and mine.'

"'A woman?'

"'Yes.'

Digitized by Google

"'Dora Lyell? She has never mentioned your name to me.'

"'No. It could only have given you pain, and you would not have welcomed any message from Horace Stewart. She is a relation of mine, and we always corresponded—so far away at Allahabad, I treasured each word of news concerning Barbara Ramsay.'

"She turned from him slowly to hide the tears that forced themselves into her eyes, and mounted the steps of the house by which they were standing.

"She surveyed him in silence, as he lingered a moment on the pavement watching her.

"'Will you not say one kind word?' he asked.

"Barbara hesitated.

"In every life there is a crisis, when some decision must be made that will lay an impress on the future, for weal or woe.

"She felt that this man—risen like a sceptre in the gloom—had an influence on her destiny.

"He looked wet and cold, for they had tramped far together. It was drizzling miserably, and she thought of the warm fire within as she pealed the bell.

"He noted her indecision, and, raising his hat, walked away without a word. Her heart melted as his figure vanished in the misty air.

"'Horace Stewart,' she called faintly, 'you may come back!'

"He caught the tearful tone, whispered so low through the heavy atmosphere, that Barbara marvelled at his alertness.

"A moment later they were standing side by side in a cheerfully lighted hall.

"The brightness dazzled him as she led the way to a cosy boudoir, where the gleams from a blazing fire threw grotesque shadows on the silver tea-tray and quaint ornaments.

"Wonderfully homelike and comfortable it looked, after the dreariness without.

"In silence she drew a second chair to the hearth.

"For a while neither of them spoke, each feeling irresistibly the soothing influence of their surroundings.

"'I wish I could understand myself,' she said suddenly, leaning forward, and staring into the fire, with her chin in her hands.

"Stewart grasped his opportunity to awaken her sympathy and confidence. Long they sat together, till the fire dwindled through neglect, speaking such words as drift on between men and women, when Fate brings them together in some new or mysterious way.

"Barbara's eyes were moist when Horace Stewart rose to say good-bye.

"'You shall be my friend always,' she said.

"'Never more than a friend?' he asked, 'through all the years that are to follow?'

"'I am only a woman,' she replied softly; 'you must not tempt me.'

"But, as Barbara turned away, she smiled."

The booming of fog signals on the line broke in, as if applauding the story.

"You have given us a chapter from two lives—illustrated," said Mr. Carter. "The elements are your artists."

(Next week: The Return of the Prodigal.)

"THIS is a forget-me-not," remarked Jawkins, as he looked at the string on his finger, and wondered why his wife had tied it there.

"IN mid-ocean we met a magnificent private yacht flying signals of distress." "Leaking?" "Oh, no; their cook wanted to leave."

MRS. KNAGGS (as her husband comes in late at night): "What does the clock say, John?" Mr. Knaggs (with difficulty): "Nothing, madam, nothing. It's got sense enough to say nothing."

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS AND OINTMENT

THE FAMOUS HOUSEHOLD REMEDIES.

THE PILLS

have gained their wonderful reputation by sheer force of merit, because every person who uses them recommends them to others. They have positively no equal for thoroughly cleansing the system and putting the liver and kidneys in functional order, without pain or griping. They are the best known remedy for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dizziness, and the common condition of ill-health, known as "run-down" or "out of sorts." Females of every age find Holloway's Pills an invaluable remedy and aid.

THE OINTMENT

is known throughout the world as positively the best and quickest remedy for Bad Legs, Old Wounds and Sores, and Skin Eruptions of every kind, and should be used in conjunction with the Pills. It is also the speediest remedy for Rheumatism, Lumbago, Pains and Stiffness in the Limbs and Joints, Backache, &c. For pains and Soreness at the Chest, and for Throat and Lung Complaints arising from Cold or Weakness, Holloway's Ointment affords most welcome relief in a very short time.

A COMPLETE DISPENSARY IN THEMSELVES.

Digitized by Google

A Village Mystery.

Telling of How a Girl Saved her Lover.

"I TELL you once and for all it is impossible—I would die sooner than my daughter should wed a pauper." The speaker, old Farmer Talbot, was white with rage, and he more than once threateningly raised a heavy hunting-crop he carried.

His companion, a good-looking young fellow of some two and twenty summers, up to this point had kept his temper during a long harangue of which the above was merely the tag, but the last remark proved too much for him.

"Very well, Mr. Talbot, if that is your decision, then listen to mine. I swear that I shall marry Alice very soon, and neither you nor any other man will prevent me. I am poor because circumstances have been against me, but I can work, and as for your money, you insult me by mentioning it. We love one another very dearly, and there's no need to make your miserable wealth a stumbling block between us."

Leonard Chadwick tried to speak calmly, but inwardly he was boiling with indignation.

"Don't you dare give me any of your insolence about what you are going to do," Talbot replied in passionate tones, "for if I catch you speaking to my daughter again I'll—I'll horsewhip you—you fortune-hunting young vagabond!"

He made a sudden movement forward as he spoke, his face convulsed with rage, and, raising the crop he carried, aimed a violent blow at Leonard's head; the latter, stepping back quickly, avoided its full force, but the stick descended heavily on his right hand, causing him to drop the rifle he was carrying to the ground. For a moment he stood irresolute, livid with fury at this attack, then, picking up his weapon, he muttered hoarsely:

"You shall hear more about this, sir. You are *her* father, and only that fact keeps my hands from you now." With these words he strode rapidly from the spot.

* * * * *

The little village of Cherry Linton was all agog with excitement. Nearly everyone who was somebody, and the majority of those who were not, had turned out to witness the opening of a grand new rifle range.

This was a free gift from Sir Samuel Barnes, who had recently been imbued with the prevalent and laudable notion that every young fellow ought to be able to handle a gun, whether the country were in danger or not. So he accordingly, and entirely at his own expense, turned over a considerable portion of his magnificent estate to the good cause.

The site chosen for this purpose was perfect in every way. Far away from any habitation the targets were placed at the bottom of a lofty hill which formed, Sir Samuel argued, an absolute and natural protection against the possibility of stray shots.

It was a lovely May day as Cherry Linton, wearing its best bib and tucker, laughed and jostled itself into Sir Samuel's grounds. Light refreshments had been provided in a huge marquee, and a band specially engaged discoursed some lively Sousa melodies.

The gentry of the neighbourhood, at Sir Samuel's invitation, threw aside all formality on this occasion and waited on the villagers.

Foremost amongst the helpers was Alice Talbot. Her sunny face, partly hidden beneath a large white hat, was here, there, and everywhere. She not only reflected the sun's rays in her pretty golden curls, but was herself a little ray of sunshine penetrating into the very hearts of all she came in contact with.

Now and then she would place her tray of fruit, lemonade and cakes on the grass and run nimbly to the gate anxiously looking up the high road, in the direction of her own homestead. At last she was rewarded, for presently she espied Leonard coming slowly along the road.

"Why, Leonard, how late you are; and, gracious, how ill you're looking!" she exclaimed in a breath, as he approached.

"Yes, I am late, little one, but there was a reason for it," he said nervously looking back.

"Why, what do you mean, dear?" she asked, placing her hands in his. "And where is father—you said you would bring him on here."

"Well, I haven't, I left him down there," and Leonard pointed rather grimly behind him.

At that moment, before the lovers had time for further conversation, a group of noisy youngsters surrounded them, begging Leonard to come on to the range and open fire with the rest. By this time the fun was in full swing, the popping of corks vainly resounded against the sharp rifle cracks, the hum of bullets as they sped through the air, and the metallic thwack when their further progress was sometimes stopped by their would-be iron destination.

As Leonard with his little following made their way to the firing-point, they were met by Sir Samuel, who exclaimed jovially:

"Ah, my lads, now you must look to your laurels. Here comes young Chadwick with a real live 'Martini-Henry,' I declare!"

Way was instantly made for him, for not only was he very popular in the village, but his prowess with firearms was well known; so great things were expected on his arrival.

To everyone's surprise, however, Leonard handed his rifle to the nearest bystander with a bag of cartridges, saying he was not feeling well and would not shoot.

A murmur of delight went round as one after the other each aspiring sharpshooter during the next twenty minutes blazed away to his heart's content with Leonard's weapon, for the two "Lee-Metfords" provided by Sir Samuel were rapidly exhausting the patience of the many waiting their turn.

Alice was not slow to see that something very much out of the way must have occurred to prevent her lover from indulging in his favourite sport, and she came over and took his arm.

"There is something wrong with my boy," she said, leading him away from the crowd, "and he must tell me all about it this very minute."

"I cannot, Alice—I cannot. You must not ask me. It is true I am upset, and I have barely had time to make my mind up as to what my next step will be. There is one thing,

Digitized by Google

though, dearest, you must prepare for a separation. I shall have to leave you for a time at least."

"Leave me, Leonard?" she asked, a slight pallor overspreading her face. "Leave me—why, what for?"

"Only your father——"

"My father; then you have been speaking to him about me, and high words have passed between you both. I see it all!" she gasped hurriedly. "Oh, my poor Leonard, I am so sorry you should have suffered mental pain on my account. I know exactly what he thinks—the son of a bank clerk is not the husband for me. Never mind, Leonard, be brave; all will come right in the end. Dad is not bad at heart, though he does let his temper get the better of him very often."

"Thanks for your sympathy, dear," Leonard rejoined, moodily looking away from her, "but things have come to a serious pass between your father and me. We shall never speak to each other again. He raised his hand against me, and I——"

"My father dared to do that?" she cried, the warm colour rushing to her cheeks.

Leonard was about to reply when another interruption took place. Sir Samuel Barnes was running towards them calling Alice's name out as he ran.

"Whatever is the matter?" she cried nervously, clutching Leonard's arm. "How startled he looks."

"Quick, child!" said the old knight, as he came up to them. "A man on a bicycle has just arrived to say your father has met with an accident about a mile down the road. Get home, where he is being taken, as soon as possible; they will want all the help they can get."

"Oh, my poor father," she cried, as the revulsion of feeling took possession of her. "Come, Leonard, we must go to him at once," and without another word she sped across the grass in the direction of the gate.

Leonard was about to follow, but Sir Samuel caught his arm and whispered:

"I daren't tell the girl myself, but a ghastly crime has been committed. Farmer Talbot is murdered. He was found shot through the back ten minutes ago. Go now, my boy, and comfort that poor girl as best you may."

Leonard staggered forward a pace or two, then, without a word, broke away from Sir Samuel and hurried off in the direction Alice had taken. She had a good start, however, and as he stumbled up to the gate she was just getting into a governess-cart Sir Samuel had thoughtfully pressed into her service. She waved her hand and disappeared down the road.

As Leonard made his way after her, he had not proceeded far when he became conscious that those who passed looked at him with a certain degree of curiosity, sometimes mixed with awe. A young mother drew her child almost into the hedge with a scream as he rapidly strode by, while further on two lads stopped open-mouthed as they pointed at him.

About half way to Talbot's Farm, Horton, the police sergeant of Cherry Linton, came suddenly round a bend in the road and came face to face with him. Horton looked white, either with exertion or excitement, and he halted in front of young Chadwick.

"Mr. Chadwick, I have painful news for you. It is my duty to arrest you on suspicion of having shot Mr. Talbot."

As Leonard was about to speak, he added quickly—

"For God's sake, sir, say nothing, or whatever is said may be taken in evidence against you. Come quietly with me, and may this shadow pass as quickly as it has descended on you!"

Outside the little rural police station, a crowd of villagers had already assembled, and when Horton with his prisoner was preparing to cross the threshold, a woman, pale as death, broke from amongst their ranks. With eyes glazed with horror, she gave one anguished glance at Horton's prisoner, murmuring—

"Leonard, Leonard, how could you have done this?" She then tottered forward and fell in a dead faint at his feet.

The case as it stood for the prosecution was perfect when Leonard Chadwick was formally committed for trial at the

(*Continued overleaf.*)

A Clergyman on Happiness.

"I HAVE lived long enough," says an eminent clergyman and Doctor of Divinity, "to learn that the secret of happiness is never to allow one's energies to stagnate."

It's easy talking, Doctor, but we have to allow some things to happen whether we will or not. When a man hasn't a morsel to eat and can't get food anywhere, he is obliged to "allow" himself to go hungry. And "energies" come from something—are dependent on something. When that something fails then the energies stagnate, in spite of all the doctors in the world—theological or medical. You can't stir up your energies as you stir meal-and-water—with a stick.

Hear a little testimony on that point from a lady residing at Tideford, St. Germans, in Cornwall. Speaking of a personal experience dating back to her girlhood, she says: "I always felt drowsy and exhausted and had no interest or joy in life whatever." In other words, her energies stagnated—a state of things which the clergyman thinks one ought not to allow to happen. Why did it happen? Let the lady herself explain. "I was but a girl when first troubled with indigestion," she writes. "I enjoyed good health up to a certain period, when my appetite declined and the little I ate caused dreadful pain in the chest and brought on palpitation. I was quickly done up and had an unreasonable dread of some impending evil. Such was my condition for months, growing worse day by day until I became so thin and weak that I could hardly get about.

We venture to say our clerical friend never had indigestion as this lady had it, or he would never have talked so glibly about not allowing one's energies to stagnate. In mercy's name how can one help it when indigestion is wringing the life out of one. If one has energy enough to do as did this lady—Miss Eliza Peters—there is cause to be thankful. She acted on the advice of a neighbour, who had been in a like condition, and sent for a bottle of Mother Seigel's Syrup. It took several bottles to cure her, for the indigestion was deep-seated, but cure her it did and so completely that she has never been troubled with it since. Such is her testimony and it may be relied on implicitly.

People who lack energy, feel tired, languid, feeble, nervous ill and unhappy, need one thing to make them strong, bright, vigorous and comfortable again, viz., food.

Food will do it, when everything else has failed entirely. After it is digested it will do it, not before. When your stomach is so deranged that it cannot digest your food, Seigel's Syrup will tone it up and help it to do its work. That is how and why it has brought energy, health and happiness to thousands of tired, dyspeptic men and women, who, without it, to quote our clerical friend, found it impossible "never to allow one's energies to stagnate."

Domestic Friction.

"THE longer I live," writes "A Countess" in the "Outlook," "the more convinced I am that breakfast is the cause of more domestic friction than can be accounted for by mere incompatibility of temper. It is not in human nature," she adds, "to be amiable in the early morning." Why it is so, is easy to understand when we remember that nine people out of every ten suffer from indigestion in one form or other. To awake in the morning fagged and worn out, dull of head and weary of limb, and with a taste in the mouth that makes breakfast a mockery, is certainly not conducive to good temper and geniality. The fault is not with the breakfast but with the stomach that should call for and digest it. Thousands of dyspeptics have proved the power of Mother Seigel's Syrup to cleanse and tone the stomach, liver, and kidneys, sharpen the appetite, assist digestion, even the temper and invigorate the system. Says one of them, Mrs. Holloway, of 3, Church Street, Henley-on-Thames, "I used to suffer such dreadful agony from indigestion. For years my life was a misery. After doctors' treatment had failed, my son's wife made me try Seigel's Syrup and gradually the pain subsided. All the other ailments followed and soon I was as well as ever."

Digitized by Google

next assizes. Not a single link in the chain of evidence was missing to brand him as the author of the crime.

A witness had sworn on oath that at 11.50 to the minute on the morning of May 13th he had seen from the road the deceased and accused together engaged in what seemed to be a violent altercation just inside the drive leading to Talbot's farm.

Two other important witnesses deposed to seeing from the same position at about 12.15 a prostrate body lying across the drive.

Climbing over the gate, they were shocked to find it was Farmer Talbot himself bleeding profusely from a gunshot wound in the back. Bending over and endeavouring to lend him every aid, they distinctly heard him say, "This is the work of Leonard Chadwick!" Before further assistance could be procured, life had become extinct.

The medical evidence went to show that the fatal injury had been caused by a partly-spent Martini-Henry rifle bullet, which had entered the centre of the back, and finally lodged in the upper regions of the chest. It was impossible for the wound to have been self-inflicted.

There was no direct evidence whatever in connection with the crime. It was purely circumstantial. No one actually saw it commmitted, yet not the slightest doubt existed in anyone's mind that Chadwick was the murderer.

There was the quarrel for the motive, the startling, incriminating admission of the dying man, the poignant fact that Chadwick's was the only rifle of that particular make able to be traced in Cherry Linton.

His pale face and peculiar, nervous manner on his arrival at the range; all were overwhelming testimony to his guilt, and there could hardly be conceived a simpler case to prove than this particular one the Crown had undertaken.

In spite of all, Leonard protested he was absolutely innocent. He pleaded "not guilty," and swore that although he had left Talbot in a frenzy of passion, he had not raised a finger against him.

At first, Alice, numb with horror, as one by one the startling array of convincing proofs were brought like spectres before her, allowed herself to believe her lover had been led away by passion, and committed the act in a moment of madness, but as the days of the earlier investigations dragged along their weary length, she watched the face of her lover as he stood upright in the dock, calm and fearless, and she read the light of truth in his eyes when he said calmly—

"I swear before God and the whole world, I am innocent!"

The day he was committed for trial, she left the Court House, her eyes burning with an unnatural brilliance. She was convinced that he was falsely accused, and thereupon determined to move Heaven and earth itself to prove it.

The fact that she was only a frail woman did not deter her in the least, the enormity of the difficult task had no terror for her. She undertook to unravel, unaided, a mystery that would have taxed the powers of the keenest and most experienced detective.

For two whole days she wandered up and down the route Leonard had traversed on the day of the tragedy, examining every inch of the ground in the dim hope of discovering a clue that would lead to the real truth. But no success attended her efforts.

On the morning of the third day an idea suddenly occurred to her, and her heart began to beat with a new-found hope. To-day was Saturday. It was only a tiny glimmer—a chance in a million of it ever leading to a correct solution, but it became indelibly imprinted in her mind and she would see it through.

She accordingly made her way to the place where her father's body had been found, and, seating herself on a rustic bench in a little alcove abutting on the carriage drive, took up her curious vigil.

Straight in front several fields stretched for two miles, terminating at the richly wooded estate of Sir Samuel Barnes. According to the evidence that had been forthcoming, Leonard, it was suggested, must have fired the shot from some position in these fields, and then walked across to the left, and so regained the road that led directly to the gate where she met him on that fatal day. So that actually the firing point of the new range was to the extreme left of where she was sitting, and the targets far distant to the right.

Straining her ears and labouring under strong mental excitement, she was at last rewarded. She distinctly heard the sound of distant firing. Shooting had commenced at Sir Samuel's, as was usual every Saturday at noon.

Alice left her seat and swiftly ran along the drive fully conscious of the fact that if her idea were correct she was running a great danger, and perhaps her own life would pay the forfeit. Now and then she stopped and bent low over the ground, watching and waiting for a sign. Would it never come?

At last, just as she was beginning to despair, something hissed quite close to her, and crashed into the bark of an oak tree by her side.

With a scream of triumph she flung herself on her hands and knees and closely examined a small hole that had been bored in the tree. She then jumped to her feet, and darted to the other side of the drive, and with staring, anxious eyes, watched the open end of an earthenware irrigation pipe, long since disused.

She had not long to wait ere another metal missile emerged and, ricocheting off the gravelled path, also buried itself with a resounding crash in a tree opposite. This time the mark was breast high.

Here at last was the explanation of the mystery. The dim hope that she had so miraculously conceived developed into a substantial fact—the truth was out!

Farmer Talbot had been killed accidentally by a shot fired from Leonard's rifle by one of the villagers on the day the range was opened, and the bullet, fired wide of the target, curiously enough, was conveyed unobserved from the other end of the pipe to the present spot. Naturally, as the shot struck him in the back, Talbot could only conjecture in his dying moments that Leonard was his cowardly assailant.

Running from the place at breathless speed, Alice, with tear-stained face summoned what assistance she could, and, as the news spread, a considerable portion of the village folk quickly made their way to the carriage drive to see such a phenomenal death-trap in full working order.

Meanwhile, on the "Cease fire" being sounded, search was made at the new range, and there, sure enough, was discovered a large gaping hole quite close to the last target, from which the unseen pipe directly led by a long, tortuous course beneath the ground to the place where it abruptly ended by Talbot's Farm.

* * * * *

Once again did Cherry Linton have a great gala day, soon after Leonard's release from durance, and on this occasion accompanied by the merry jangle of village wedding bells, which entirely owed their present sweet office to a woman's heroism, love and Heaven-sent intuition. **Vivian Grey.**

A SIXPENNY EDITION OF A THRILLING NOVEL.

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

Author of "Sherlock Holmes."

THE PARASITE.

THE PARASITE.

THE PARASITE.

"A truly thrilling tale."—*Glasgow Herald.*

Price SIXPENCE.

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

At all Railway Bookstalls, Booksellers, and Newsagents, or post free for 8d. from the Book Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

To Protect Children from Deafness.

A plea on behalf of children with defective hearing is published in the last issue of the "Review of Ear Diseases." The Editor points out the necessity for frequent tests of the hearing, and gives some excellent advice on the care and treatment of the ears, which should be read by all parents who take an interest in their children's future. As this number of the "Review" is intended for public benefit, a free copy can be obtained by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10, Marble Arch, London, W. Another special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged, if given by correspondence. The Editor advises patients, however, when possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are—in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultation.

Plain Women Become Beautiful.

Beautiful Women Intensify Their Beauty.

A Wonderful Book Free.

The Peralia Perfumery Co., of 73 Camden Street, North Shields, will send to every reader of SHORT STORIES mentioning this paper, and enclosing a penny stamp with their application, a wonderful booklet, entitled "Beauty's Boudoir." This book, which reveals many astounding secrets of immense importance to every woman, will be sent strictly under cover. Amongst the many items of information it tells how to remove in one night all Wrinkles, Crow's-feet, Blackheads, Facial Defects, &c. How to make the pimply, freckled face as fair as the lily. If the bust is undeveloped, you can learn how to develop it. If you are too short, how to increase your height. This marvellous book also deals with the hair and informs you how you can curl the hair and permanently keep it in curl without the use of curling irons; in fact, if you are interested in your personal appearance at all, we advise you to send 1d. stamp and your address in full, at once and the Peralia Perfumery Co. will forward you per return this charming book, which deals in a clear and explicit manner with many matters in which women of all ages are interested. There are some wonderful proposals in this book, and no lady reader of this paper can afford to miss this chance of gaining the valuable information contained therein. Address:—The Peralia Perfumery Co., Dept. 14, 73 Camden Street, North Shields.

GIVEN AWAY

with next week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 492.)

PAPER PATTERN of this

BATHING DRESS

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

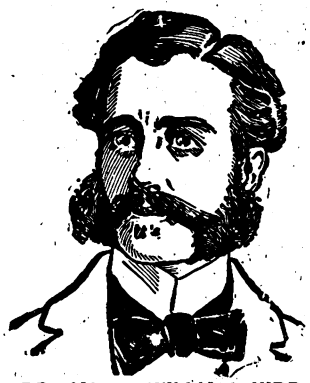
PRICE ONE PENNY.

CURES ANY DISEASE.

A New and Wonderfully Successful Method of Curing all Chronic and Lingering Afflictions.

A Free Trial Package of this Remarkable Discovery will be Mailed to All who Write.

Anyone who suffers from a weak disordered condition of the heart, lungs, kidneys, stomach, blood, liver, skin, muscles or nervous system should write at once for a free trial treatment of a new method that is rapidly displacing the old ways of curing disease.



DR. JAMES WILLIAM KIDD.

Gout, partial paralysis, dropsy, locomotor ataxia, rheumatism neuralgia or any other disease resulting from high-living quickly and permanently removed by the new method.

Weakness or debility in any form whether in man or woman entirely eradicated from the system by the new treatment.

Consumption, bronchitis, asthma, catarrh, impure blood, heart disease, kidney and bladder trouble and liver complaint cured to stay cured by the doctor's wonderful remedies.

If you are the victim of any malady or sickness which you have long wanted to get rid of, try one of Dr. Kidd's free treatments and see how easy it is to be cured when the proper means are employed.

If you have aches or pains, don't feel well at times, if you are despondent and discouraged, tired out, it is because you have some terrible disease lurking in your system.

Why not write to Dr. Kidd, get a free trial treatment, and let him show you how quickly you can be cured by his new method. It makes no difference what your peculiar ailment may be, Dr. Kidd will send you a trial treatment entirely free of charge to prove to you that he can do as he claims.

Write to-day, telling the doctor what you wish to be cured of, and receive the free treatment for it by return mail. There are no conditions whatever. Dr. Kidd's generous offer is meant for everybody who suffers from disease in any of its various forms. Address Dr. J. W. KIDD Co., 522 Baltes Building, Ft. Wayne, Ind., U.S.A. No one should miss this grand opportunity of securing the benefits of the doctor's latest discovery, since it costs you nothing.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. 2½%

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, *Managing Director.*

Digitized by Google

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

PUREST & NICEST.

PINK'S JAMS

A good housekeeper thinks

The "pink" of Jams is PINK'S.

NERVES

"Jumpy" Nerves tell their own tale of spoilt digestion; food fails to nourish—system disordered. *Then* is when you want

Page Woodcock's Pills

For Wind on the Stomach, Biliousness, Indigestion, and all Stomach and Liver Troubles, there is no remedy so safe and sure as these famous Pills. Sold by all Medicine Vendors at 1/1½ and 2/9, or post free for price from PAGE WOODCOCK, Limited, 14 and 16, Euston Buildings, LONDON, N.W. (late of LINCOLN.)

SMITH'S

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model C is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for Cash is £8 8 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 15/10 each. Gentleman's machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns

Carr. Paid.

LISTS POST FREE

Juno Cycles, Trailers from £5 5 0, or 10/6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—JUNO CYCLE Co. (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

30/- REAL SILVER KEYLESS WATCH

for 11/6 only. 1/6 Deposit secures it.

Simply send your full name and address and enclose 1/6 P.O., also three penny stamps for postage, to secure one of these marvellous bargains; you can pay the balance by small instalments of 1/- weekly.

LADIES' or GENT'S

Real silver government stamped ¾ plate jewelled movement, 1/- discount for full cash with order. Postage abroad 1/- extra.

H. STANLEY & Co. (Dept. 12)
Bankrupt Stock Buyers,
284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W

FOR LADIES

SYMONDS' CYCLES

They are GOOD machines. Thousands of voluntary testimonials. Cheapest genuinely guaranteed cycles in the world. Prices £4 to £8. Cash or easy payments. Sent anywhere. Full particulars free. Mention this paper.

Symonds' London Stores,
124-126, City Rd.,
London, E.C.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(CLOTTED).

Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil; invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/4, 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard-Bishop, Devon.

TRIUMPH Cycles

£10 10 to £19 19
or by Deferred Payment System.
"The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce."
CATALOGUES GRATIS.
TRIUMPH CYCLE CO. Ltd., COVENTRY.
4 and 5, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.
30 Deansgate Arcade, Manchester. 4 King Edward St. Leeds

DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS
Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

Ten Days Free Trial

is allowed on every cycle we sell. The full price and all carriage charges returned if unsatisfactory in any way. 1903 Models, fully warranted,

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample cycle at special price and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 44D.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

Digitized by Google

Lonely Microbes.

She: "There are microbes in kisses." He: "Aren't your microbes lonely?"

Thought She'd Improved Them.

He: "What's the matter with these cigars?" She: "Why, dear, they smelt so horrid that I put some eau-de-Cologne on them!"

A Good Hater.

Notting: "How can you sit here with that Chaffer woman playing on that confounded piano of hers in the next flat?" Helter: "Oh, I enjoy it. It reminds me that she is Chaffer's wife. I hate Chaffer, you know."

Not Inconsistent.

"I'm afraid of you," said Miss Kittish to Mr. Callow, saucily. "That's stwange," replied Mr. Callow. "A few minutes ago you—aw—said that you were afraid of nothing, doncher know." "Well, what of that?"

Careful of his Trousers.

Miss Cashley: "You have dropped your handkerchief on the floor, Mr. Van Dudekin." Van Dudekin (preparing to get on his knees): "I did it with a purpose, dear Miss Cashley—er—Edith, I love you; will you be my wife?"

Mother Understood.

"My dear," said Mrs. Richleigh to her daughter the other evening, after young Woodby had departed, "how in the world did your hair become so disarranged?" "Why, mamma," replied the quick-witted miss, "I suppose it must be from shaking my head so much when Mr. Woodby was trying to coax me to say yes." And the mother suddenly remembered that she had once been a girl herself.

Coincidence.

"Somehow, I'm awfully stupid to-night," remarked young Borum, languidly the other evening. "Indeed you are," retorted Miss Cutting, somewhat impulsively. "Do you really mean that?" asked the young man in surprise. "I merely indorsed your remarks; didn't you just now assert that you were stupid?" she queried. "Yes," he responded, "but I only said so without thinking." "And up to the time you spoke of it," she replied, "I only thought so without saying it."

The Press Did its Duty.

"Oh, I think it must be so nice to be connected with a newspaper," said Miss M'Flinn to young Quilldriver, as they sat together one evening. "Yes, it is so," he replied. "But why do you think it is?" "Why, it has so many advantages. I should think you would glory in the freedom, the power, the liberty, and all the privileges of the Press." "Certainly I do. It's a pity with all your enthusiasm on the subject that you are not a journalist." "I think so, too; but you know it is hard for a woman to get recognition. I should be delighted to think that the Press embraced me." "Oh, you would, would you? Great Scott! wait till I turn down the gas."

Good for the Other One.

He paid her a thousand golden sovereigns, for damages done to her heart, and with it she and her true lover were able to get quite a start.

There Wouldn't be Time.

"I would die a thousand deaths for you," said the villain in his most silken tones. "I fear me much," said the heroine, whose love was growing cold, "that the piece will not run that long."

The Decrease of Love.

Rollins: "I begin to doubt whether my wife still loves me as she used to do." Collins: "Why so?" Rollins: "Because I came home last night with my hair cut and she never noticed it."

A Man Under the Bed.

"Old Miss Sere saw a man under her bed at last." "Good gracious! What did she say?" "She told him to look out for the plastering. He was carrying the bed downstairs on his head. You see, she moved yesterday."

His Terrible Confession.

She: "Before we are married and it is for ever too late, confess to me whether there is anything in your past life that you think I might not approve of." He (trembling): "Well, if you must know all, I kept a diary for nearly three weeks once."

Change was Good.

"Vain, vain," he cried in agony. "For I am a poor man, while you have been reared up in the lap of luxury." Into her eyes came a dreamy look, such as ordinary persons affect when their corns hurt them; but she was no ordinary person. "One lap gets mighty monotonous," she observed gently, for there was her maidenly reserve to be thought of.

Liked the Setting.

"Your every tooth is a milk-white pearl," tenderly whispered the lover fond. And softly laughed the winsome girl when the moonshine caught in her tresses blonde. His lips neared hers, but before they met in a kiss, the rest of the world forgetting, "You like pearls, then?" said the small coquette, "Not so much," he replied, "as I like their setting."

Caught in a Box.

"Why is it," he asked, "that beautiful women are always the most stupid?" "Sir," she replied, "am I to understand that you desire to cast reflections upon my mental capacity?" "Oh, no," he hurriedly returned; "I have always said that you were one of the cleverest girls I ever——" But he didn't finish. Before he could do so he realised that he had said the wrong thing, and could never make it right.

Easy to Promise.

In her heart love and duty strove for mastery, and duty won. "No man shall wed me," she exclaimed, with suffused eyes and quivering lips, "who does not promise me that if he is ever Prime Minister of the United Kingdom he will use his influence to have battleships christened with water!" Such was the ardour of his passion that Algernon hesitated not a moment. "I promise," he cried, and fell upon his knees.

After the First Quarrel.

"Go!" she exclaimed, "and never speak to me again!" He passed out into the unsympathetic night, but paused when he reached the street, and drew something bright from one of his inside pockets. As he did so, the beautiful girl, who was watching him from the front door, uttered a shrill scream and ran towards him. "Albert," she cried, "what would you do? Pray do not kill yourself! Throw your revolver away, and let us forget our quarrel." "It isn't a revolver," he replied, as he caught her in his arms. "It's a sixpenny spanner I borrowed from you that day my bicycle broke down. I have been wearing it next to my heart ever since." Then they returned to the parlour and took up the thread of love's dream where it had been broken.

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Case of Corpulence.

"GEETY" is only nineteen, but is getting very fat. How can she prevent herself from growing too corpulent? Exercise is the best thing—plenty of walking, if you can get it, or any other outdoor occupation that comes your way. Then, as to diet, don't eat much pastry, sweets, or jam, avoid taking sugar in your tea or too much butter, and make your diet as simple as possible. A few months of this will soon show you whether or not you are able to reduce your weight by ordinary means. If not, then consult a doctor.

A Question of a Ring.

"SHOULD I accept a ring from a young fellow I have been meeting for four months?" writes "KIDDIE." "I am a barmaid, not yet eighteen years old, and though I like him very well, I don't feel that I love him. He is four years older than I, and very anxious for us to become engaged."

* * * * *

You are rather young, "KIDDIE," to become engaged. And as you have not made up your mind as to your feelings towards the young man, wait awhile before you pledge yourself to him. You have plenty of time, and should not be too rash just now, as perhaps you will meet someone you really love, and that would lead to great trouble if you were engaged.

Calf Love Symptoms.

"MATER" is troubled as to her son. He is nineteen, and for weeks past has been out very late at night. He gives the excuse either that he has been late at the office, or with his male friends, and yet his manner is usually very reserved.

* * * * *

It looks like a case of love. You had better let it go on, "MATER," as it is a thing most boys experience at his age, and little good comes of interference by parents. If the affair continues, and looks like lasting, tell him you know all about it, and ask him to bring the girl home. She may, for all you know, be quite the right sort, and though she is young, a man never loses by the society of a good and true woman, even though he may not yet be able to propose marriage.

Caught Red Handed.

"A. S." is a young man, and has been courting a very pretty girl for some time without his parents' knowledge. The other day they went out of town, and "A.S." thinking the coast was clear, asked the girl to go to his home and have tea. On his arrival with the girl, he was met in the hall by his mother, who had unexpectedly returned. How should he have explained his conduct?

* * * * *

He should have at once introduced the girl as a lady friend. If he was not ashamed of her, this would be the only straightforward thing to do. To attempt to conceal matters by deception would only embarrass both yourself and the girl.

Getting Introductions.

"G. O. E." has read my advice on the subject of mutual friends, and how girls and young men should employ them in the affairs of the heart. She is attracted by a man she does not know, like a great many others, and knows that both of them have mutual friends who could secure the introduction. Who should take the first step in the matter?

* * * * *

I would first find out from a mutual friend whether the young man is interested in you, and if they do not know, get them to find out. If he is, then the mutual friend might well be employed in giving the introductions. But if he is really so taken by you, he would probably have put the machinery in motion earlier. It is the man's province to take the first steps in getting to know a girl.

In Love with a Scholar.

"ANNIE" is very much in love with a man ten years older than herself. He is a very clever man, and a great scholar, whose conversation is far above "ANNIE'S" head. How could she make known to him the fact that she is so attracted?

* * * * *

You had better first see if he shows any signs of being equally interested in you. A girl should never "throw her cap" at a man, particularly one who is her superior mentally. Very likely he is like most other clever men, fonder of the society of simple girls than those of his own mental rank. In this case he will certainly show you whether or not he is interested in you. When with the man avoid trying to appear his equal in knowledge. That is a mistake. Men like girls to be natural.

Madness in the Family.

"SHOULD a man let his *fiancé* know all his family affairs?" asks "F.R." "I am sorry to say that many of my relations have developed insanity, and I myself am given to fits of depression. If I told the girl this, it might make her parents break off the match."

* * * * *

If she has known you long enough to be engaged to you I suppose she knows how far your fits of depression are likely to mean anything serious. Insanity, of course, does run in families, but it doesn't at all follow that you are likely to develop it, though probably if your mind were overstrained, or you had a great deal of worry, you would be less able to bear it than people whose families are free from such trouble. The only thing is for you to lead as quiet a life as possible, and avoid over-excitement. If your fits of depression are really serious take medical advice, and base whatever you tell the girl on the doctor's verdict.

Would it be Forward?

"MY dilemma is great," writes "LONESOME." "The other day I dropped my handkerchief, and a young man I admire very much picked it up for me. Would it be forward for me to bow to him next time we meet?"

* * * * *

What a curious thing it should be that it was a very young man who picked it up, and was it quite accidental, "LONESOME?" Yes, it would be rather forward for you to bow to him next time. But such forward things are done very often in this world. Sometimes they have very happy results.

* * * * *

If it would be possible for you to get to know the man socially, and you know that he is a desirable acquaintance, of whom your parents would approve, the bow might not be altogether a mistake. If he is a casual young man of whom you know nothing, and whom you could not meet without resort to deception, then I think you had better not encourage him to make your acquaintance.

Cynthia

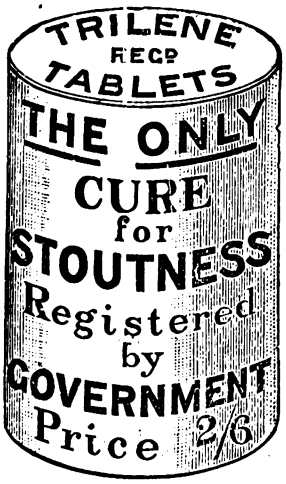
Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, London, Henrietta Street, W.C.

Digitized by Google

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

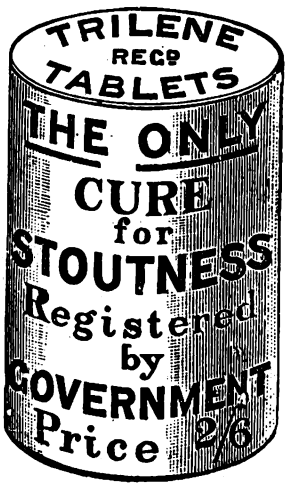
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION
66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18.b. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 4lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablet has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of 1st. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRÄD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest value I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

Patent Dry Cleaning

What is it? A novel system of cleaning by means of scientifically distilled Spirit, without in any way affecting the material, altering the colour, or affecting the shape of it.

What will it clean? Dresses, Jackets, Blouses, Dressing Gowns, Overcoats, Suits & Trousers, Tapestry, Cloth, and Chenille Curtains, Table Covers, Carpets & Rugs.

Where is it done? at JOHNSON BROS., Bootle Dye Works, LIVERPOOL.

Send Post-card, and address of nearest branch will be sent you. 150 *Branches in London and Provinces.*

SOLD BY ALL UP-TO-DATE DEALERS

THE "OCEANIC"

THE UP-TO-DATE HALF-GUINEA BRITISH BOOT.

STYLISH—DAINTY—DURABLE—COMFORTABLE.

Ask for and see the stamp "Oceanic" *inside every boot*

ASK YOUR BUTCHER

. . FOR . .

Swift's

American BEEF

Choice and Tender.

THE ONLY PERFECT FIRELIGHTER.

BREAKFAST READY IN FIVE MINUTES.

OF OILMEN EVERYWHERE.

BRITANNIA CLEANS HER HELMET WITH "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

AND EVERY BRITISH HOUSEWIFE SHOULD POLISH ALL METALS WITH IT, TOO.

Most foreign polishes set up acid, are *sticky* in use, and require much labour in cleaning. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is entirely made in England, and by using it you support British Trade.

Manufacturers: THE "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH Co. Ltd., LIVERPOOL.

Digitized by Google

NEW COMPETITION JUST STARTED.

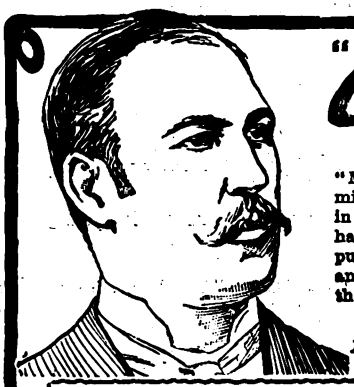
SHORT STORIES

No. 755.] Week ending June 20th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

The ring was slipped on her finger, and she was tied for life to that fearful figure in rags! But there was no way out of it.

(A Dramatic Incident from our Story, "Married in Haste." See inside.)

Digitized by Google



"Ask for proof"

"My advice is, be sure that you are fully satisfied with the goods before you make up your mind to purchase. I receive and execute from ten to fifteen thousand orders every week, and in every case I send the goods entirely subject to customer's approval after full opportunity has been given for critical examination. If you are fully satisfied, you can complete the purchase by Easy Monthly Payments as per scale, or, if you prefer to pay the account in one amount, you are invited to select a Handsome Bonus Present from Illustrated List sent with the Goods."

"I PROVIDE EVERYTHING."

Each Departmental Catalogue is sent Post Free on application, together with Order Form and full particulars.

1. **WATCHES.** All my well-known Watch Specialities fully illustrated and described. My Watch Department is the Largest Watch-Sales concern in the World.
2. **TOOLS AND MACHINERY.** Thousands of illustrations. Every known Tool and Machine is supplied on Easy Terms of Payment.
3. **FURNITURE.** Every Furnishing requirement is illustrated. My System of Furnishing by Easy Instalments is fully explained.
4. **MANTLES AND COSTUMES.** A beautiful Album of the Fashions of the Season.
5. **GENT'S TAILORING.** This Stylish Department is splendidly equipped, and is probably the Largest Clothing Business in Great Britain.
6. **BOOTS AND SHOES.** Beautifully illustrated. A Splendid choice of the Newest Ideas in Foot Wear. *Contractor to His Majesty's Government.*
7. **BOOKSELLING DEPARTMENT.** Catalogue describes a vast assortment of Standard and Current Literature.
8. **SHEFFIELD CUTLERY & PLATE.** The produce of my own Factories illustrated and fully described. *Hotel and Shipping Orders a Speciality.*
9. **GLASS, CHINA, LAMPS, & STOVES.** Dinner and Tea Services, Toilet and Bedroom Ware, Lamps, Stoves, &c.
10. **CLOCKS.** Every known style and make supplied on Easy Terms of Payment.
11. **GENERAL DRAPERIES, etc.** Dress Goods, Blankets, Sheets, Furs, Ladies' Outfitting, Babies' and Children's Clothing, etc.
12. **GOLD JEWELLERY & DIAMONDS.** Engagement and Wedding Rings, Bracelets, Brooches, and all kinds of Gold Ornaments, fully illustrated & described.
13. **GENERAL FANCY GOODS.** Bags, Umbrellas, Albums, every kind of Leather Goods for Wedding Presents and Home Use.
14. **CAMERAS AND OPTICAL GOODS.** Hundreds of Designs by the most reliable makers.
15. **BICYCLES.** Exclusive Designs for the present season supplied on Easy Payment Terms.
16. **MUSICAL DEPARTMENT.** Pianos, Organs, and every known Musical Instrument supplied on Easy Payment Terms.
17. **ARMY AND NAVY.** A Catalogue representing all kinds of Goods required by all grades of both branches of the Service.
18. **COLONIAL DEPARTMENT.** A comprehensive illustrated Book which deals with the requirements of customers abroad, and quotes Special Cash Discount for Shipping Orders.

Mention Number of Catalogue required

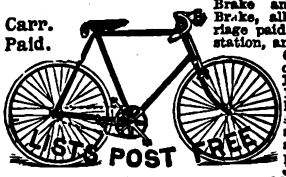
J. G. Graves.

An AGENCY for my firm is a very remunerative way of using spare time to advantage. Write for Agency particulars.

89 DIVISION STREET, SHEFFIELD.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model A is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for Cash is £8 8 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 15/10 each. Lady's Machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns Juno Cycles.



Carr. Paid.

Trailers from £5 5 0, or 10/6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 126 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free. —JUNO CYCLE CO. ("S.S." Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS

Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well.

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

"In pain? Try ZOX."

Below is Our Great New Serial.

SHORT STORIES

No. 755.] Week Ending June 20th, 1903. [ONE PENNY.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life.

By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

"THOSE whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The sacred words were droned in monotonous tones by a lean, apathetic curate. The church is empty save for the two principals—Margaret Heath and Vernon Grant—and the necessary witnesses. After the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris.

Digby Scarlett turns over his letters leisurely in the interim between breakfast and sorting a cigar.

"Ah, here's one from my friend and collaborator, the valiant Vernon. I wonder what the Paris postmark means? Any way, it can wait until I have written to ask the adorable Margaret Heath to be my wife."

This done, he opens Vernon's letter, and when he reads the news of the latter's marriage to the girl to whom he has just penned a proposal, he murmurs—

"Twice hit by the same hand, and both blows destined to die with me—to bleed internally. Not bad for a man intellectually my inferior! But the third blow *I* shall get in. My innings begins to-day." Then he leaves for Paris to join the happy couple at their invitation.

Scarlett and Grant at one time had practised copying each other's signatures, and Grant had been very successful in his imitations of that of his friend. Now Scarlett persuades him, for a bet, to sign his name to a cheque for a large amount, promising to make it all right at the bank when presented. This, however, he fails to do, and Grant is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude for forgery, Scarlett not even saying a word in his defence. Mrs. Grant goes to the prison to bid her husband farewell, and tells him that she will never have anything more to do with him.

The First Chapters.

LADY MAITLAND is the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland of Maitland Manor, Melton. She captivates everyone by her extreme beauty. Sir Trevor has three children—Jack, Agnes, and Muriel—by his first wife, and an only son, Woolf, by the present Lady Maitland.

Shortly after Sir Trevor's second marriage a baby-girl is found in the Manor grounds. She is intrusted to the care of Mrs. Parkins, the lodgekeeper's wife. The name of Ivy Strange is given to the child, and at the time of our story Jack Maitland is in love with her.

Heriot North, an old friend of the family, who visits the Manor to pay his addresses to Agnes, succumbs to the charms of Sir Trevor's young wife, to the great chagrin of Agnes, who is accordingly neglected. There is nothing Lady Maitland will not do for her boy Woolf. One evening when she goes to her room to dress for dinner she finds there an ex-convict and burglar—Mike Holland—who says that he was in gaol with her first husband, and unless she pays him well to keep silence he will blazon to the world the fact that she is a bigamist.

Lady Maitland protests that her first husband is dead, but to preserve the good name of her boy she consents to pay the price, and intrusts Heriot North with the first payment, twenty pounds, which is to be left at a certain place in London for Holland to call for.

Ivy Strange refuses to become engaged to Jack until the mystery of her birth is cleared up. This her lover promises to do, and to start with interviews Mrs. Parkins. The only information he gleans from her is that on Ivy's brow—hidden under her curls—when she was a baby there was a mark like the mark of a broad arrow! Jack goes to London to consult a detective, Gilbert Chase. Afterwards at his club he meets Digby Scarlett, a celebrated explorer. Scarlett accepts Jack's invitation to accompany him to Maitland Manor.

The night of their arrival Ivy brings Lady Maitland a note, written on a dirty piece of paper. It ran as follows:

"*The man you got the laugh over is now going to laugh at you. You lied to me. I know that your first husband still lives. I 'ave seen 'im. Send or rite by return to M.H. post office, Chorlton, inclosing five 'undred pounds or will call at Manor and tell all.*"

After reading it Lady Maitland gets Ivy to write a note saying that she is sending half the money to the same place in London as she forwarded the twenty pounds.

When the girl has slipped away Lady Maitland takes the dirty piece of paper and drops it in the fire. "I only wish I could do the same with the writer," she mutters. "I see that I shall have to fight hard, but for my boy I will risk anything. Now to go and see this wonderful friend of Jack's."

With a tender smile on her lips she goes softly downstairs.

"Ah!" says her husband's voice, as she enters the room, "let me introduce Jack's friend, my dear."

The man comes forward slowly, a gleam of dazzling teeth throwing up the blackness of his moustache. Sir Trevor Maitland's wife glances up at him with a swift smile of welcome.

"This," continues Sir Trevor, "is Mr. Digby Scarlett—my wife!"

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

THE BOND BETWEEN.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Recognition.

Digby Scarlett strolled thoughtfully into the village of Melton. It was a fine, bright day, the damp and fog of the last week had given way to a mild, almost humid atmosphere, and the sky overhead was clear and blue.

But it was not of the elements and their pranks that Digby Scarlett was thinking. Everything was forgotten, swamped in the baffling uncertainty of a haunting memory, that both mocked and lured him on at the same time. It was a woman's face, brilliant, haughty, and surpassingly beautiful, that blotted out every other vision. The face of the woman who had played to perfection the *rôle* of his hostess four nights ago—Sir Trevor Maitland's wife!

"Bah!" he muttered. "I must be mad to connect the two! She would not dare! Besides, when I failed to trace her at the time, I saw afterwards, in some continental paper, that she was dead—had died a year after. But this woman is marvellously like! She nearly took my breath away! I wonder whether I could satisfy myself," he mused thoughtfully. "I hate playing in the dark!"

"What! All alone, Mr. Scarlett?" said a voice behind him; and turning quickly, he saw Agnes Maitland hurrying towards him. Her sallow face was slightly flushed, and an agreeable smile parted her thin, pale lips.

He smiled grimly. This elderly, young lady did not appeal to him in the least, but he saw that he had found favour in her eyes. He had also been quick to notice that she bore no love for her beautiful step-mother. Probably she would be useful.

"Yes, Miss Maitland," he answered, "I am investigating for myself! But I might also apply the same remark to you," he added laughingly; "you appear to be alone, too!"

"I usually am," she said, the smile fading from her face, and the acid look returning to it. "But you are our guest; I am afraid you will think us very negligent."

He laughed.

"I like being alone, Miss Maitland. I am never in such good company as when my thoughts walk side by side with me! But you are different," he went on lightly. "I should have imagined that you would find your step-mother just a fellow-companion—an elder sister, in fact."

A bitter laugh broke from Agnes Maitland.

"My step-mother is my father's wife, Mr. Scarlett. I do not know her any better than I did the day she came to the Manor with him, fifteen years ago."

"Ah! She must have been a girl almost," he said thoughtfully, "while you were a child."

Agnes Maitland flushed.

"She was a widow when my father married her—a Mrs. Vernon," she said tartly.

Digby Scarlett started. His doubts did not appear so ridiculous after all!

"Really?" he said carelessly. "I must compliment Lady Maitland upon her youthful appearance! Were you going to the village, Miss Maitland?" he asked. "Because if I can do anything for you there, it will give me much pleasure. I am going to the post-office, to inquire for letters."

She hesitated.

"Thank you, but there is nothing, Mr. Scarlett. I was only going to call on an old woman in the parish, but will postpone it, as I find I may be late. You will probably meet Jack," she smiled. "If he is not at the lodge, he is generally in the village."

She turned and retraced her steps. Digby Scarlett looked after her, a queer smile on his cynical mouth.

As he was inquiring for letters at the post-office—having given that address at the club for any correspondence to be forwarded—a man came in after him, and bought some stamps, then threw a careless glance at him that changed to a look of interest, as the post-mistress said: "One letter for Mr. Digby Scarlett."

As Digby Scarlett left the post-office the man gazed after him. "That face and name seem oddly familiar!" he muttered; "especially the name. I wonder who he is, and what he is doing here."

The voice of the post-mistress roused him. "Here are your stamps, Mr. North." He took them, then left the office, and was just in time to see Digby Scarlett talking to Lady Maitland, who was driving her dogcart into the village.

After a brief pause, the jealous eyes of the man on the post-office steps saw his divinity make room for the stranger in the trap, and drive off with him in the direction of Maitland Manor.

Heriot North watched them out of sight, then walked away slowly. As he passed the "New Age Inn," a man lurched out, falling against him. With a disgusted gesture he flung him from him, then started with surprise, for the drink-sodden wretch, looking at him with bleary eyes, was the same disreputable loafer whom he had seen in the District Messenger Depôt in Regent Street, a couple of weeks ago.

"I hope that creature has not taken advantage of Lady Maitland's generosity to beg from her again," he muttered. "He must find it a lucrative business to take the trouble to come here from London for the purpose!"

In the meantime Digby Scarlett was listening to the gay, careless chatter of the radiant woman who was driving him back to the Manor.

"Well, Mr. Scarlett," she laughed. "I suppose our dull little village will bore you to death after a few days, and you will be hungering for the frivolities of town?"

"On the contrary," he replied. "I was thinking of inquiring whether there was a house to let in this neighbourhood; it is time I settled down."

The hands holding the reins trembled slightly, and a slight pucker furrowed the satin-like brow of his companion.

"I am afraid you will be disappointed," she laughed. "There were one or two small shooting-boxes to let last season, but they have been snapped up lately."

"Ah!" he murmured; "that's a pity. I was hoping to know more of the people of Melton than I do now; they interest me."

Lady Maitland did not reply. She was wondering feverishly whether this man recognised, in the polished, stately wife of the squire of Melton, the unformed girl of eighteen years ago! She thought not! She prayed not! His eyes had told her nothing a few nights before, when the name of Digby Scarlett had been a bolt from the blue of her security! His face she had not recognised; but the name—that had ever haunted her like a shadow.

"By the way," Digby Scarlett said carelessly, "I met your daughter, Agnes, a few moments ago."

"My daughter!" she exclaimed—her eyes contracting suddenly. "I have no daughter—only a son."

"I meant step-daughter, Lady Maitland," he laughed easily; "and she told me that your name, before you married Sir Trevor, was Mrs. Vernon."

"That is true," she said coldly; a strange sense of coming disaster making her feel faint.

"I wonder," the calm, well-bred voice went on, "whether you ever met a woman I once knew—*her* name was Vernon, only that was her husband's Christian name. I believe their surname was—or, rather, *is*, for they still live—Grant!"

A stifled exclamation rose to the lips of the woman holding the reins, now loosely, between frozen fingers.

"I don't remember," she said, in a low, intense voice. "My life has been so full of changes, that I forget half the people I have met."

The man by her side smiled. "I can understand your forgetting some people, Lady Maitland," he said carelessly. "By-the-way, what an extremely charming pet name your young step-daughter, Miss Muriel, calls you by. It is an abbreviation for—Margaret, I presume?"

She raised her eyes to his with a haggard desperation in them. "No, Mr. Scarlett; it is no abbreviation," she said slowly. "My Christian name is Pearl."

Digitized by Google

Digby Scarlett's black eyes met hers with mocking deference. He had learnt what he had only suspected.

"And it is a name that suits you, Lady Maitland. Ah! Look out!" he said quickly; "you nearly had us in the ditch then!"

She laughed recklessly. "Oh, that is nothing; you will meet with more serious mishaps than that, Mr. Scarlett."

As they turned into the drive, Sir Trevor was standing at the lodge gates, speaking to Parkins. "Ah, my dear," he said. "Have you been showing our pretty county to Mr. Scarlett?"

His wife smiled. "I think we have both contributed to each other's amusements, Trevor."

"Yes, Sir Trevor," replied Scarlett, "I was fearfully disappointed to learn from Lady Maitland that there is no place to let about here. I had hoped to become one of yourselves as a neighbour."

"Why, my dear Pearl!" said Sir Trevor to his wife; "surely you forget the 'Rest' near us? That is to let, Mr. Scarlett, and it would be a very good thing if you could take it."

"I am sorry," laughed Lady Maitland carelessly; "I had forgotten the 'Rest' when I spoke to Mr. Scarlett."

When he was alone, Digby Scarlett smiled grimly. "I fancy my stay at Melton will be an eventful one! She fears me already; she knows that her secret is mine! Perhaps I may have to use my power—soon!" And his fingers stroked his moustache with the same old trick he had had when clean-shaven.

* * * * *

Lady Maitland dismissed her maid, and paced the floor of her dressing-room with long, swift steps that sank softly into the velvet pile of the carpet. Her lips were closed in a thin, scarlet line, and her eyes glittered strangely. "He knows me! He knows me!" she murmured. "I shall be unable to buy *him* off as I do the—other——! He does not need money. What then will he exact for his silence?"

She brushed the thick hair from her brow, and gazed at herself in the glass. It was a drawn, haggard face that glanced back at her—the ghost of the woman of a month ago!

"I almost wish," she murmured, "that you *had* died at the time you sent that notice to the papers! Now your life is going to be a *living* death! Unless"—she threw back her head and laughed. "But it is early days to cry 'Peccavi!' I will not give in, for his sake—the happiness and honour of my boy will spur me on to meet my enemies! He shall never learn to blush for his mother!"

She flung herself down by a chair. She did not usually pray, but her lips moved in a passion of supplication, and the refrain of her prayer was, "For his sake! For his sake! For his sake!"

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Face in the Photograph.

"ARE you going to the meet, Maitland, or will you leave me to the tender mercies of Miss Muriel again?" Digby Scarlett laughed lightly. It was the morning after his drive with Lady Maitland, and he was in a genial mood.

"Well, I may follow you afterwards," replied Sir Trevor's son and heir evasively. "I have something to do first. But Muriel will be with you," he added, "to say nothing of the mater, who is a fine rider to hounds. You were in at the death the last time you rode with us, eh, mater?"

Digby Scarlett bowed his head in the direction of Lady Maitland, who sat at the head of the table. He, being a guest, was on her right hand. "To die would be easy in such a presence!"

She laughed carelessly. "I hope we shall all parade as much pluck in our own death as we do at that of the poor fox, Mr. Scarlett!"

"The fox has nothing to complain of," he said slowly. "It has a good run, and it only has itself to blame if it 'breaks cover' too early!"

Their eyes met, and the challenge lurking in the depths of the woman's startled him. She rose from the table with a light laugh.

"The hound is a generous enemy, Mr. Scarlett, and kills quickly. It is only the higher race that stoop to torture!"

She swept out of the room with the graceful dignity for which she had become so celebrated, and Digby Scarlett sent a flash of admiration after her. "She will fight to the bitter end!" he thought, but the idea pleased him. It would add zest to the victory, to win it over a foe that dies hard!

As he rode with Muriel and Sir Trevor to the meet—Lady Maitland having pleaded a headache, and Agnes being no horsewoman—they saw Jack coming away from the lodge, and strolling along the Melton Road. He was not alone; a slight, graceful figure was beside him, and they appeared to be deep in conversation.

Sir Trevor's face clouded. "That son of mine throws up every other obligation to pursue a will o' the wisp!" he muttered. "I am sorry he has no consideration for his duties as your part host, Mr. Scarlett," and he turned apologetically to their guest, who had grown strangely quiet.

He had not forgotten the face in the likeness he had confiscated the night of the fog in London, and it had become a custom for him to look at it every night and morning before returning it to its hiding-place.

He wondered at not having heard anything of a *fiancée*, or seen the original of that bewitching fairy, and now he wondered whether the girl with Jack was the living possessor of so much beauty.

"Don't mention it, Sir Trevor," he said easily, "I was young once myself," and he smiled, grimly.

"Were you, really?" said Muriel, looking at him curiously. "Somehow, you suggest an impression of having looked through centuries, your eyes have such a world-weary expression in them, just like the Sphinx!"

"Muriel!" said her father reprovingly, but Digby Scarlett laughed, the girl's frank criticism amused him.

"Perhaps Miss Muriel is right, Sir Trevor. I am almost a veteran now, but not so old that beauty fails to touch me!"

"Ah," said Muriel proudly, "you have only dreamt of beauty, so far, Mr. Scarlett, when you see Ivy you will meet it."

"Ivy?" he said quickly. "Who is she? Your sister?"

Before she could reply, they had arrived at the meet, and soon after, conversation was dispensed with in favour of the more exciting pastime.

Two hours later, Digby Scarlett walked his horse slowly through the lanes of Melton. He had gradually let the rest of the field lose sight of him, and then quietly turned back and followed the road they had traversed earlier in the day.

As he drew near the outskirts of the wood lying behind the Manor, he gave a start of surprise, for standing in the open, yet sufficiently concealed from public view to allow of low-voiced confidences being exchanged, were two figures.

He reined in his horse and gazed curiously at them.

One was a low, vicious-looking man of the tramp species, with a cruel face and crafty, squinting eyes. But it was on his companion that Digby Scarlett gazed with wonder and startled admiration. For the face of the girl talking to the man with the evil eyes, was the original of the photograph he had so long cherished. But it was so far removed from that unflattering prototype that he almost laughed with joy when he remembered how he had looked for her to be like it.

As he gazed, drinking in the girl's unconscious beauty with thirsty eyes, his brow grew puzzled. He had, on comparing the face in the photo with one that belonged to the years that had gone, described it as possessing the beauty of the pearl, while that of the other had had the brilliancy of the diamond, and an indescribable atmosphere about her sent his thoughts speeding backwards.

Digitized by Google

"I wonder who she is?" he muttered, "and what that blackguardly ruffian wants with her? Anyway, I mean to find out her name, somehow!"

He flung himself lightly out of the saddle, tied his horse to a tree, then stepped behind a bush where he could see and hear without being seen.

"Now then!" said the coarse voice of the man, "I've 'ad enough of excuses. What I wants I means to get, or I'll know the reason why!"

The reply of the girl barely reached the ears of the listening man, so low and quiet was her voice. "I'm sorry, that is all you can have now. But if you return to London you will have more sent to the address that the first was forwarded to. That is all I can tell you. And," she went on, in the low, monotonous tone, as though repeating a lesson she had learnt, "it is dangerous for you to stay here."

"Hallo!" thought Digby Scarlett, "I have discovered a case of blackmail. This is interesting."

The man laughed brutally. "Dangerous! Not much! I'm going to be on the spot! The secret I know is worth a bloomin' mint to me! I'll chance the rest!"

The girl clasped her hands convulsively, and the keen eyes of the man behind the bush saw tears glistening on her lashes.

"Oh, no," she murmured, "please go! I will give you all I have, if you will only leave Melton!"

"All right, miss!" he laughed. "Begin by giving me that gold bracelet on your wrist!"

She drew back quickly. "No, no, not that! I cannot part with that!"

An ugly look crossed the man's coarse mouth. "I want that, I tell yer, or——!" He caught her arm suddenly, and a low cry came from her lips.

Digby Scarlett gripped his hunting crop tightly, and his breath came from him in laboured pants.

"Stow that!" snarled the bully, "or I'll jolly soon silence you for good!"

He raised his hand quickly towards her with an oath, but it was intercepted by another hand that caught his arm from behind him in a vice-like grip, and the next moment he was flung violently aside. Then, as he turned to see who had attacked him, his collar was seized firmly, and for a few seconds the air was filled by the sharp, stinging whirr—rr—of a whip being cut quickly on to a fleshy, writhing body.

"There, you confounded scoundrel! Let that be a lesson to you not to attempt to bully a lady again, or your next dose will be a little stronger!" and, livid with rage, Digby Scarlett gave his victim a final shake, then dropped him on to the brown earth, where he lay speechless, and terrified by the sudden change matters had taken.

He rose to his feet painfully, his long upper lip was quivering with fear, and the look he threw at the girl and her protector was malignant and full of hate.

"So yer set someone on to watch me, eh, me beauty?" he said to the shrinking girl. "Then let me tell 'im the little secret we share together!"

"Shall I thrash him again?" said Scarlett, turning to her. "He deserves it!"

"Oh, no, let him go!" she murmured in a low tone. "Send him away now!"

"This lady has spared you another thrashing!" he said in a stern, cold voice. "If you don't instantly make yourself scarce, I shall follow you, and finish what I have only just begun!"

With an evil leer the man slunk off, the early November mist enveloping his figure as he stole between the thick trunks of the trees that grew more frequent as he reached the interior of the wood.

Then Digby Scarlett turned again to the girl, whose white face and strained, violet eyes told of the ordeal through which she had passed.

"I hope you are not hurt in any way?" he asked. "I am glad I happened to be riding this way."

She put out her slim, white hand with a pretty gesture.

"Oh, no! Not hurt, only frightened. I am afraid to think what would have occurred had you not come to my rescue!" And she lifted her eyes to his with an appealing gratitude that thrilled him. He was not accustomed to such glances from women.

"It was an honour to me to be of service to you," he said, but he did not think it necessary to mention that he had listened to part of her conversation.

"I am afraid these lonely woods are not safe for anyone quite so—so young and unprotected as yourself, to visit alone," he went on. "That ruffian may lurk about here again in the hope of seeing you. Will you promise me that you will take more care of yourself in the future?"

She flushed, and her eyes filled with sudden tears. "I am afraid I cannot go so far as that," she murmured; "my way lies through the woods very often."

"Then I shall constitute myself your guardian," he said lightly, and noticed that a momentary fear leapt to her eyes, and that her lips trembled.

"It is very kind of you; but I would rather you did not trouble," she replied. "I shall be quite safe in future—really!"

He smiled. "I only hope so! But I am not so sanguine as you seem to be. These woods are horrid places for such desperadoes as our late friend!"

As she walked silently by his side he asked himself curiously what secret this pure, beautiful girl with the tender eyes could possibly share with the drink-sodden tramp he had punished so summarily.

"By the way," he said, "may I know to whom I have had the honour of tendering some slight service?"

She blushed suddenly, but answered with simple dignity, "My name is Ivy Strange."

"Ivy Strange," he murmured thoughtfully; "I wonder are you related to the Stranges of Durham?"

"I think not," she said coldly, another wave of colour sweeping from brow to throat.

"I am staying at the Manor," he went on easily; "my name is Digby Scarlett."

Her eyes flashed with a sudden light. "Oh, then you are the friend of whom Jack—I mean Mr. Maitland"—she corrected herself hastily—"has spoken to me!"

He smiled. "I have that honour; you live in this neighbourhood then?" he queried. "I wonder I have not met you before at the Manor or at the dance at the Town Hall, to which all Melton went."

She blushed hotly, then raised her head with a proud gesture. "You will see me at none of these functions, Mr. Scarlett. I go up to the Manor to see my friend, Muriel Maitland, but never stay there. I am the child of the lodge-keeper of Maitland Manor."

For a moment he was taken aback. She so entirely possessed all the outward attributes of a well-born woman that the idea of her being only a child of the people after all, was a sudden extinguisher upon his hopes. But he looked at her again, and the sight of her perfect profile silhouetted against the grey background of the barren trees made him laugh at his scruples.

"Such beauty as hers is a pedigree in itself," he thought.

"I must pay the lodge a visit one day, if I may," he said; "and pay my respects to Mrs. Strange."

For a moment the girl's mouth quivered, as if with sudden laughter; but she murmured demurely, "Thank you, sir; mother will be pleased to see you."

All the time they had chatted he had walked beside her, leading his horse by the bridle, and as they reached the Manor gates Ivy Strange stopped suddenly. "This is my home," she said, with a gesture towards the lodge, "I will say 'Good afternoon,' and thank you once more for your protection. But," she went on, quickly, raising earnest eyes to his, "may I presume to ask you a great favour?"

"Certainly," he murmured, "a request from your lips will be a command."

Digitized by Google

She smiled. "It is only to ask you not to mention at the Manor the rough man you saved me from. Sir Trevor and—and Lady Maitland may be anxious and perhaps annoyed; and as I owe them a great deal I should not like to offend them."

He bent his head. "I will obey you, you may rely on me, Miss Strange."

He watched her into the lodge, his hat in his hand, and as the door closed upon her he turned slowly to walk up the drive with his docile steed.

"*That* girl to be the child of a common lodge-keeper!" he muttered. "Incredible; yet, unfortunately, true! I understand now what vexed the old squire when he saw his son and heir philandering about with her this morning!" He shut his mouth with a savage snap, as he thought of possible love passages that might have passed between them.

Then he laughed cynically. "Bah, it's the way of all sons and heirs to amuse themselves; he is only a boy, and must marry well, for the title's sake; but I—I have no one to please but myself, and may pick my bride from the gutter if I choose. But I must find out what that low scamp was threatening her about! I won't have a mystery around the woman that I intend to make mine!"

He went to the stables, gave his horse to a groom, then entered the drawing-room in time for tea.

"Hallo, Scarlett!" said Sir Trevor; "where did you go off to? We missed you at the finish."

Digby Scarlett laughed easily. "I'm sorry I dropped out; but, to tell the truth, I felt suddenly ill, and thought it wisest to turn back in time. I had lunch on my few sandwiches in the wood, and was incidental in rendering a small service to a lovely damsel in distress!"

"Who was that, Mr. Scarlett?" said the low voice of Lady Maitland. "I did not know that Melton beauties grew in the wood."

He looked at her curiously. She was wearing her favourite colour—white, and her face was very pale, while her deep violet eyes shone brilliantly under the coronet of warm hair. He felt strangely that she was, in some indefinable way, knit to him by a tie—a tie of silence, that only he would break when he chose.

"It was a young lady," he said slowly. "A beggar was importuning her for money—I stepped in, and suggested that he should apply to the local union!"

Lady Maitland's eyes contracted with an unspoken thought, and she bit her lip with a sudden spasm. "Did you discover this modern Andromeda's name?" she said, looking at him closely through her long lashes.

He laughed. "I fancy she said it was Strange—Miss Strange," he answered.

"*Miss* Strange!" laughed Agnes Maitland, harshly; "that is an honour, Mr. Scarlett! She is usually known about here as *Ivy* Strange—the foundling from Nowhere!"

Digby Scarlett felt a wave of disgust steal over him for this hard-mouthed virago. "Then all I can say is that Miss Strange conceals the fact, and only struck me as being a gentlewoman!" he replied coldly.

"Thank you, Scarlett," said Jack Maitland, coming up with a white face and angry eyes, "you have done me a great service. Miss Strange, whom you protected from possible insult this morning, will one day be my wife, I hope!"

The two men clasped hands silently, then there was an instant's pause, and Jack Maitland strode out of the room with his friend after him.

When Digby Scarlett was dressing for dinner he laughed softly to himself. "I am afraid my impetuous young friend will not win his heart's desire. He is a nice boy; but that must not stand in the way. My little lady of the violet eyes and red-gold hair will marry me!"

He stopped with a sudden catch, and his lips paled strangely. "That cat called her a foundling from nowhere. Her face, eyes, colouring and hair, of whom did they remind me? By Jove! What a find!" He smiled grimly. "If it *should* be so—what a crowning of vengeance!"

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Heriot North Makes a Promise.

HERIOT NORTH rose from his lonely dinner table at "The Hollies" and looked at his watch. It was nearly nine o'clock.

"Just time for a stroll round the grounds before turning in to bed," he muttered. "I feel that I should enjoy a ramble."

He took his hat and went down the path, leaving the hall door on the latch. There were only an old man and his wife in the house, who fulfilled the duties of butler and cook respectively, and they retired at any hour they pleased after dinner had been cleared away.

Heriot North pulled at his cigar with long, thoughtful puffs, and his feet took him unconsciously in the direction of Maitland Manor, that loomed, large and imposing, before him.

Of late days he had rather avoided the Manor, until a special reminder from Sir Trevor warned him that a further absence would perhaps compromise the one creature he desired to serve. So, as he drew near, the thought struck him that he would pay an unconventional call before turning in.

"I wonder," he murmured, "why I should have been allowed to meet that woman too late! If only I had come into her life earlier, she might have cared! But now I almost wish that I had never seen her! I might then have been content to marry Agnes!" and a short, mirthless laugh burst from him as the vision of Sir Trevor's Maitland's sour, acid-looking daughter rose before him.

"No! I will live my life at the foot of a shrine," he thought. "The ideal shall never be replaced by an unsympathetic reality."

He sighed resignedly; then walked slowly on, his eyes fixed on the dim light in the lodge windows that acted as a guide to the Manor. Suddenly a sound of voices reached him. They were low, yet distinct, and appeared to come from behind a thick clump of trees that stood near the pathway. There was no moon, and the blackness was intense.

"Ah!" he muttered, "poachers or tramps! I wonder what they are up to."

He paused, and at that moment a deep, gruff voice said: "If I don't get it all by the beginning of the week, I shall throw it up, and queer yer little game! S'elp me if I don't! I bet *someone 'll* pay me well for the secret I could tell 'im!"

"Silence—you fool!" said another voice; and at the sound of it, Heriot North started violently, and the cigar fell from his nerveless fingers, for the voice was that of the one woman who occupied his thoughts both day and night. He held his breath and listened.

"I have no more money on me just now," went on the low voice, "but—" here the voice grew indistinct and only a murmur reached the ears of the man—"I must slip out, or send someone, with the money on the night of the ball at the Manor."

"Don't go trusting that girl, then!" the deeper voice replied. "She got me a lickin' last time from some cove that's after 'er!" And an oath accompanied the words.

"If I can, I will come," said the woman in a whisper, "if not, I will send her—she knows nothing. Now go!"

The voices died away in the darkness; and, after a time, Heriot North roused himself from the stupor that seemed to have fallen upon him.

That voice, the same as that which had lured him into a momentary self-betrayal! Impossible! It must be one similar in tone, and his constant musing on it had made him think every woman's voice hers! He must find out who the man was, then perhaps he could satisfy himself as to the identity of the woman who shared his secret—whatever it was.

Spurred into activity by the desire to come to the bottom

Digitized by Google

of his suspicions, Heriot North broke into a run that led him beyond the Manor gates into the village.

Just as he was about to give up the wild-goose chase, he saw a solitary male figure loafing ahead of him that paused under the dim light of a lamp. Heriot North followed swiftly behind, his memory stirred by the suspicion of familiarity that lingered round the man.

As he came up to him, the man was turning into the "New Age Inn," and Heriot North caught a full view of his face before he disappeared between the swing doors. As he saw it in that momentary flash he fell back with an exclamation. For the man whom he had overheard speaking to a woman, and had followed from that moment, was the same objectionable creature he had seen in the Regent Street District Messenger Depôt; and again, lurching out of the inn, a few days ago, in an intoxicated condition!

* * * * *

"Ah! North, I'm glad to see you! We were wondering why you had not been near us for so long!" and Sir Trevor Maitland held out a hearty welcome to his guest.

Heriot North murmured some words of conventional greeting to his host, then his eyes sent a questioning glance round the room to encounter the eyes of the stranger he had seen in Melton Post-office some days before.

"Oh you don't know Mr. Scarlett, do you?" Sir Trevor continued; "let me introduce you. Mr. Digby Scarlett—Mr. Heriot North."

The two men exchanged a few commonplace courtesies; an instant, indefinable antagonism springing up between them.

"As you have both lived much in the East, you should have a lot in common," said Jack Maitland genially. The boy was in high form, for he had just left Ivy, whose good-night kiss still lingered on his lips.

"I am afraid that too much in common makes people bad friends, Jack!" laughed Digby Scarlett easily. He had noticed the other man's searching glance round the room, and wondered for whom it had been.

The door suddenly opened, to admit Lady Maitland.

"Ah, Mr. North!" she said, her lips parting in a sweet smile. "You are indeed a stranger!"

He took her hand in his, and flashed a puzzled inquiry into her face. She was looking radiant, in some soft, clinging, black gauze; but his glance was quick to note a rather strained look in her violet eyes, and a metallic ring in her voice.

How could he imagine that this calm, perfectly self-possessed woman was the secret conspirator of the loafer in the village public-house?

And yet some link must exist between them, for the coincidence that Lady Maitland of the Manor should send him on a charity quest to a London address for this self-same tramp, and then, that the creature should turn up in Melton and have a private meeting with the woman possessing the peculiarly sweet voice of Lady Maitland, was what would be described in a police-court as "circumstantial evidence" that some understanding existed.

All this Heriot North argued with himself, as the soft hand of Sir Trevor's wife rested in his; and yet he could not but think that there must be another woman in Melton with her ladyship's voice.

"I walked here through the wood," he said to her; "and almost imagined that I must suddenly have taken leave of my senses."

They had strolled to the other end of the room, and he had lowered his voice involuntarily.

She raised her brows. "Indeed, why?"

"Because I was mad enough to imagine that I heard you speaking to someone on the outskirts!"

She looked at him through half-closed lids that had suddenly fallen over her eyes, her pupils becoming almost like pin pricks.

"That was certainly a mad fancy, Mr. North," she said idly, fingering a long, turquoise chain with slender fingers. "But"—she cast a swift glance over her shoulder to where her husband was deep in some erudite dissertation with Digby Scarlett. "But," she continued in a low, cautious voice, "I wonder whether you will help me in something. You promised to be my friend—you know!" And a mocking smile curved her mouth.

"Indeed, I am always at your service!" he said quickly. "Tell me, is it anything to do with the ruffian I saw to-night? If he is annoying you——"

"I don't understand," she replied coldly. "You saw whom, Mr. North? And what was the man saying to the person you mistook for myself?"

He felt that he had blundered. "I—I beg your pardon," he stammered, "but I heard the man—whom I afterwards recognised in the village—threaten someone about money, and mention a secret. I am afraid, knowing of your kindness to the man, that he was worrying you for more! Let me silence him," he went on in a low voice. "I would do anything to prove my disinterested devotion to you!"

"Anything?" she smiled curiously.

"Yes, anything!" he breathed; and with that vow he sealed his soul to a bondage the chains of which would lie heavy on him all his life!

"Ah!" she laughed lightly. "Then, first of all, Mr. North, you must not imagine that it was myself whom you heard this evening. It was, unfortunately, the waif, Ivy Strange, who lives at the lodge; and I have discovered a sad secret concerning her. The man in the wood is—"

"Ah, Lady Maitland, you are discussing a subject in which I am more than interested!" And Digby Scarlett smiled pleasantly into her face.

She started suddenly. How much had this man, who knew her as no other man present did, heard of her conversation? He was dangerous; and in his presence she felt that a veritable powder-mine yawned under her feet.

"What particular portion of my conversation interests you, Mr. Scarlett?" she said coldly.

He smiled. His intuition had told him that the dark, lean man with the intense eyes and strenuous expression had more than a friendly regard for the lovely châtelaine of Maitland Manor, and his sardonic humour was tickled by the knowledge that he held the strings by which, when he chose, he would make this beautiful puppet dance to any tune he desired.

"The pretty waif—at the lodge," he replied slowly, his black eyes narrowing to a fine glinting sparkle. "Is the engagement between her and Jack to be made public yet?"

"I am not aware that any engagement exists, Mr. Scarlett, between my step-son and the girl at the lodge," Sir Trevor's wife said. "I do not fancy their mutual adoration will go any further than the usual flirtation, in spite of his heroic defence of her the other afternoon! Neither his father nor myself consider it seriously."

She rose and beckoned Heriot North to follow her. He did so silently, having moved away to Agnes' side when Digby Scarlett interrupted them.

"Trevor," said her ladyship to her husband. "I am going to my boudoir to show those miniatures to Mr. North; he is quite an authority on them, I hear."

As they passed through the doorway, Digby Scarlett laughed quietly. "Ah! she is not partial to the idea of Jack either being engaged to the waif, or having the first place as the heir! She would rather her own brat had the precedence."

Then he turned to say something to Agnes, who was standing, gazing out into the darkness. As he approached her, he was startled by the expression of her face. It was white and bitter, and her mouth had a cruel sneer on it.

"The plot thickens!" he murmured. "She is in love with North, who is ditto with the fair Lady of the Manor;

Digitized by Google

and, in consequence, there is no love in her heart for her step-mother!"

"Well, Miss Maitland," he said aloud; "you look busy with thoughts! I wonder if they are on the same subject as my own?"

She turned startled eyes on him. "What were they, Mr. Scarlett?" she said, with a chilly smile.

He lowered his voice, and, casting a glance at the half-closed door, said carelessly: "Lady Maitland's style of beauty attracts all sorts and conditions of men. She seems to have cast a spell over your friend, Mr. Heriot North."

A dark, ugly red spread slowly over the thin, spiteful face of Sir Trevor's elder daughter. She opened her mouth as though to speak, then shut it with a sudden snap, and between her closed teeth he heard her mutter: "I hate her! I hate her!"

As he strolled away towards Jack, who had asked him to join him in a game of billiards, he smiled grimly. "So her ladyship has not won over everybody by her charming ways! I wonder what her whispered conversation was about with that chap North? The girl at the lodge was mentioned, too. That woman is playing some game, I fancy, and one that requires delicate handling! I have not begun to play yet; and I fancy my game will surprise her ladyship not a little!"

That night, before Lady Maitland retired to rest, she smiled thoughtfully at herself in the mirror. The anxious look had left her eyes, and her expression had grown again sweet and child-like.

"I am glad I told him about the accident of that girl's voice being like mine," she murmured. "The fact of my giving the man money made him think I did it for the girl's sake!" She laughed softly. "While *she* imagines that I am shielding her Jack from harm! And if I should, at any time, find the creature growing too exorbitant—I have by me someone to deal with him—someone to——"

She stopped suddenly, and going to the drawer in the dainty escritoire, unlocked it, and drew out the bright, shining toy she had taken from her husband's dressing-table some time ago.

"Yes," she murmured, handling it lightly, "I have found someone to deal with him! Someone who will tell no tales!"

As the bright light fell upon the thing in her hand, a gentle noise at the door made her turn her head quickly, and thrust her hand behind her. Then, creeping softly, she suddenly flung the door wide open.

"Who's that?" she said sharply.

The corridor was in darkness, but dying away in the distance, she heard the quick rustle of a woman's dress.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Room.

"Will you allow me to congratulate you upon your engagement, Miss Strange?" And Digby Scarlett leant upon the lodge-gates, and gazed into the lovely face of the lodge-keeper's adopted daughter.

"My engagement, Mr. Scarlett?" And Ivy Strange flushed hotly as she glanced at him with startled eyes.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I hear that you are engaged to Jack Maitland!"

"No, at least, I mean——" She stopped, and her colour grew even more deep than before.

"You mean what?" he asked. "Perhaps it is a conditional engagement, depending upon his good conduct?"

She raised her head with a sudden hauteur, and he smiled as he remembered where he had noted that movement before.

"It is nothing to do with that, Mr. Scarlett," she said simply. "But we are waiting until—until he has found out something for me—something connected with the past."

"The past?" he murmured; "whose past? Yours?"

She flushed. "Yes, mine; since you have probably heard that I am only a foundling," she said bitterly.

Digby Scarlett bit his lip. If this girl and her lover discovered what he very nearly suspected, then he would lose the greater part of his revenge! He must try to prevent that if possible.

"Then," he said, leaning forward; "until that time of discovery arrives you are free?"

"Practically—yes," she murmured absently.

Digby Scarlett smiled; and when he liked, his smile was very tender.

"I am glad you have told me that—Ivy," he said, in a low, intense voice; "because it gives me some excuse to tell you that I love you; and even were you a gutter-child, I would deem it an honour to call you mine. *I* would seek for no parents—only you would I want. Tell me," he went on, passionately; "is it quite hopeless?"

When he had first spoken, the girl had recoiled from him in sheer amazement, and her face in the dark gloom of the late November afternoon looked strangely pale.

"Oh, Mr. Scarlett!" she said, bewildered; "you must be mad to speak to me like that! I love no one but Jack; if ever I marry, he will be my husband!"

"Don't say that," he cried. "Listen to my love, dear! I am an older man than Jack. He is only a boy, and life holds many prizes for him; but for me, Ivy, child! the world contains only your fair, sweet flower self!"

"Don't speak to me like that!" she said, shrinking from him fearfully. "You are nothing to me; never can be anything; only Jack, I love, and hope to marry some day!"

He opened the gate and came towards her, his passion carrying him beyond the bounds of prudence.

"You shall love *me!* I shall supplant that boy's image from your mind!" he said hoarsely, and seizing hold of her, he attempted to draw her to him. "Kiss me—Ivy—darling—kiss me!"

She struggled in his arms like a bird newly snared!

"Jack! Jack!" she cried faintly, then, as Digby Scarlett was about to press his lips to hers, he was suddenly and effectually silenced by a well-directed blow from a strong young fist, that laid him full length on the gravel path.

"Jack! oh, Jack!" cried the girl again; but this time her cry was of joy, not fear; for her lover had come at her call.

"Who is the man?" he said hotly. "I only saw you, my darling, and the back of the brute's head."

Digby Scarlett rose slowly, and as Jack Maitland saw his face, he fell back with a cry of amazement. "You, my guest!" he murmured. "Scarlett, why have you betrayed my trust in human nature like this?" And the pain in the boy's voice made the elder man wince.

"I am sorry this has occurred," he said speaking thickly. "I understood from Miss Strange that she was not engaged to you, and I asked her to—to marry me, thinking that she was free."

"You knew I loved her!" said Jack passionately. "You were my friend—and I confided my feelings to you; then you take advantage of my absence to try and win her from me!"

Digby Scarlett shrugged his shoulders. "When you are my age, Maitland, such terms as 'friendship' and 'honour' will play second fiddle to the object a man means to win! I fell in love with Miss Strange, and, base as it may seem, my friendship for you faded in proportion to the strength of my love for her."

He paused, and his hand went up to his brow, where a red bruise was beginning to throb.

"I offer Miss Strange my apologies for frightening her. It shall not occur again! And you"—he turned to Jack, speaking in a clear, staccato voice; "you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have knocked down a man old enough to be your father!"

Jack whispered a few words to the trembling girl beside him, who glided into the lodge, leaving the two men alone.

"I will try to forget what has happened," Jack said, in his honest,

Digitized by Google

manly way. "The whole affair is regrettable, and I feel that perhaps I was wrong to have left her so much alone lately. I am willing—if you are—to bury the hatchet!" He put out his hand, with a grave civility foreign to his usual debonair style. After a moment's hesitation Digby Scarlett touched it with his own.

"Done, Maitland!" he cried with a harsh laugh. "I will do my best to win back the confidence there was once between us. I will go to London to-morrow—perhaps, when I return we shall all be the same."

"I hope so," said Jack quietly. Had he not been instrumental in bringing this man to his father's house, he would have cut his hand off rather than held it out in a mockery of friendship to the man who had attempted to steal his lover from him!

With a few brief platitudes they separated, and when Digby Scarlett was by himself, he turned in the direction of Maitland Manor and the lodge. "I will make you pay for this, you young hound, as I made the other pay for his blow years ago!"

With a face distorted by passion, he shook his fist at the twinkling lights of the Manor, and a rasping laugh came from his lips:

"*You* shall pay for each blow! I hold all the strings in my hand, and when I pull them the dance will begin!"

The following day a telegram came from London calling the guest of the Manor away.

"I am almost ashamed to say how long I have trespassed upon your kindness and hospitality," he said genially. "And I shall never be able to repay it."

"Oh, come, Scarlett!" laughed the Squire; "we shall see you again, I hope. You are not going to let London swallow you up?"

Lady Maitland raised her eyes and fixed them on the guest she both hated and feared, waiting for his reply.

"Hardly," he replied. "I made arrangements yesterday to take the 'Rest' on a short lease; so the next time we meet it will be as neighbours; and I hope"—he turned to his hostess—"that Lady Maitland will honour me by giving a house-warming for a lonely bachelor!"

Their eyes met in a swift challenge, but Sir Trevor's wife smiled graciously, and said: "Certainly, Mr. Scarlett, I shall be very happy to help you."

The *adieux* were made—Jack was unaccountably absent when the guest drove off—and in a few hours time, Digby Scarlett found himself once more in London.

He went to a hotel instead of the club; and the next morning took a hansom and directed the driver to an address in a fashionable part of the West End, where apartments were let in the season.

The streets were murky and full, and a shabby-looking man following the hansom was unnoticed.

Digby Scarlett dismissed the cab, then slowly went up the steps and rang the bell.

"Is your mistress in?" he asked, when a trim maid opened the door.

"Yes, sir; will you walk in?" And she showed him into a handsomely-furnished room on the first-floor.

He looked round grimly. "Luck favours me to-day. I hardly expected to find the woman here, after all these years. I shall soon find out if she is the same one. I am glad I kept the address."

"Is it for apartments you have come, sir?" said a voice behind him, and, turning, he saw the landlady—a plump, grey-headed woman, with a kindly face, wrinkled like an apple, and a dignified manner.

He bowed. "Yes; or, rather, I have ventured to call especially to ask you about a lady who stayed with you some years ago. I am—her brother, just returned from America, and wish to trace her."

The woman frowned thoughtfully. "Well, sir, I have had many ladies staying with me since I began to let the rooms these last twenty years." Digby Scarlett smiled; then it might be the same woman after all.

"Unfortunately, madam," he said, "I am afraid you will remember only too well, when I tell you that my sister's name was Mrs. 'Grant.' She was here on her honeymoon, and a very sad thing happened to her husband. Perhaps you remember now?"

"Mrs. Grant, sir," she exclaimed quickly. "Oh, that poor, young thing! I shall never forget her as long as I live! That was an awful time for her!"

He nodded his head. "It was. What I wished to ask you was, how long she stayed with you—afterwards?"

"I don't remember exactly, sir. She was very ill, poor child. When she got better she went away with her little baby and her maid."

"Ah!" Digby Scarlett murmured thoughtfully. "Did she tell you where she was going?"

The woman shook her head. "No, sir. All I know is that they went to Southampton. After that, I never heard any more."

He took up his hat. "Then I won't trespass upon your time any longer, Mrs.—er——"

"Phillpot, sir!"

"Ah!" he murmured thoughtfully. "That is all I think I need ask you. By-the-way, what was the name of the maid?"

She shook her head. "I don't remember, sir. I know Mrs. Grant depended on her a lot."

Digby Scarlett thanked her, looked at the rooms, then left, after profuse apologies for detaining her so long. As he settled back in the hansom that was taking him to his hotel, he smiled with satisfaction. "I don't fancy I need look any further for proof. I know all I want to know."

As he went into the vestibule of the hotel, he did not notice a pair of hungry, burning eyes that followed him—the eyes of the shabby man who had run all the way to West Kensington behind his hansom, and followed him back again! There was a smile of grim determination on the worn face of the man as he turned from the hotel, and disappeared into the darkness with swift feet.

Digby Scarlett spent the day after his visit to West Kensington in choosing bric-a-brac for his new home, the "Rest," and when he returned to his hotel he felt tired and played out. As he was crossing the hall to make inquiries for letters, one of the attendants stopped him:

"If you please, sir, there is a gentleman waiting to see you. I showed 'im into your sitting-room; as 'e would wait."

"Did he leave a name?"

"No, sir. 'E said you would need no introduction."

The face of the man who listened changed colour slightly, and his lip trembled as he walked slowly up the wide staircase. Then he laughed. "I must be seeing phantoms to-night! There are hundreds of men who may want to speak to me. Why should I imagine such an impossibility?"

He paused suddenly and called the man to him. "Did you notice what the gentleman was like?"

"He was quite old, sir," replied the servant; "very bright eyes, and snow-white 'air."

Digby Scarlett laughed softly, as he turned away. "One of the estate people, I suppose, come to me to sign the papers about the 'Rest.'"

He went into his bedroom—it was adjoining his sitting-room—and unlocking his bag, took out a small, steel thing, which he slipped into his pocket. "One never knows," he muttered. "It may be useful."

He went to the door of his sitting-room, and, softly turning the handle, walked in. As he did so, a figure rose from a chair, and came forward slowly.

Then Digby Scarlett's fingers touched lightly the trigger of the "thing" in his pocket.

(Another long instalment next week.)

Every Lady who wants . . .

A HUSBAND

should get a copy of this week's

PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

Digitized by Google

Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN. FIRST PRIZE, £25.	CASH DOWN. SECOND PRIZE, £10.	CASH DOWN. THIRD PRIZE, £5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*

And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

• • • • • • •

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink), in the space left for that purpose, the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:
ABGHIIMMNR... Birmingham.

THIRD LIST.

25. EEERTX	**31. AEGILMNNOT** .....
26. BGHINORT	**32. AEIKLLLO** .....
27. ACHINORSW	**33. ADDLLNNOU** .....
28. ACEILLRS	**34. EEFINNRSSV** .....
29. DEEFGHORR	**35. ABILRSSUY** .....
30. BDERY	**36. DEEEIMNRRW** .....

Name..... Address.....

.....

Digitized by Google

Married in Haste.

Telling of a Strange Match that had a Happy Ending.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

It was perfectly plain that there was going to be a wedding in the church of St. Simon—a large and imposing edifice in a well-known London district.

Th passers-by gathered this much from the fact that a strip of red carpet covered the steps from the church door to the pavement, and from the further fact that the clerk hovered uneasily before the main entrance to the building, quite evidently waiting for the wedding party.

Most men and all women love a wedding, therefore those who had time to spare, and no urgent business to do, took up their positions at the foot of the steps and waited patiently to obtain a glimpse of the smart folks they felt certain they would presently see.

Some of the bolder spirits even went further, and walked up the steps into the church itself, and, finding they were unmolested by the clerk, went with increased boldness up the nave and seated themselves in the pews that gaped invitingly empty for all comers.

It was strange, but no wedding guests filled any of the seats; the footsteps of these who had come into the church half afraid of their own boldness rang loudly round an empty building; and their eyes looked in vain for any of the ordinary signs of a brilliant sight.

Not a soul was to be seen, save the anxious-looking clerk, whose face seemed each moment to put on a fresh expression of care, and the curate who stood at the vestry door waiting to come forward and do his part in the ceremony.

"Oh! it's just going to be a sort of hole-in-a-corner wedding," one girl whispered to another. "I daresay the bride will simply be in her travelling dress, and not worth looking at. I wish now I hadn't come in!"

"Well! there certainly isn't going to be anything *smart*; I haven't seen a single soul who could by any stretch of imagination be called a *guest*, and—oh! my dear, who is that?" The chattering young lady broke off her sentence to end it with this abrupt question, as a strange and most incongruous figure passed through the church door and slouched slowly towards the chancel steps.

It was the figure of a man, whose downbent head and nervously twitching hands told of the shame and discomfort he was enduring. His face might once have been handsome, but want, misery—possibly even sin, had carved deep lines upon it.

His clothes were shabby to the point of raggedness; indeed, his coat was torn in many places, so that the lining showed through, and his boots were not only much the worse for wear, they were, practically, unwearable.

He wore no collar, his coat was buttoned to his chest, and a sorrier specimen of the human race could scarcely have been dreamt of than the miserable being who slouched up to the chancel steps, watched suspiciously and scornfully by the clerk, curiously by the onlookers, and with something of horror by the curate, who stepped quickly from his place and whispered a few words to the intruder.

The answer must have satisfied him, for he withdrew to the vestry door once more, but the puzzled horror on his face deepened, and he never removed his eyes from that strange, incongruous figure standing with drooping head and wretched mien beside the chancel rails.

"Who is he?" "What is he doing here?" "What *does* it mean?"

The questions buzzed to and fro amongst the congregation which, in the last few minutes, had grown imperceptibly larger. But no answer came to their questionings, and curiosity was reaching the point of fever-heat when the sound of a carriage stopping at the big west doors drew all eyes in that direction, and then only the sacredness of the building prevented the utterance of a loud exclamation of surprise from those who watched.

Of surprise—and of admiration—for, moving with stately steps across the threshold, their astonished eyes saw a tall and graceful woman, about whose shapely form fell the rich folds of a white satin gown, over whose head fell a veil of the most costly lace.

Her face was as white as the gown she wore, but its rare and exquisite beauty made those who saw it hold their breath for a second; whilst its expression of infinite sadness, of frozen horror, gave them a sudden sensation of taking part in some awful unknown catastrophe.

The bride's hand rested lightly on the arm of an old man, about whose thin lips an evil smile hovered, whose shifting, snake-like eyes shone with a baneful light—a light that became wickedly triumphant when he finally placed the beautiful woman in white by the side of the miserable, ragged form at the chancel rails, and drew back a pace himself, smiling still.

"She is going to *marry* him. He is the *bridegroom*," horrified whispers arose on every hand, and the face of the curate as he moved mechanically down from the vestry wore a look of disgusted amazement reflected on many another countenance.

The miserable bridegroom straightened himself a little as the opening words of the marriage service rang through the church, and his eyes lighted themselves deprecatingly towards the beautiful woman beside him. But no feature of her face moved, her eyes seemed fixed on vacancy; she might have have been an automaton for all the sign she gave of life or interest in the proceedings.

Her lips framed the words the clergyman bade her say, but the words themselves sounded dead and meaningless; she held out her hand to her bridegroom when she was told to do so, but it was like the hand of a dead woman.

Never once did her eyes glance in the direction of the man who was swearing to love and cherish her till Death should part them; only once did she give the slightest sign that she was a breathing, liying human being.

When the ring was placed upon her finger, those nearest her could see that a long shiver ran through her from head to foot, but after that she remained like a statue until the end of the service.

To those who looked on it was the most strange, the most painful ceremony they had ever witnessed, and a breathless longing to see the *dénouement*—to know more of the why and wherefore of the extraordinary proceedings led the whole congregation to go to the church door, in order to watch the driving away of the most incongruous couple they had ever seen joined together in holy matrimony.

Digitized by Google

If their curiosity was not satisfied, it was, at least, whetted tenfold.

Side by side the bride and bridegroom walked down the steps—side by side, but no more. Her hand did not rest upon his arm, she did not look towards him, and his head was bent downwards more shamefacedly than before.

The carriage waited beside the kerb—a carriage and pair, whose footman stood decorously holding the door open, his face expressing nothing but the absolute passivity of a well-trained servant.

The old man with the evil face, who had given the bride away, followed the newly-wedded pair down the steps, but at a discreet distance, and it was noticed that his repulsive countenance was still wreathed in smiles.

At the foot of the steps the bride paused, and a faint flush dyed the deadly whiteness of her face, as she suddenly held out her right hand towards the man so lately made her husband.

"Take this," she whispered, her words inaudible to those standing near, "I have done—as I said—take this—and let me never—see your face again."

From her hand to his something passed, and those nearest declared it was a heavy purse, and that for an instant the man had hesitated, as though intending to refuse it. Then his fingers closed over it, an extraordinary expression passed over his face—an expression whether of passionate love or bitter hate it was impossible to say.

He took one quick step towards his bride, and in a voice as low as hers had been, but vibrating with a force and passion hers had lacked, he murmured:

"You shall never see my face till I am fit to claim——"

His sentence remained unended. She drew herself away from him, and her eyes swept over his wretched figure with scathing scorn in their depths.

"Let me pass," she said slowly and clearly, and, drawing herself to her full height, she brushed past him with a superb gesture of disdain, and entered her carriage.

"Home," she said to the footman. The door was banged to, the footman sprang upon the box, the carriage drove quickly away, leaving the bridegroom and the old man with the evil face standing side by side upon the pavement.

"This is the best day's work you ever did," the old man said with a sneer; "and this would not have been done, except for me."

"Except for *you*!" The other's face grew livid, his eyes burnt fiercely. "You have ruined her life as well as mine; and, see here, I will not touch her money—not a farthing—not a halfpenny of it! She—is an angel of light—an angel of light, I tell you, and some day—some day——"

A low, mocking laugh from the old man checked his utterance. With an oath he flung the purse he held at the mocker's feet, and repeating in a low voice:

"Some day—you will see!" He broke his way through the crowd, and hurried rapidly down the street till he was lost to sight.

The old man stooped, and his laugh rang out again, as he picked up the fallen purse.

"I shall see, shall I, my noble son? A fool for your pains, as usual, Maurice Dranmore—a fool for your pains."

Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, and that snake-like smile hovering round his lips, he jumped into a waiting cab, and was driven rapidly away. The younger man wasted no time in escaping from the gaze of the gaping crowd.

* * * * * * *

In the great house which was the home of Dorothy Swayne, the heiress, there was an unusual stir and bustle; much shaking of the head, and many whisperings.

For many days rumour had been ripe that their beloved mistress was going to be married, but an atmosphere of mystery and strangeness had hung round all these rumours, and no one had been able to ascertain the exact truth upon the subject.

With the exception of a scapegrace brother, Miss Swayne had no near relations, nor anyone to call her to account for her actions; but her faithful servants had seen, with growing uneasiness, that their young mistress was in trouble—terrible, deadly trouble—and her white face and anguished eyes gave them many a heartache.

And now, at last, a climax had come.

Arrayed in bridal white, she had this morning driven away in her own carriage, accompanied by a certain Mr. Dranmore, whom, they all knew, she hated and despised, an old man who had been her father's friend, but never hers.

The whole household then was agog with excitement—an excitement but little diminished when, barely an hour after her departure, Miss Swayne returned—alone.

"Tell all the servants I wish to speak to them in the library," she said to the butler, as she swept across the hall in her trailing white draperies—her face as white as they—"bring them all there at once." And when her astonished household hastily obeyed her summons they found her standing beside the library table, stately and tall as a great white lily, her face calm and still as though carved in stone.

"I wish to tell you," she said steadily, "that I have been married this morning." All eyes stole furtively to the plain gold ring on her left hand—a gasp of intense surprise burst from all lips, "I have been married to Mr. Dranmore's son—Mr. Maurice Dranmore."

Amazement, horror, dismay chased each other over every face in the room, but the quiet voice went on: "But, excepting that I have changed my name, nothing else will be changed. I shall live here as before—alone. I have parted with—my husband on the church steps. I do not expect ever to see him again. I—married him for a reason of great importance; he is my husband in name only."

That was all! The household learnt no more, and surmise and conjecture ran riot in housekeeper's room and servants' hall.

"Why—why—why had their mistress done this thing?" That was the perpetual question.

"Why?"

On that same afternoon the newly-made wife—Dorothy Dranmore—her white robes removed and hidden away from her sight as she hoped for ever, dressed herself in the simplest of black gowns, and went out alone. Her destination was very far indeed from her own stately mansion, and the cabman who drove her thither lifted his eyebrows in surprise when she bade him stop at last before a mean house in a yet meaner street.

"Wait for me," she said, "I shall not be long;" and she passed through the open door of the building and up a flight of broken, rickety stairs.

At the very top she paused, and, drawing a long breath, knocked on the door of a room—entering it immediately.

Digitized by Google

Beside the table in the centre sat a young man, his head buried in his hands—his white face indicative of the utmost dejection.

At the sound of the opening door he started violently and shivered from head to foot—but when he saw the tall, beautiful woman come in alone he rose quickly to his feet with the low ejaculation,

"Sis? Is it you? Why have you come to my beastly hiding-place? Why?"

She put her hand gently on his arm, and some of the frozen misery that had been in her face all day died out of it.

"I have come," she said, "to—bring you this—to tell you it is all right—that you are a free man—and safe." And as she spoke she handed to him a slip of paper.

"A free man? Safe? All right." He repeated her words heavily, the colour coming and going on his fair, weak face. "What do you mean? You were always cleverer than I, sis. You oughtn't to have had such a wretched fool for a brother."

"Hush, dear." Her voice was very gentle. "Read that paper. See—it is all right;" and she unfolded the paper she had given him, and held it before his eyes. He looked at it vacantly for a moment, then, suddenly a light leapt into his face.

"I—I can't understand!" he exclaimed brokenly, "It—it seems plain enough, but I can't understand. That's old Dranmore's writing,—but—but he's as hard as nails—they say he never forgives, and—and Dorothy I did forge his name—it's no use pretending I didn't. I forged—and—embezzled. Being his confidential clerk made it so—so jolly easy,—and the temptation was more than I could stand." He looked weakly up at his sister, and her lips quivered.

"But if you wanted money why not have come to me? My godfather gave me wealth,—and—you know, Dick,—you *know* I would have given you all you needed."

The young man hung his head.

"It—it was racing debts, sis,—gambling debts that you would have hated. I—I could not bear to let you know,—and old Dranmore gave so much into my hands that—the temptation was too much. I meant to pay him back,—but I knew he would never forgive if he once found out,—and I can't understand—this."

He indicated the paper he held, on which were written the words:

"On my most solemn word of honour I swear that I will not prosecute Richard Swayne, nor in any way attempt to punish him for forgery and embezzlement. This I swear to in recognition of Dorothy Swayne's action on my son's behalf.

"Signed, Joseph Dranmore."

"What have you done for old Dranmore's son?" Dorothy's brother looked up into her face with bewildered eyes.

"I—have married him," she said shortly.

"*Married* him? Why—his father had cast him off; he had pretty well gone to the dogs; he was—in the workhouse or something. You *can't* have married him, sis; why did you do it? Why did——"

"I did it for you," she answered gravely. "Hush—listen—try to understand, Dick. Mr. Dranmore came to tell me of what—you had done; he threatened the utmost penalty the law could inflict—and I pleaded for you in vain. Then—he is a fiend, Dick—an utter fiend—he laughed suddenly, and said he would let you off, pardon you absolutely—on one condition. If I would agree to marry his son—Maurice Dranmore—you should be free."

"Why did you not tell me? I would never have let you sacrifice yourself," the young man exclaimed indignantly.

A sorrowful look overspread his sister's face. How could she tell him that with her knowledge of his innately weak character? She had been certain that penal servitude would have meant his utter ruin.

"I—told no one," she said gently, "Mr. Dranmore stipulated that I should marry his son *as he was*, dressed in his old clothes, exactly in the miserable condition in which he seems to have been living. He sank to be a sort of cab tout I think—he looks the most utterly wretched being." Her face grew white as she remembered that it was her husband of whom she spoke, and she paused for a moment—then went on bravely.

"I was to be in ordinary bridal dress—that was part of the bond—and I was to give the man money when I had married him—but the marriage was an absolute necessity. Without that Mr. Dranmore entirely refused to forgive you. I—I have done it, Dick. I have married Maurice Dranmore. See—that is his ring upon my finger. I—am—his—wife. We parted at the church door, and God grant, oh! God grant I may never see his face again."

Her brother looked at her in speechless wonder, a gratitude that was beyond words lighting up his face.

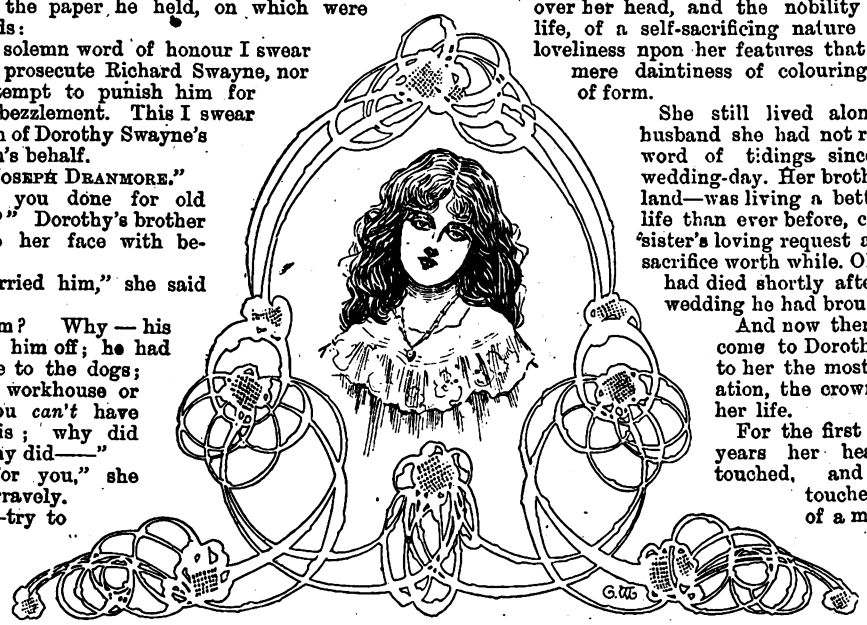
"No—don't thank me," she said, a little sob breaking her voice. "I—did what I thought was right, and now, Dick—oh! Dick, try to make my sacrifice worth while. Be a good man and a strong one. Let me know that my action was not in vain. Make my sacrifice worth while!"

* * * * * *

Ten years had slipped away since Dorothy Swayne had, under such unwonted circumstances, married Maurice Dranmore.

The nine days' wonder of it had quickly subsided, and Dorothy's world had learnt to look upon her as a married lady—or rather perhaps as a widow.

If she had been beautiful at twenty-five, she was far more beautiful now that thirty-five summers had passed over her head, and the nobility of an unselfish life, of a self-sacrificing nature had stamped a loveliness upon her features that was far beyond mere daintiness of colouring or the beauty of form.



She still lived alone, and of her husband she had not received a single word of tidings since that strange wedding-day. Her brother—in a distant land—was living a better and manlier life than ever before, carrying out his sister's loving request and making her sacrifice worth while. Old Mr. Dranmore had died shortly after the infamous wedding he had brought about.

And now there had suddenly come to Dorothy what seemed to her the most terrible temptation, the crowning anguish of her life.

For the first time in all the years her heart had been touched, and more than touched by the homage of a man who for the last few months had been constantly at her sdie.

Digitized by Google

"From the colonies," was vaguely said of him, but his name—Tom Smith—gave very little clue as to his identity or antecedents. Only Dorothy knew that she cared neither who nor what he was; that the sound of his footstep could set her pulses throbbing; that his deep voice would send a thrill through her heart; that the glance of his dark eyes made her instinctively lower her own.

The strength of her own feelings terrified her; but strive as she would, she could not wholly quench the love that was springing up in her own heart in answer to the love that looked out of the stranger's eyes.

"I must tell him the truth," she said to herself one evening, wringing her hands together; "he thinks I am a widow—and free; I must tell him the truth—and—break my own heart!"

Two hours later she was seated by his side in the conservatory of a house of mutual friends, and in the fragrant stillness it seemed to her that she could hear all her pulses throbbing whilst his gaze scanned her face.

"I—I have something to tell you," she said abruptly, feeling that she must speak at once and end the agony she endured. "I—I——"

"And I have something to tell *you*," he broke in quickly, "something which I have wanted to tell you for days, for weeks, for——"

"Wait, wait," she cried, springing to her feet; "you must hear me first. I ought to have spoken before; it was wrong of me. I have been letting you be my friend under false pretences,—I—am not what I seem; I am a married woman, and my husband is still alive."

She panted out the words breathlessly, then waited in a very anguish of despair for his answer, not daring to lift her eyes to his face; longing, yet dreading to hear his voice. When she heard it at last its tenderness sent a long shiver through her frame.

"And if you were free—could you have—cared for *me?*"

"Ah! don't," she exclaimed; "don't tempt me—don't *hurt* me, it——"

"*Hurt you?*" His arms went suddenly round her, she was drawn close against his breast, his kisses rained on her face. "Hurt you—my wife—my wife!"

"Oh! *don't*," she sobbed, struggling a little in his arms, but he still held her closely, whispering:

"Your husband is alive, my sweet; he is here—here—here! My name is Maurice Dranmore, not Tom Smith. When I married you—for your brother's sake, and utterly against my will—I was not worthy to kiss your feet. But your angel face, your heavenly goodness awoke what good there was in me.

"I have worked, and toiled, and struggled to be fit for you, and in all the long, long years I have thought of you—only you—and loved you more every day. And now—I have come to ask you to take me, truly and in earnest, 'till Death us do part,'—my wife!"

The face that Dorothy lifted to his was wet with tears, but what he saw there satisfied him, for a smile flashed into his eyes—"Married in haste, sweetheart," he murmured, "but with God's good help I will see to it that you do not repent at leisure."

L. G. Moberley.

Hotel Clerk: "This is a bad half-crown." Commercial: "All right; I had a bad night."

There are young men who cannot hold a skein of wool for their mothers without wincing, but who will hold between eight and nine stone of a neighbouring family for the best part of the evening with a patience and docility that are certainly phenomenal.

A small landed proprietor was taking a drive with his daughter and his intended son-in-law for the purpose of showing the latter round the estate. The coachman drove at a smart pace. "John," whispered his master in his ear, "don't drive so fast, the estate will look so small."

Your Editor Chats.

All attempts in the "Buried Stations" Competition should reach this office not later than by first post on Thursday (June 18th). Envelopes must be addressed according to the instructions given last week.

Another list of letters in the Juggled Letters Competition will be found on page 777. Competitors are asked to read the conditions carefully; this will prevent their raising unnecessary queries. No questions regarding the competition will be answered either personally or through the post, but if any point of general interest is raised it will be dealt with in this column.

A comprehensive summary of the chapters of our new serial, "The Bond Between," is published on the first page, so that new readers can start it now. I would certainly recommend anyone who has not begun to read it to do so without further delay.

Any single or widowed lady among my readers—between the ages of seventeen and seventy—who is in want of a husband, should get a copy of this week's *Pearson's Weekly*, in which she will see full particulars as to how she can win Mr. P. Doubleyou, who is being offered as a prize. The conditions are not very hard to fulfil. In addition to a husband the fortunate winner will have her wedding dress and complete trousseau provided for her by *Pearson's Weekly*, All expenses attached to the wedding itself and a month's honeymoon will also be paid. Ladies should get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* now and see what they have to do.

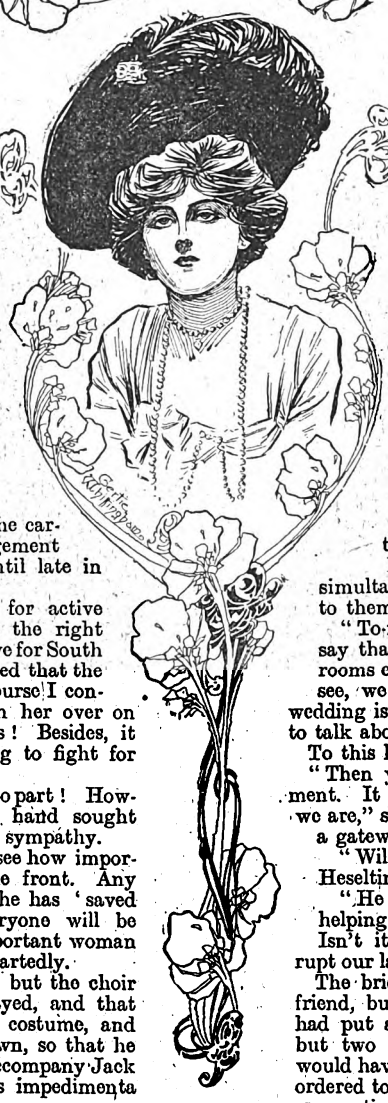
I hope my readers have not overlooked my request that they should inclose some stamps for the Fresh Air Fund with their attempts in the "Buried Stations" Competition. If each competitor sends in only two or three stamps it will mean a considerable increase to the Fund. Only ninepence is required to give one child a happy day. All the expenses of management are borne equally by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd. and the Ragged School Union, and every penny of the money subscribed by readers goes in paying the expenses of the children's own outings.

Some readers may perhaps like to get up an entertainment, hold a bazaar, or do something else by which to raise money for the Fund if they cannot afford to give out of their own pockets as much as they would wish. Collecting forms will be sent on application to anyone who desires them. All amounts will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*, and should be sent to the Hon. Sec. Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to whom all communications regarding the Fund should be addressed.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

ASSISTING AT A HOLOCAUST.



Telling of a Girl's Disillusionment.

"So sweet of you to come, darling," and Ada Sutton threw her arms round the neck of her friend as she stepped from the train to the platform.

"Which end is the luggage in? Here, Williams," and she beckoned the footman towards her, "see to Miss Heseltine's boxes. Come along!" and she linked her arm within that of her schoolday companion, giving her a hug as she did so.

"But how sudden it is!" began Mary Heseltine as soon as they were seated in the carriage. "When you told me of the engagement you said the marriage would not be until late in the year."

"Yes, but Jack has been called up for active service. I don't know whether that is the right expression, but at all events he has to leave for South Africa within the next few days. He asked that the marriage might take place at once. Of course I consented. My mother objected, but I won her over on the question of expense. See what it saves! Besides, it is my duty to marry him when he is going to fight for his country!"

"Oh, Ada, how heartbreaking it will be to part! However will you say 'good-bye'?" Her hand sought that of her friend and gripped it in warm sympathy.

"Yes, that will have to be faced, but see how important I shall be, having a husband at the front. Any day I may open the paper and find that he has 'saved the situation,' or got the V.C. Everyone will be coming to see me. I shall be the most important woman in Broadmere!" She rattled on light-heartedly.

"The wedding will be as quiet as quiet, but the choir will be there, the 'Wedding March' played, and that kind of thing. I shall wear a travelling costume, and the short honeymoon will be spent in town, so that he can start at a moment's notice. I shall accompany Jack round the stores while he is getting his impedimenta together. Isn't it exciting?"

Mary Heseltine looked at the bright girl who took things so lightly. She was an emotional little creature with light, fluffy hair, very affectionate, but of no depth of character. It pained her to think that she should regard so serious a matter in the light her words implied.

"Of course, you always promised that you would be my bridesmaid," she continued, "so I wrote to you at once. His sister will be the other. I don't think you will like her—I don't, she is always so grave. Jack calls me optimistic. I suppose she is pessimistic—is that the word? But I am monopolising the conversation. Have you no news, Mary? When are you going to be married?"

Mary Heseltine's face reddened with a happy, rosy blush, and the light of joy was in her eyes instantly, as she turned them on her friend with a meaning glance.

"Oh, Mary!" cried her friend excitedly. "Is it——"

She nodded quickly.

"Bless you!" exclaimed her companion. "I am so pleased. Tell me all about it. No, there is not time now, for we are nearly home, but to-night we shall have a long, long talk. Your room is next to mine. I arranged that just so that we might have a regular old school night again, like the good old times. Do you remember the little bedroom we shared at St. Fursey's?"

"And how we got impositions for sitting up late?" put in the other.

The two girls laughed merrily over their escapades. "What a lot we shall have to talk about!" they exclaimed simultaneously, as the old memories came back to them instinct with life.

"To-night, as soon as dinner is over, I will say that you look tired, then we can get to our rooms early," suggested the bride-elect. "You see, we shall have no time to-morrow, for the wedding is at eleven o'clock, and there is so much to talk about."

To this her friend readily consented.

"Then you can tell me all about your engagement. It will be so nice to talk over the fire. Here we are," she broke off, as the carriage swept through a gateway into an avenue of trees.

"Will he be here to-night?" inquired Mary Heseltine.

"He? No. He is at the barracks to-day, helping to get things ready for the start. Isn't it fortunate? There is nothing to interrupt our last evening together."

The bridesmaid smiled. She was fond of her friend, but her thoughts went to the man who had put a half hoop diamond ring on her finger but two days ago. She wondered whether she would have talked so lightly if her lover had been ordered to South Africa. She smiled at the mere suggestion, and thanked Providence that Bertie Crowhall was a civilian, and not likely to be ordered away on the eve of his wedding.

As arranged, the two girls retired early that night. Very soon after going up there was a tap at Ada's door, and her friend entered in her dressing-gown, eager to exchange confidences in regard to their respective lovers.

"What a lovely fire! Why, Ada, you will be roasted!"

"Welcome to the Holocaust!" she replied.

"A what?" inquired her friend.

"A holocaust—that is the word, I know, for I made sure by looking in the dictionary."

"Who is the victim?" she laughingly asked as she drew a chair up to the fire.

"That is yet to be disclosed. In fact, there are awful disclosures to be made, but to-night closes Act I. in my life."

By her side was a box, which she proceeded to unlock with an assumed air of mystery.

"Now we shall have a burning!" she exclaimed as she

Digitized by Google

threw back the lid, disclosing the contents to Mary's gaze. "We will take them in order," she began, picking up a sprig of white heather. "It has kept remarkably well. I met him in the Highlands two years ago, and he gave me that at parting. He was a nice young fellow, but too dour, as the Scottish call it, with a regular Highlander's temper.

"He proposed to me on Mount Nevis—Ben Nevis I mean—and I half accepted him. Indeed we were almost engaged, but he went abroad and—well there is no fun in being engaged to a man you never see. A man abroad is always more or less a myth—people don't believe in them. Here are some of his letters. Letters and white heather into the fire you go," and she dropped a little bundle into the flames.

"You seem to have a lot of letters in that box," remarked the other girl.

"Yes there must be some hundreds. There are some I received when I was at St. Fursey's with you and others so late as last week, but all must be burnt to-night. Do you remember Tom Ashe, the vicar's son? He gave me that little silver whistle when I was at school. We wrote stocks of letters to each other. Poor Tom, he was killed somewhere in India—Afghanistan, or I believe I should have married him. He sent me that photograph from Delhi, and those flowers from Simla."

She went on with her history, steadily dropping various keepsakes and mementoes among the glowing coals, while her friend sat and listened.

"Don't you think this is rather horrid, telling me all about these men?" said Mary Heseltine at length. "Their inmost thoughts appear to me to be in a way sacred, and some of the writers are dead."

"You wretched moralist. Are you not interested?"

"Yes, certainly, but it seems mean, somehow, to tell another of their love affairs."

"Of course, Mary. I am only telling you, besides I am destroying all clues, as they say in the penny dreadfuls. You are my confessor—we all need one at times."

"Go on then," smiled her friend.

"I believe you are impatient to tell me your affair—own up," she said, with mock sternness.

"No, my news can wait. It's not so important as all that."

"Very well, then, we will go on. Mind, I am dying to hear all about your engagement, but we must do one thing at a time, and my confession is not yet made. This little Prayer-book in silver and ivory was given to me by a former curate here. He was really a good fellow, but so awfully conscientious that I felt a great sinner in his presence. It was a dull time—just after I left school. I took up with church work. We were great friends until——"

"Don't burn the Prayer-book. It seems sacrilege," interrupted the maid of honour, putting out her hand in protest.

"Very well, if you will take it, but I cannot retain it in my possession. Tear out the flyleaf; we will at least burn that. I was saying he went off to London, and is working somewhere in the slums now. Here is the last note he ever wrote me. I am afraid I treated him badly, but he was really too good, and, foolish man, he thought I was a saint. Men are stupid where we are concerned."

She paused as she gazed into her treasure box at the mixed collection of photographs, faded flowers, locks of hair, buttons of different regiments and such like.

"I call them the broken fragments of love's dream."

"Or memorials of my flirtations," suggested Mary.

"Oh, I was really in earnest with a number of these men. I wonder why they loved me," she mused. "But you must all go the same way. It will never do to begin married life with all these in my possession. I wonder what Jack would say if he knew."

She hastily collected a number of photographs.

Suddenly her companion, who was looking over her shoulder into the box, gave a start, and with an effort suppressed a cry.

"Good Heavens, Mary! What a fright you gave me. Whatever is the matter?" asked the bride of the morrow.

"I am cold." Her lips were white, and she spoke slowly.

"Why, you are shivering; those bundles of letters are putting the fire out—they actually refuse to burn. Come nearer. I will put some more coal on. Now you will be all right with this shawl round you. That journey of yours must have been very trying."

She was so intent on the box that she did not notice the dark shadows that had come over the eyes of her friend, or that she still shivered in spite of the wrap.

Poor Mary Heseltine. The box had proved fatal to her, there being turned out for the holocaust was a package of lettersf rom the man she loved. She knew the handwriting too well to be mistaken, besides there were various pictures of his.

Her first impulse was to demand an explanation from Ada. The ink looked as fresh as if it had been written the day before, but her face was innocent of deception.

"How long is it since he was one of them?" she asked with an effort that cost her a great deal.

Still her friend did not notice the change in her voice, and answered casually. "Oh, he held on right up to the last. That reminds me, there is a note from him in my sealskin pocket in which he speaks about being heart-broken, the stars going out, or the moon, I forget which—it may be the sun, and that sort of thing. She went to a wardrobe in search of the missing epistle.

"How fortunate it was that I thought of it," she added. "Yes"—opening it—"this is dated the third and to-day is the eighth. Pretty near, isn't it? But he would not take 'No' for answer, and sent this letter."

Mary thought of one now in her own pocket from the same man that she had read and re-read many times that day.

"Yes, young Crowhall was very persistent. Do you know he actually proposed again when he knew that I was engaged to Jack. When I snubbed him he sent me this note," and she took another from the box. "This came three days ago, from which it would appear he intended to warm up some old broth. You know him. Don't you remember at Lady Grandtown's ball he was with my brother Dick, and you remarked that he was very nice looking?"

Mary Heseltine nodded. She was watching the flames curling about the blackened mass of correspondence that held out so long against annihilation. Her hands were clasped about her knees and she was thinking.

"Wouldn't Bertie Crowhall do for you?" asked her friend laughingly.

She shook her head sadly. "Not now," she replied quickly.

"Oh, I was forgetting. Of course you must tell me all about your engagement, dear. How selfish I am—all this time I have been thinking about myself. Now into the fire with the remainder of love's fragments," and she tumbled the relics into the flames, giving the box a bang to clear out the dust. "That is over. Now, dear, tell me about your romance."

"There is nothing to tell, Ada. You know I was always fond of a joke. There is no engagement."

Athol Forbes.

Digitized by Google

Carrots and Turnips.

The Romance of a Red-haired Girl.

"Carrots!"

The young girl thus appealed to turned her laughing brown eyes to her brother, who, with his mouth half-full of bread and butter, seemed determined on dividing his attention equally between his elder sister and his breakfast.

Vera Mapleson, the Squire's daughter, was a beautiful girl, but Nature had endowed her with hair of that peculiar shade which is generally known as Titian red; in ordinary lights it appeared to be red, of a bronze-red hue, but if the sun shone on its silky masses it looked like burnished gold.

Vera was lucky in so far that she made her entrance into Society when this coloured hair was in vogue, and she created quite a sensation that the men raved about her, while women rather disdainfully whispered that they could not see what gentlemen found to admire so much in that "carroty-haired Miss Mapleson!"

Her schoolboy brother, young Teddy, had given her the nickname of Carrots. Vera had been away on a month's visit, and had only returned the previous evening. The family were dawdling over breakfast this morning.

"Carrots!" Teddy repeated.

"Teddy!"

"Yes, mater, darling, what is it?"

Gentle Mrs. Mapleson tried to appear as severe as she could.

"Naughty boy, you know I do not like you to call your sister by that vulgar appellation of Carrots."

"But, mater, you know Vera does not mind; it suits her to a T. It is all very fine for the London swells who make love to her to call her hair Venetian gold and Titian red, and all that twaddle, but her hair is red and all aglow, and no mistake!"

"Eat your breakfast, sir, and stop that good-for-nothing tongue of yours," broke in Squire Mapleson from behind a sheet of the *Times*.

So Teddy obediently fell to with a schoolboy's healthy appetite.

"Well, Teddy," smiled Vera, "you seem to be full of some wonderful news; out with it, or it will certainly choke you!"

"Have you seen the new head-gardener?"

"No, how could I have seen him?"

"Well, he is a ripper! I do not know where on earth the governor unearthed him, but he is out-and-out the best fellow I have ever come across. He and I just hit it off capitally together. We are such chums!"

"Teddy, my dear boy, I do not think the gardener is exactly the sort of companion Squire Mapleson's son should choose," and again his mother shook her head.

"Mater, dearest, you do not know what a fine fellow he is, tip-top for the orchid and grape-houses, and he looks every inch as much of a gentleman as any of those London beaux who come after Carrots."

"Teddy!"

"All right, old girl. I won't mention those fellows again if it bothers you. But after breakfast you might just come with me and I'll introduce you to my friend the gardener."

"You absurd boy," laughed the Squire. "Is it likely that your sister is going to be introduced to the gardener!"

"But he is one in a thousand, he tells such tales and yarns. He can construct a boat or anything he likes, he is so clever; just now he is helping me to run up a Robinson Crusoe hut in the old chestnut tree."

"George, do you think it wise that Teddy should be so much in the society of this rough, common man?"

"Mater, he is not rough or common, he might be a prince of the blood royal!" indignantly protested Teddy.

"My dear," answered the Squire, "I do not think you need worry over Teddy, I had the highest references with this man before I engaged him!"

"Indeed, and from whom?"

"Well, from rather an unexpected quarter—from Lord Yvor."

"Lord Yvor! Why, he has not been seen or heard of for over ten years, I believe."

"Lord Yvor is living abroad, he has bought a large place in some remote part of Brittany, and this gardener who has such a splendid testimonial from him, has been in his service for many years. Wishing to return to England, and seeing my advertisement for a head-gardener, he got his master to recommend him. So you see this Phœnix of Teddy's is all right."

"Yes, and just fancy, he has travelled about such lots as Lord Yvor's confidential man, and he seems to know every part of the globe. To hear him talk is just like reading a book of thrilling adventures. Carrots, old girl, you would just rave about him!"

Vera laughed.

"Teddy, dear, I am not made of the same inflammatory stuff as you are. I do not catch fire as easily as you do!"

"Well, you ought to with that coloured hair!"

"Teddy," said the Squire, "give over cheeking your sister. You had better tell your mother and Vera the name of your precious paragon, that will take every spice of romance out of the matter."

"Oh, look here, father, that is mean of you," exclaimed the lad dolefully. "His name is the one thing about him I cannot get over, it does not suit him one bit; it ought to be Lancelot, or Percival, or——"

"Yes, but unfortunately," broke in the Squire, with a loud laugh, "it happens to be Turnips!"

"Turnips!" said Vera, "well, there is nothing like having a name to suit one's vocation. Never mind, Ted, the immortal Shakespeare has said 'What's in a name?'"

Just then the door burst open, and a lovely child entered; she was the very counterpart of Vera in a miniature way; indeed, little Flossie's rippling curls were so like in colour to her elder sister's hair that Teddy was wont to say she would have to be called Carrots the Second!

The child was soon ensconced on Vera's lap hugging her sister, and bestowing on her all the marks of her exuberant affection.

"Carrots," piped Flossie in her clear child's treble, "you must come to the stables to see my new doggie. Father gave it to me, and the gardener is looking after it for me."

"What, Flossie, are you gone on that gardener as much as Teddy is?"

"He's a darling, I love him and mean to marry him when I am grown up," the child said gravely.

Her little speech was greeted with peals of laughter from her father and brother. Mrs. Mapleson looked absolutely horrified.

"Child, you must not say such things; children should not talk about what they do not understand."

Half an hour later Vera, with Flossie clinging to her hand and Teddy hanging on her arm, bent her steps towards the stables to go and inspect the new dog. Suddenly both children relinquished hold of their sister and disappeared behind

Digitized by Google

the shrubbery, from which they promptly issued triumphantly dragging forward the gardener.

Tall, squarely built, and remarkably good-looking, he seemed to bear himself as proudly in his working garb as if he were king of the realm.

Little Flossie had taken hold of one of his hands and was patting it affectionately, looking up trustingly into his face. But he gently disengaged himself from the clinging, childish grasp.

"Take care, Miss Flossie, you will soil your pretty white frock, my hands are covered with mould, I have just been repotting plants in the glasshouses."

"Never mind, Turnips, dear," she replied, "earth is not dirty! Look," the child went on, "this is my sister Vera—Carrots, Teddy and I call her, 'cause she's got red hair like me. Is she not beautiful?"

The gardener doffed his cap respectfully, and made of course no answer to Flossie's burst of admiration for her sister.

"You have been very kind to my brother and little sister," Vera said, with one of those beautiful smiles of hers which in Society led captive so many hearts, but here of course it was different—this man was only the gardener, a common man in her father's employment.

"Didn't I tell you my sister was the most queenly beauty that ever walked the earth?" whispered Teddy. "What do you think of her?"

The gardener answered the boy in a low voice:

"She is the master's daughter, and in our humble sphere, Master Teddy, we have no right either to blame or to admire the quality. Miss Flossie wants to see her dog, I think," and, preceded by the child, who danced gleefully in front of him, he disappeared inside the stables.

"Well, Carrots, is he not a splendid fellow?"

"He seems quite a superior sort of person, far above his station. I suppose it is his constant companionship and travelling about with Lord Yvor which has given him a sort of genteel varnish; but I think it is bad for any of that sort of class to lift them from their proper level, it only makes them feel like fish out of water."

And Vera turned away without casting another thought on the gardener.

Vera had always been the idol of her young brother and little sister, and she felt a certain degree of unconscious irritation and jealousy against this man, a stranger, and holding such a humble station in her father's household, who had thus twined himself round the hearts of those two children, where hitherto she had reigned in undisputed sway.

Vera had been back three weeks when one afternoon she went in quest of her little sister; failing to find her in

On the green sward, at the foot of the tree, sat the head-gardener, with little Flossie on his knee.

Digitized by Google

the house, Vera gave up her search in despair, and made up her mind rather reluctantly to take a solitary stroll by the banks of the tiny river, which wound in and out of the woods at the far end of the domain.

It was a lovely, picturesque walk, with the trees growing so thick that the spot was always shady, no matter how torrid the sun's scorching rays might be, and the placid silver stream slowly flowed onwards, with its incessant musical murmur, and the birds warbled their love-songs overhead.

As Vera neared a favourite nook of hers at the foot of a gnarled, spreading old tree, amidst whose drooping branches climbed in a sort of leafy arbour the rambling trails of the wild, sweet-smelling clematis, she paused as she heard the sound of voices, and peeping through the foliage she beheld a group which made her heart beat with an angry pulsation.

On the green sward, at the foot of the tree, sat the head-gardener, with little Flossie on his knee. The child had her hand clasped in his, while she gazed up confidingly into his face, and listened enraptured to the fairy-tale he was telling her.

"And so Rosalind married the Prince, and they lived happy ever after. There, Miss Flossie, is not that a pretty story?"

Vera just heard the concluding phrase. Flossie put up her hand and patted his cheek with a loving caress.

"Yes, *dear, dear* Turnips, it is a lovely story, like everything which you tell me. And fairy tales always end so, they marry and live happy. *I* mean to marry, to live happy ever after!"

"Do you indeed, Miss Flossie?"

"Yes, when I grow up I am going to marry you, 'cause I love you." And with a pretty, impulsive gesture she flung her arms around his neck, and laid her pretty soft cheek against his.

He stooped and fondly kissed her.

"Little darling, you have not yet been spoilt by the falsehood and hypocrisies of Society; your pure, childish love is true and genuine."

But at this moment Vera felt she could control her feelings no longer—to see this common fellow, one of her father's menials, actually kissing her baby sister, made her proud nature throb in a perfect passion of anger. Pushing back the leafy curtain and advancing with a flushed face, she snatched the child from the gardener's arms.

"You forget yourself strangely, daring to take such unheard of liberties with your master's daughter!"

The cold, hard words seemed to strike him like a pitiless blow; he rose to his feet, a crimson hue overspreading his whole swarthy face.

"I beg your pardon, miss, I did not know I was committing such a crime!"

"This must never occur again," Vera peremptorily commanded in her haughty tones.

"Naughty Carrots!" piped Flossie, with a tiny reproving finger held up. "I won't have you scold Turnips, he is a darling, and I like him to kiss me!"

"Hush, Flossie, dear, this man is only a servant, you must not forget the dignity attached to your person, even at your early age!"

"I don't care, Flossie will always love you just the same," and the child held out appealing little arms to her humble friend.

"No, Miss Flossie," he said sadly, "you and I must cease to be friends from this day forth."

"I *will* be your friend always," announced the child in a determined voice, "and Carrots is naughty!"

It was gall and wormwood to Vera to feel that in the contest with this man she was not getting the best of it by any manner of means; he seemed to exercise some sort of extraordinary power of fascination on the child.

"Turnips," she said severely, "I shall get my father to dismiss you at once if ever you take such a liberty again with Miss Flossie."

"Very well, Miss!"

He touched his cap respectfully, and abruptly turned away.

One evening little Flossie seemed unusually fretful and peevish; when the nurse came to take her to bed she clung to Vera and refused to leave her.

"Never mind, nurse," said Vera, "I shall keep Flossie in my room to-night, she will sleep with me."

The child had nestled contentedly with her head on her sister's shoulder, and later on she fell asleep peacefully in Vera's arms.

Suddenly, in the dead of night, Vera awoke with a strange suffocating feeling at her throat. What was this smell, this dense smoke which seemed to fill the room?

She jumped out of bed, hurried on a dressing-gown, and opened her door; she gasped and almost reeled back with the volumes of thick smoke which assailed her. The house was on fire! She heard confused noises, smothered cries, trampling of feet under her window.

Vera's room was the turret-chamber, far away from any of the inhabited parts of the house. It was a fancy of hers to occupy this quaint old room, perched up high in the old turret. She used to say laughingly that she felt herself quite a mediæval princess up there in her castellated bower.

Alas, this strange freak of hers seemed likely now to cost her her life, and, worse than all, Flossie, darling little unconscious, sleeping Flossie, was doomed.

The passage and stairs were already impassable, the flames were even now invading the little antechamber which opened into the bedroom. Vera shut the heavy oak door, but how long would that last as an effectual barrier against the cruel, encroaching enemy.

Catching up the still sleeping child in her arms, she flew to the window. Alas, no hope of escape lay there; to attempt a leap from such a height meant a certain and horrible death.

Far down below she could see figures rushing to and fro, and hear agonised cries and wild appeals; no doubt they had been missed, but who could dare attempt their rescue when all around the foot of the turret the flames were gathering in force and fury.

Vera turned to One whom we all seek when we find human aid failing us. Still clasping her little sister on her bosom, the despairing girl flung herself on her knees by the side of the bed, and sent up an earnest appeal for help to the throne of the Everlasting Father. Even as she prayed, help was nearer to her than she could possibly imagine.

A man had scaled the burning walls; scorning danger for himself, he only thought of the helpless girl and child, and determined to save them, or die in the attempt.

As he reached the window he saw Vera on her knees, and Flossie, who had just awakened, sobbing piteously. The child hardly realised what was wrong, but instinctively she felt something was amiss. The man strode across the room; laying his hand on Vera's shoulder he spoke in authoritative tones:

"Come, Miss Mapleson, there is no time to be lost!"

Vera turned and confronted—the gardener! How bitterly had she scorned him, how deeply had she resented his daring to come between her and her child sister's love, and yet now she turned towards him with such infinite relief and trust.

"Oh, Flossie, my darling little Flossie, save her!" And she held out the child to him.

"Yes, I shall save her first, and then return for you."

"No, no, that would be folly, you would only madly imperil your own life! Go, save Flossie, and leave me to my fate!"

He lost no time in answering, but, taking a blanket from off the bed, and wrapping the child in it, proceeded to make his perilous descent in feverish haste, fearful that he might be too late to save the one he had left!

At the foot of the tower he hurriedly placed the child in the Squire's arms, and, regardless of the imminent peril he now ran, as the walls might crash in at any moment, he once more went up to the turret-chamber. He did not see Vera at first, then he discerned her lying senseless on the floor.

He groaned aloud.

"Too late, after all!"

He seized her in his arms, and, yielding to an irresistible impulse, he strained her to his heart, and pressed his lips to

Digitized by Google

hers; they were cold and bloodless, but, with infinite relief, he knew she was not dead, but only unconscious. When he reached the ground, clasping his precious burden, strong man as he was, he reeled, and would have fallen, if ready hands had not been put forth to save him.

The whole of that wing where the turret chamber had been situated was levelled to the earth by the devouring flames, but the other part of the building suffered little, and with the help of the firemen the burning foe was quenched and conquered at last.

The next morning poor little Flossie lay in bed feverish and flushed; the fright, the doctor asserted, had been most injurious to the sensitive, highly-strung child.

Mrs. Mapleson was quite prostrated, and unable to leave her room, but Vera, very white-faced, and with large black circles round her eyes, was untiring in her care and devotion to her little sister; nothing would induce her to absent herself from the child's bedside.

As Flossie tossed and turned with burning cheeks and glistening eyes, she continually asked for her dear, good, kind Turnips.

No thought of petty jealousies now reigned in Vera's mind; her whole, heartfelt gratitude went out to the man who had so nobly risked his own life to save hers and her sister's.

She knew from Squire Mapleson that the gardener had firmly and proudly refused any sort of monetary reward when the grateful father had gone to thank him for saving his two children. He needed not to be paid, he had said, for accomplishing a common act of humanity.

A maid had been dispatched to seek Turnips. When Vera heard a gentle tap at the door she rose and opened it herself. The gardener stood before her, quiet, self-possessed, and respectful as usual.

"You sent for me, Miss?"

"Yes, my little sister is ill, and she kept repeatedly calling for you, and I"—she coloured and hesitated—"I wanted to thank you for saving my life and Flossie's."

"I only did my duty, Miss," he said coldly. "I am sorry poor little Miss Flossie is ill."

Just then Vera caught sight of his right hand, which was bandaged.

"Oh, you got hurt last night, injured while in the act of saving us!"

"Oh, it is nothing, Miss, a mere scratch, only it will unfit me for my work for the next few days!"

"Oh, that is of little consequence!"

"Excuse me, Miss," and he drew himself up proudly, "but I am a paid menial in your father's service, and must fulfil my engagements to my master."

Laying her hand on his arm she whispered: "Yes, do as she bids you."

"Not when you have imperilled your own life to save his daughters," she said rather impatiently. "Has your hand been seen to, have you had the doctor?"

"No, Miss, it is really nothing. Let me just have a look at Miss Flossie."

He moved to the bed-side. Flossie knew him at once.

"Turnips, my dear Turnips!" and she held out her little arms. "Please kiss me!"

He shook his head, but Vera moved swiftly up to him, and, laying her hand on his arm, whispered—

"Yes, certainly, do as she bids you."

"You once forbade me ever to dare to take such a liberty with your sister."

"It is different now, you have earned the right to kiss her since you saved her life."

"He saved *yours* too, Carrots!" said Flossie, with startling promptitude. "He may kiss you too!"

Vera flushed hotly, while a guilty look crept over the man's face; to hide his confusion he bent over the tiny cot, and Flossie put her arms round his neck and kissed him. Then the child half rose in her bed, and, taking his hand and Vera's, joined them together in her two little ones. She looked earnestly at them both—

"You will be friends now, Carrots, won't you, with Turnips, 'cause I love you *both* so, you *must* love each other too."

The man disengaged his hand quickly and moved to the window as if he wished to avoid his countenance betraying him. After a few moments of awkward silence Vera followed him.

"Turnips," she said gently, then she stopped abruptly, "have you not got any other name but that one?"

He smiled grimly.

"You don't like my name, Miss?"

She blushed and lowered her eyes.

"I should like," she said in a low voice, "to think of the one who saved my life and my sister's by some other name than that one."

"My Christian name is Donald."

"Thank you," she hesitated, then breathed the name very softly. "Donald," she went on, speaking rapidly, "I have heard from my father how you have refused to accept from him any acknowledgment of your noble action; will you at least accept this from me? I had it painted for myself, but I can easily get its exact duplicate done."

She held in her hand an exquisitely painted miniature of Flossie, beautifully mounted in a tiny gold filagree frame set with diamonds and pearls.

He took it and gazed intently at it.

"How like! The very counterpart," he muttered almost unconsciously.

"Everyone says Flossie is so like me," she said softly.

"Thank you, Miss, I accept this—at least the painting, but

Digitized by Google

not the frame," and, taking out his penknife, he deliberately detached the rich setting from the small ivory plaque and returned it to her. It was done in such a masterful way that Vera did not even remonstrate.

"Good-morning, Miss," and without another word he left the room.

* * * * *

A fortnight had passed and Flossie was about and her own bright little self again. And yet Vera carefully avoided asking her little sister to accompany her, as she left the house for the grounds one afternoon. The girl was very pale, her lips were set and resolute. She entered most of the glass houses one after the other; at last, in the palm-house, she espied at the far end a familiar figure, and without a moment's hesitation she went straight up to him.

"My father tells me you are leaving us, Donald; is that so?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Why?"

"Because I have committed a crime, a deadly crime, Miss."

"*You* committed a crime, Donald! What folly is this? I cannot believe you could ever do anything wrong!"

"And yet, Miss, my crime in your eyes and in those of your set could not be condoned."

"I should *never* blame you," she murmured very softly.

"Shall I tell you what my crime has been?" he said resolutely.

"Yes," she answered, but she averted her head as if afraid to meet his searching eyes, which seemed to read the very secrets of her soul.

"I have been mad enough to allow myself to care for you, Miss Mapleson. I must leave this place at once because I love you, and I will not face your bitter scorn." He folded his arms and looked at her almost defiantly.

A radiant light of intense happiness diffused itself over her features.

"Donald, I do not scorn you," she whispered softly.

"What, you have no words of scathing contempt for the humble menial who has the arrogance to lift his eyes to yours! You do not seek your father and bid him ignominiously drive forth the insolent, low-born churl who dares to insult you with an avowal of his love?"

Vera drew near to him and, putting her hand in his, she said: "To me you are no menial, Donald, but the noblest and bravest of men—the one man I love."

He put his arm around her, and she let her head rest on his shoulder; his manly voice trembled and betrayed the strong, intense feeling which moved him as he bent over her.

"Will you indeed give up all—home, family, social position—to attach yourself to my humble fortunes and will you stoop to marry *me?*"

"Yes, Donald," came the answer in a clear, firm voice; "I will gladly give up all so as to be your wife."

"Even to taking the obnoxious name of Turnips?" he smiled, and, bending down, imprinted a passionate kiss on her unresisting lips. "Vera, my darling," he used her Christian name for the first time, "mine at last, and this time I have the right to kiss you."

"You never kissed me before," she protested.

"Yes, Vera, I have a confession to make. The night of the fire, when you lay in my arms, I acted the part of a coward; my brain and heart seemed to be on fire, I was mad for love of you, I despaired of ever winning you, and, Vera, I kissed you then. Ever since I have despised myself for having taken advantage of your helpless state when you were literally at my mercy. Darling, will you forgive me?"

"Nay, Donald, I could not be angry with you if I tried!"

"Well, these reassuring words give me fresh courage for yet another confession I must make. I am not what I seem. I have wooed and won you under a false name. You will have no need to be called Mrs. Turnips!"

She looked up at him in a startled way.

"Oh, what is it? Tell me the truth, quick, Donald! But perhaps Donald is not your real name either?"

"Yes, Donald is my Christian name; I could not bear to mislead you about that. But my full name and title is Albert Edward Donald Lynton, Lord Yvor."

Vera released herself from his incircling arm and started back a few paces from him.

"You! Lord Yvor!"

"Yes; will you deny the love to Lord Yvor which you so readily granted to the humble gardener?"

Poor Vera gazed at him bewildered.

"I cannot understand—tell me, what does it all mean?"

"Come," and, taking her hand, he led her to a rustic seat; "let us sit down and I will tell you all. Ten years ago I was a very young man, full of life and hopes; everything smiled on me; I was endowed with an immense fortune, titled, and the master of Pen-Yvor Castle, which, as you know, is close by your father's house, and one of the show places of England.

"I fell in love with a girl—don't be jealous, Vera, darling, I did not love her as I love you now; it was a sort of boyish infatuation. However, I discovered that this girl did not love me really; she feigned an affection for me which she did not feel, and she had simply accepted my hand because I was Lord Yvor, and was so wealthy. In fact I discovered she loved another man whom she had jilted to accept my suit.

"I charged her with her baseness, and was so revolted with the whole of womankind that I swore I would never wed. I shut up Pen-Yvor Castle, went abroad, travelled about seeking solace in hunting, shooting and yachting.

"Finally I settled down in a remote part of Brittany, where I addicted myself to gardening and all sorts of horticulture. This is where I gained the knowledge which rendered me fit to fulfil my functions of head gardener on your father's estate.

"Last winter I happened to go down to the Riviera, and at the very hotel where I was stopping at Cannes you chanced to be staying with your mother. I believe you had come there to spend a few weeks on account of Mrs. Mapleson's health.

"I rarely used my title abroad, and was inscribed on the hotel books as Mr. Lynton. At any rate, neither you nor your mother noticed me, but I saw you on several occasions, and I could never again banish your image from my mind. I returned to Brittany and sought to forget you, but in vain.

"Of course, the plain course open to me would have been to resume my rank and title, return to Pen-Yvor Castle and woo and win you as Lord Yvor. But I recoiled from such means. I dreaded being accepted by you simply because I was Lord Yvor. That bitter experience of my youth haunted me still. So I thought out this plan.

"I answered your father's advertisement for a gardener, presented myself with excellent testimonials written by myself as Lord Yvor, and was accepted. When I came here first, to my intense disappointment you were away on a visit, and only returned three weeks later.

"Meanwhile I had quite lost my heart on little Flossie; the child was so like you, the colour of her hair, everything about her, reminded me of you, and I loved her first for your sake, but very soon she won me herself by her winning, loving little ways. Your brother Teddy also took the strongest possible fancy to me, and those two children brightened my whole life.

"Then you came, and your proud, haughty air chilled me; from the very first you seemed to take a strong dislike to me; and the day you surprised me kissing Flossie, you spurned me as if I were mud! Oh, how I writhed under your cruel, taunting words!"

"Donald, forgive me, I think I had begun to love you even then, but in my fierce pride I hated and despised myself for thinking of such a one as I thought you then were. Afterwards, when you saved my life and Flossie's, love conquered pride, and I knew then that I loved you above everyone on earth, and I felt that I could gladly give up everything to be your wife."

"My beautiful Vera, for your sake I wish I were a king, so as to crown that wealth of tawny gold!" And once more Lord Yvor bent to impress kisses on her lips, brow and hair.

Digitized by Google

Suddenly upon the absorbed and enraptured lovers there broke a shrill, childish voice :

"Oh, Turnips, Carrots, I have been looking for you everywhere," and little Flossie stood before them. They both looked utterly confused, and Vera's cheeks assumed the brightest of crimson hues. The child gazed at them in a puzzled way.

"Why do you pretend you won't kiss before me, and then do it on the sly? Turnips, Carrots," she continued severely, "that's surely wrong. Father says we must always do everything openly," and the clear, innocent blue eyes fixed themselves reproachfully on the guilty couple.

"You are right Flossie darling, but your sister and I do not mean to act in an underhand way, we are going straight to Squire Mapleson to tell him we are engaged."

Flossie shook her head sadly.

"Oh, you naughty, bad Turnips! So you are going to marry Carrots? What about *me*, then, when I grow up?"

The look of despair on the child's face amused and touched the young earl. He caught up Flossie in his arms.

"Little one, won't you have me as a brother instead?"

This new suggestion delighted her, she laughed merrily and clapped her hands.

"Yes, like Teddy, only a much bigger brother—that will be nice; and you will always tell me pretty fairy tales?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Still, Carrots *did* say I was not to forget the dignity attached to my person when you kissed me. And now she lets you kiss her, so I s'pose she's forgotten *her* dignity!"

"Oh, you terrible child," chimed in Vera, and she in her turn hugged little Flossie.

"That child's logic is certainly disconcerting," laughed Lord Yvor.

"And when you're married, Carrots, you will never quarrel with Turnips again, will you?" the child asked eagerly.

"Well, that depends on his conduct to me," and Vera looked archly at the young man.

It was a seven days' wonder in Society when Lord Yvor's romantic engagement to Vera Mapleson became known. As for Teddy, he was wild with delight; he confided to his future brother-in-law that he was the dearest old chap in the world, and that he had known from the very first that he was a true gentleman. The beautiful Lady Yvor and her husband are still known among their very intimate friends by the quaint names of Carrots and Turnips.

Lily Butler.

The Gentle Art of Cooking.

How it Caused an Upset at Laburnum Villa.

It was well on towards the end of September. Mr .and Mrs. Sinclair, with Toddles, who was now almost four years old, were sojourning at Llandudno.

Time was drawing near when the trio must say farewell to all the delights of North Wales; and it had been decided that Gerald should return on the Wednesday and manage to exist until his wife followed on the Saturday. He was not quite sure whether he could live without her for three days, or whether he could do without the vicious tugs at his moustache that Toddles was in the habit of giving, but he would try.

It was, therefore, in a sad mood and a London and North-Western train that he arrived in London once more. His sad mood grew sadder as he reached Laburnum Villa and thought of the three days he must spend alone there.

He occupied two hours after he reached home in writing to his wife telling her how miserable he felt, how lonely he would be, and what a long way off Saturday seemed. Then he went out and ate a huge dinner, after which he visited the Pavilion.

He became depressed again when he reached home early Thursday morning and was the sole occupant of Laburnum Villa, for the servants were away too.

On the following morning he dressed and went to town for breakfast, and that same night he filled up by going to the Tivoli. In the meantime writing to Mrs. Sinclair and saying that the days were like eternity.

When he arose on Friday morning he said to himself: "You know, Gerald my boy, it's silly to go out and get meals when there's bound to be stuff downstairs to eat. Why not get your own breakfast?"

So elated with this idea was he, that he rushed downstairs as he was, and hunted about. Naturally there wasn't much about, as the house had been empty for three weeks. But in the larder he came across a piece of bacon, and then the thought struck him that there was no milk or bread.

He rushed to the front door and opened it, the road was empty.

Suddenly a small boy turned the corner, and Gerald waved frantically and called to him. The small boy looked his jaw dropped, his eyes went wide open, and his cap visibly rose on his head. Then he turned and bolted as though running for his life.

"H'm! Curious," observed Gerald aloud, as he thoughtfully rubbed his face. Then to his astonishment his hand came away covered with lather, and he remembered that in the enthusiasm of the moment he had thrown down his razor as he was shaving and had come downstairs simply attired in shirt and trousers. No wonder the small boy ran home and got whipped for saying he had seen a madman with froth all over his face.

But Gerald was still enthusiastic, and, after dressing, he commissioned another small boy to fetch him milk, eggs, and butter, from a local dairyman who was in the habit of supplying Laburnum Villa.

Then he got to work. He sliced the bacon first and then his finger. This necessitated a stoppage for bandaging the cut, and talking about it in a humid strain. Then he got a frying-pan and put it over the gas, whilst he went to fetch some water for the kettle.

A tin-tack penetrated his carpet slipper, whilst in the scullery, which necessitated a further stoppage. At last he returned to the kitchen, but was assailed by a nauseous odour and a cloud of smoke. At first he thought the house was on fire, but all he found was a hole in the frying-pan. This was certainly awkward, he would have to find another frying-pan.

Then the thought struck him that he had seen people put grease into frying-pans, and, accordingly, when he had

Digitized by Google

found a second of these utensils, he put in a liberal dab of butter and then the bacon.

Now came the eggs. He had certainly observed people break them, and thought he could do it. He picked up one gingerly, and knocked it on the side of the frying-pan. Unfortunately he hit it so hard that, before he had time to lift it and drop the contents into the pan, the whole lot had dropped over the gas stove.

It was aggravating, to say the least of it, but he was more careful with the rest, and presently had a right royal breakfast of eggs, bacon, bread, butter, marmalade, and tea before him.

There was one other little upset, though. That was when he went to pour the tea out, only water came, as he had forgotten to put the tea-leaves in. But still he got on first-rate considering everything, was his own impression.

At the office that day a great thought struck him. He would take home three other men who were always prepared for, what he would have termed in his younger days, a lark; they could cook some dinner and have bridge or music afterwards.

He was so fired by this idea that he left the office immediately, and went round hunting up the other fellows. By a piece of good fortune he found they were all disengaged, and were quite willing to come.

For the purposes of this story I will call these three friends of Gerald by the well-known names of Brown, Jones, and Smith. They were three bachelors, and were well-known on the Stock Exchange as the ringleaders of almost every joke that was played.

Gerald met them at five o'clock and they went together to Leadenhall Market, where they purchased: A shoulder of lamb, a tin of ox-tail soup, potatoes, cauliflower, artichokes, fruit.

Gerald wanted to buy bacon and eggs as well, because he fancied he was great guns at cooking them, but he was persuaded not to. Whilst Smith offered to make an apple-pie if they'd get the various ingredients, only as nobody knew what they were, they decided simply to have fruit.

All the purchases were packed with the purchasers in a couple of hansons, and they drove off to Laburnum Villa. Brown and Jones *would* sing, and as they were not both in one cab, the two hansoms had to keep together, so, as Brown put it, the glorious harmony could be heard.

At length Laburnum Villa was reached, and very soon the culinary operations were put in hand.

Smith volunteered to open the tin of ox-tail soup, and after chopping a lump out of the table and cutting his coat-sleeve, he succeeded in breaking the table knife which he was using. Someone then suggested trying a tin-opener which was used most successfully.

Then Jones, in a sonorous voice, read out the directions, which Gerald, Brown, and Smith all attempted to carry out together. The result was that Smith upset the hot water over Brown's foot, which resulted further in a desultory argument. Jones laughed so much that he upset the tin of ox-tail, whereupon half of the contents spread out in a large brown stain over the hitherto white table.

At last, though, they got the ingredients together, and presently Gerald poured a hot, sticky, very dark liquid into a tureen. Somebody suggested it might grow cold whilst the joint was being cooked; so they turned the gas on and put the tureen in the oven to keep warm.

Then came the great cooking feat of the evening, the joint and the vegetables. Now each of them was firmly convinced he could cook the joint like a *chef*, so it was arranged they should toss for it. They did it on the principle of "odd man"—that is, they all tossed, Gerald's coin came down "heads" and the other three "tails," therefore Gerald being odd man, had first choice.

He chose the joint.

Smith won the next, and chose the potatoes. Brown got the cauliflower, and Jones the artichokes.

Then Gerald disappeared and presently returned with Mrs. Beeton under his arm (figuratively speaking, of course). His advent was greeted with a chorus of cheers. After much perusal of this lady's interesting work, a remarkable scene ensued.

Gerald was doing what he called basting. He'd got very mixed up, but was quite happy in laying butter and flour an inch thick on that unhappy shoulder of lamb. He also made a hole in it and filled it with butter and flour.

"That makes the gravy, you know, you chaps," he said.

The others listened in awe-stricken silence, and watched with fascinated eyes. But presently they returned to their work.

Smith was cutting bits off the potatoes and off his fingers, whilst he swore softly to himself.

Brown insisted in cutting all the green off the cauliflower, because he said you never eat it.

Jones wasn't quite sure what you did with artichokes, but still he thought they should be pealed, so he cut them about until there wasn't much of the original vegetable left.

Brown and Jones were still musically inclined, and insisted on singing duets. Oh! Mrs. Sinclair, if you could only see your kitchen now.

Presently Gerald grew tired of basting and put the shoulder of lamb into the oven just below the tureen full of ox-tail soup. He then turned the gas on full, and refilled his pipe.

"Bang!"

A loud report rang through the kitchen. Brown and Jones stopped singing. Smith ceased to swear, and Gerald dropped his pipe.

Then a hissing, bubbling noise was heard from the oven, whilst clouds of steam poured out. Between them they opened the oven door, and then, ye gods! what a picture.

The tremendous heat of the oven had been too much for the tureen, and, in consequence, it had cracked. All the soup had flown down over the shoulder of lamb and then on to the gas, putting it out.

Then Brown and Jones fell into each other's arms and laughed until they sobbed. Whilst Smith and Gerald held a heated argument on the subject.

They eventually decided that it would improve the shoulder of lamb to be bathed in ox-tail soup, and once more went on with the culinary operations. Smith got the potatoes in his saucepan and then dropped it on the floor, where it unfortunately fell on his toe. Brown and Jones resumed their hilarity, whilst Smith resumed his speech. They picked the potatoes up and got them in a saucepan again.

Then Brown and Jones had their cauliflower and artichokes ready, and placed them in saucepans. Unfortunately Jones dropped the artichokes into the wrong saucepan, so they cooked with the potatoes.

Gerald proposed a rubber of whist whilst they waited for the dinner to cook, and this proved so interesting that they forgot all about the cooking.

Presenting a horrible smell of burning meat pervaded the kitchen. Gerald jumped up, and, rushing for the oven, pulled the door open. There was the shoulder of lamb burnt to a most mournful shade of black.

But despite this and the fact that the cauliflower had gone to pieces, and that the potatoes and artichokes were only half-cooked, they still sat down to dinner. And, what is more, they ate it. They admitted afterwards that the fruit was really very nice.

Digitized by Google

"Well, what shall it be, you chaps?" said Gerald, when they had finished eating. "Bridge or music?"

They decided to have music.

"Come along then into the drawing-room," cried Gerald. "And we'll outdo Orpheus and make the welkin ring."

They all commenced to smoke pipes in the drawing-room. Shades of Mrs. Sinclair! Gerald officiated at the piano.

Glee after glee was howled. From "Who will o'er the downs so free?" to "Come, Landlord, fill the blowing bowl."

Suddenly there was a ring at the bell.

"Cease those mellow tones, Smith," cried Gerald. "Go! Unloose the portals wide, and see who stands before our gates."

Smith departed to the door, where we will accompany him. Another impatient ring quickened his footsteps, and then he opened to the caller.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, and then he was dumb. For there was a lady with a little child; from her appearance Smith knew it was Mrs. Sinclair, although he had never met her. She shot one indignant glance at him, and then swept in, leaving him gasping at the door. With a sudden inspiration he seized his hat and coat and rushed out into the wild, dark night.

And this was the reception Mrs. Sinclair received.

"Who was the weary wayfarer, Smith?" bellowed her husband. "But come along and take the tenor in 'Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen.'"

Through the cloud of smoke a figure advanced, and it said: "I am the weary wayfarer."

Gerald turned and saw. His lower jaw dropped, and a despairing groan emanated from his lips. Brown and Jones hurriedly made for the door, and when once safe in the street, they leant up against one another and howled with laughter until a policeman moved them on.

But what of Gerald?

Laden with the consciousness of guilt he sat wretchedly in the tobacco-laden air of the Laburnum Villa drawing-room. Mrs. Sinclair stood before him. She, too, was speechless, but from a different reason. Then she found her tongue and for a quarter of an hour she talked without cessation.

This was the way he pined for her. This was the way that he passed the eternity of time that he spoke of. Then she ran off at a tangent, and spoke of turning her drawing-room into a tap-room with six or seven pot-house loafers.

"It's always the way. Oh, you deceitful man. I can't let you out of my sight for a minute."

"But, dear——"

"Don't call me dear, Mr. Sinclair."

"Well, then. You said you weren't coming back until to-morrow. And we could have got the room tidy by then, and the dinner things washed up."

"Dinner things," shrieked Mrs. Sinclair. "Do you mean to say that you and those brutes have been eating?"

Here Toddles began to weep profoundly.

"See how you're treating your son, sir. Oh! My child! What a father you have to be sure."

"Confound it all, Ethel——"

"That's right, swear at me. Abuse me, go on, I can bear it."

"What's the good of trying to talk sense to a woman," muttered Gerald disgustedly.

In the meantime Mrs. Sinclair had gone into the dining-room, and Gerald heard her shriek of dismay with an inward tremor.

Then he heard her visit the kitchen, and another shriek quite upset his nerves. So that when Mrs. Sinclair burst into the room talking excitedly, he made not the slightest attempt to argue.

"Spoilt a dinner service! All the saucepans ruined! The kitchen table spoilt! Messes all over the linoleum, and the gas stove like a pig-sty! Oh, you—you—you b-b-brute!" Then she commenced to cry. "This was what (sob) I came home a day earlier for (sob). This was the loving (sob)—welcome I expected. Ten great drunken beasts (sobs) trapsing about the house (sob)—(more sobs)."

Gerald thought tremendously.

"How dare you do it in my house? Twenty great hulking brutes spoiling everything?"

Gerald ventured to suggest that he owned a portion of the house at any rate, and that she might be exaggerating about the number of visitors.

"Go away and don't talk to me," she cried, as he approached her.

And then he went into the kitchen. Cleared up the mess. Washed up the dinner things and put them away. Then he commenced on the pans and pots to try to get them clean. So intent was he on his task that he did not hear a light footstep cross the kitchen, or know that there was anyone else in the room beside him, until a soft voice whispered in his ear:

"That isn't the way to do it, Gerald, let me help?"

Regardless of the condition of his hands he turned and took his wife in his arms, and—well, that's how the quarrel ended.

E. Newton Bungey.

[*Other Laburnum Villa stories which have already appeared are:*

"A Romance of an Unpaid Bill."—February 21st.

"What's in a Name?"—May 16th.

"Vice-Versa."—May 30th.]

Fashionable Patient: "This bill is exorbitant." Doctor: "But, my dear sir——" Fashionable Patient: "Not a word, sir. Either cut it into two, or find something else the matter with me."

LITTLE ECONOMIES

And How to Practise Them.

By EDITH WALDEMAR LEVERTON.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, **Price 1s.** *Post free* **1s. 2d.**

Contents:

GENERAL MANAGEMENT.
THE FINANCIAL QUESTION.
KITCHEN ECONOMIES.
COOKING ECONOMIES.
FUEL, FIRING, and LIGHTS.
CATERING.
HOME-MADE PICKLES, JAMS, etc.
THE KITCHEN GARDEN.
POULTRY KEEPING.
LAUNDRY WORK.
CARVING.
ENTERTAINING.
THE SERVANT QUESTION.
SPRING CLEANING.
FLORAL DECORATION.
HOME CARPENTERING.
THE SICK ROOM.
THE CARE OF CLOTHES.
HOME DRESSMAKING, etc.

Order Form.

To Book Publisher,
17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please send me a copy of **"LITTLE ECONOMIES,"** for which I inclose the sum of 1s. 2d.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Digitized by Google

Splendid Series.

The Return of the Prodigal.

Being the fifth of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

"Who is that?" he asked, gazing steadfastly on the face of the girl in the picture.

Again the six friends met on their return from business. During the cold weather the story telling became quite an institution.

That night Mr. Pitman, who was an amateur artist, and indulged an impressionist craze in leisure hours, offered to paint them a word picture from human life. He was screwing up his eyes as if the window were a vanishing point or a perspective, and trying to discern the passing scene without through grey evening mists.

"I wish I could get that effect on canvas," he said. "The dim houses wrapped in gloom, the half light. I might call it 'Seen from a railway train'—just one of those fashionable blurs that create talk and sensation."

"I know the sort of thing," said Stourbridge. "You see a dark object in a fog, and wonder if it is a church tower or a hansom cab; then you see it's a signal-box—awfully clever, but mightily uninteresting!"

"I say, I heard an awfully queer tale to-day," began Carter, stroking his imperial.

"Yes, but don't do me out of my word picture!" sighed Pitman.

"We'll toss up," said Harford, drawing a coin from his overcoat pocket. "Heads Pitman, tails, Carter."

He threw it in the air.

"Heads it is; fire away, Pitman, we are all impatience."

Pitman surveyed his audience with a benign smile.

"She was an artist, of course," he commenced, "that is why I am interested in her history—an heiress, young and beautiful, who adored painting, and only lived for art. Her name? Oh, yes!—Moore Meredith. Her age? Well, a woman's age is sacred after seventeen. She had been an orphan since her infancy, and lived with an old uncle, who eventually condescended to die in the peaceful, orderly manner suitable to his well-regulated household, and courteous considerate nature.

"He just took up his evening paper, leant back in a red leather chair, and breathed his soul into space, without even troubling to ring the bell. To enhance this estimable gentleman's merits, I may add, he left his heroine his fortune.

"She had, you will see, no need to paint for money, but the love of fame had been implanted in her breast since childhood. She was ambitious, and her one aim in existence was to win renown. She longed to create a picture that would take the world by storm, which, after all, was a fortunate craving, since it compensated for the loss of those dead faces that should have brightened her life.

"Art was her father, her mother, her all. Genius the companion of her solitude, and the all-engrossing study gave her something to live for.

"She might have spent her time in the gay and frivolous set that eagerly desired to enlist this brilliant young heiress into their ranks; but she preferred the attractions of her quiet studio—worked like the veriest slave—with no one to gainsay her.

"'Every man to his taste'; so the world passed by, and smiled.

"One morning Moore Meredith sat idly in her studio—it was the first day for weeks she had been inactive—while the early sun crept through her windows, shedding its bright light round the model throne and on all the artistic adornments of the room.

"In the centre stood a large easel, bearing a half-finished painting, at which she was gazing somewhat wistfully.

"'That picture,' she said, rising and standing before it with folded arms, 'might make my name if only I could get the man's face.'

"She knew exactly what she wanted, but the face was hard to find. Already the form of a beautiful girl, in a clinging robe of palest grey, floating like feathery evening mists about her figure, stood out on the canvas.

Digitized by Google

"Her eyes wore a fascinated, half-fearful look, suggestive of a creature in pain; her expression was one of horrified surprise; yet the lips were parted in a helpless, tragic smile, so flickering, so undecided, that it seemed to fade and wake again before your sight. Surely this was genius in its true sense! And that fair, yet puzzled face was listening. You could conjure up the storm of thought in the distracted mind, and tell that she was wavering up on the brink of evil.

"The second character had yet to be painted, brought to life by Moore's magic touch. She pictured him in her mind with rugged features and haggard eyes, a man with a striking personality, years older than the girl. It is not the fresh buoyancy of youth that always has the power to charm. More frequently, to the pure, unsophisticated woman, who has just stepped, with reluctant feet, from 'where the brook and river meet,' the determined man of the world—the man with a past—can infatuate her trusting soul.

"'He should stand,' thought Moore, 'against a dark background, in the act of drawing the trembling maiden boldly to him, while the summer evening closed around them, as if to hide her weakness and blind his hungering eyes.'

"There were daring touches in the half-completed work, significant of the artist's spirit and vivid imagination; it was the work of a skilful and well-trained hand, that immediately demanded more than ordinary attention. Moore was satisfied with what she had done, it pleased her artistic eye, but she was troubled how to proceed.

"'I *must* get a model,' she cried, pacing the room; 'if I fail I will burn the picture! The girl does well; she is life-like, she is possible; but the crowning point is the man!'

"She was expecting some models on approval, and, as if in answer to her thoughts, a voice said outside the locked door:

"'A gentleman to see you, miss.'

"She hurried eagerly upstairs, all impatient to scrutinise the newcomer. So many interviews had proved fruitless. Wrinkled old seamen, Olympian gods, ferocious brigands, blue-eyed boys, Hercules, and Saint Sebastians had come in turn seeking employment, but she had sent them all away with a hopeful 'Some other time, perhaps.'

"As Moore entered the room she noticed at a glance that her wildest expectations were realised. Here was the face of her dreams, the man who had whispered of worse than death in the ear of her grey-gowned heroine! Marks of care lined his brow, his features were tanned and weather-beaten by a long sojourn in foreign lands. As she advanced towards him a bewildering variety of expressions flitted across his countenance, while his eyes mutely owned the searching interest and admiration she aroused in him.

"His was no ordinary, commonplace personality. Those eyes, in action or repose equally irresistible, had a power to charm at one moment and terrify the next. They were exactly what she longed to depict. His dark hair was streaked with grey; he had passed the prime of youth.

"As she felt the magnetic influence of his glance Moore Meredith could have shrieked for joy.

"With an effort to control her excitement she addressed him:

"'You have come to sit for me? I am so glad, because you are just the model I am in need of; I might have searched the world over before I found a better. I am madly anxious to finish my picture, and was perfectly in despair. It is heartrending to be stopped in your work. I shall want you to-day—don't say you're engaged? I don't mind what I pay, but I must begin this very morning—now, at once!'

"He bowed assent, but there was a queer light in his eyes, a sad drooping of the lips.

"Moore gave a sigh of relief.

"'Come, and I will show you my studio. Every minute I am away seems waste of time.'

"Fired by her enthusiasm, the stranger followed.

"As Moore turned back to speak she noticed how well he walked, and how upright he was. She had an uncomfortable feeling that the new model was a gentleman.

(*Continued overleaf.*)

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS

THE FAMOUS HOUSEHOLD REMEDIES.

THE PILLS

have gained their wonderful reputation by sheer force of merit, because every person who uses them recommends them to others. They have positively no equal for thoroughly cleansing the system and putting the liver and kidneys in functional order, without pain or griping. They are the best known remedy for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dizziness, and the common condition of ill-health, known as "run-down" or "out of sorts." Females of every age find Holloway's Pills an invaluable remedy and aid.

THE OINTMENT

is known throughout the world as positively the best and quickest remedy for Bad Legs, Old Wounds and Sores, and Skin Eruptions of every kind, and should be used in conjunction with the Pills. It is also the speediest remedy for Rheumatism, Lumbago, Pains and Stiffness in the Limbs and Joints, Backache, &c. For pains and Soreness at the Chest, and for Throat and Lung Complaints arising from Cold or Weakness, Holloway's Ointment affords most welcome relief in a very short time.

A COMPLETE DISPENSARY IN THEMSELVES.

AND OINTMENT

Digitized by Google

"'I suppose Mr. Robinson of the Art School sent you?' continued Moore.

"Again he inclined his head. As yet he had only listened to her respectfully, without uttering a word.

"She found herself waiting curiously to hear his voice.

"'This is my picture,' she said, 'what do you think of it?'

"He stared at the face on the canvas long and earnestly; it seemed to transfix him. She fancied he paled and breathed harder. Had she so well depicted what was in her mind, that even the sight of this one figure in the unfinished scene could move a strong man almost to tears?

"'It is wonderful,' he said at last, turning his eyes full upon Moore, and his voice vibrated oddly; it was just the sad, low tone she had expected, and that of an educated man.

"Then he walked to the spot she indicated, and as she turned to her easel and took up her palette her cup of happiness was full. All that morning she kept him there, working feverishly. He seemed to catch from her a keen sense of delight, an all-absorbing interest.

"'You will come to-morrow—and every to-morrow till the picture is complete?' she said, smiling. 'I feel exhilarated by to-day's progress, for I am the hardest master to please over my work. Sometimes I destroy it in a frenzy; occasionally I have been mean enough to send some thankless tasks to decorate the walls of children's hospitals. They should have the best; but such is life. Ah, you smile. Perhaps you have done the same?'

"'Who has not? The greatest works go naturally to the highest places; the lowliest do for the sick poor. It was ever so.'

"There was a ring of sarcasm in his reply that chilled Moore.

"The man perplexed her.

"Day after day he returned to his post, watching her every movement during those silent hours in a way that occasionally made the girl self-conscious.

"The picture was nearly finished and the artist quite worn out with fatigue, but unwilling to own it till the very last touch of the brush should kiss farewell to the radiant canvas.

"'I want to give you a more speaking impression,' she said. 'You don't *live* at this moment. Everyone must see you are talking—animated. I could put greater life into your face. I know——'

"'I think,' replied the man, 'that I am in fault. I grow heavy while sitting in silence.'

"Moore's face brightened.

"'Then talk,' she said; 'there's a good idea; tell me a story if you will.'

"'Shall I?'

"'Yes, yes.'

"'But perhaps you would rather not listen?'

"'What is it to be about?'

"'Your picture brought the idea to my mind.'

"Moore worked steadily on.

"'Then I am sure to be interested.'

"'It is a very simple little narrative—a tale of the world we live in—a place so saturated with sin, that sooner or later *all* must feel its presence, and be brought into contact with evil. How can the devil be concealed for long, when the earth reeks of him—ringing from day to day with the news of murderous deeds, while temptations haunt and dog the footsteps of every human being?'

"Moore's head was bent, but he saw that his words awoke her curiosity. For he spoke ferociously, while his eyes flashed.

"'Once there lived a girl like you—young, talented, fair—her face was sweet as an angel's—her soul pure as a child's. She lived in a paradise of blissful ignorance, the world was a pleasure garden—an Eden before the fall. She was the joy of her home—a ray of sunlight—a star! The poor loved her too; she would visit them in their cottages, and comfort them in their troubles. She had sympathy for all—the kind, encouraging word—the soft, angelic smile. Such a woman was born to hold sway over lower minds—to be holy, happy, blessed! What should you think ruined that young life so full of promise, so tender and beautiful?'

"Moore looked up with a cynical little smile.

"'The usual thing,' she said, 'love.'

"The man started.

"'*You* think that, too,' he replied, as if she had re-echoed his thoughts.

"'It is the theory of the age,' she answered lightly. 'Love is out of date—played threadbare—stale.'

"'It is terrible to hear that from the young,' he said; 'but my story is quite old-fashioned—it happened years ago—when women believed in men,'

"'In the days of grandmother?'

"No, nearer than that—in the days of your mother, shall we say?'

"'Go on. Love shattered her paradise?'

"'Yes. Suddenly a spirit of darkness in the form of man cast his shadow across her path. He met her first in the green country—it was Springtime, and all the flowers were starting up through the earth, the trees were budding, and their souls were young. They would wander for hours through meadows whose sweet scent sometimes in after years came back with gall and bitterness.

"'She saw in the man all that her heart desired. He was full of strength and hope, he was handsome and daring, he took her by storm. Heaven knows he meant no harm; if Fate had willed things otherwise he would have cherished her till death. But matters turn out so differently and unexpectedly to what is wished. There are dark days as well as bright—a place of torture as well as an abode of bliss.

"'The marriage bells chimed out over hill and dale—one glorious summer morning these two were made one by the village parson. All the old folk, and the children, the young men and maidens, came out to wish them God-speed. They decorated their working carts with green boughs and wild flowers, and hung mottoes across the road. Oh! the hollow mockery of the words "Long life and happiness!" and "God bless the bride and bridegroom."

"'Even the little railway station rang with cheers as they steamed away, for she was loved, and he was respected. Men are not all bad from their youth up that afterwards sink to the lowest degradation. They may be honest, noble lads who have never told a lie. They go out into the wilderness full of bright ideals, with a sure faith in all mankind, till the dust of cities clogs their spirit, the mire from their boots reaches to the heart—bad times come.

"'The wife is tired, she wants her carriage; the babe is ill, and it cries till the heart is sore over the woes of the wretched world into which it has been brought to dwell. The wicked across the way flourish before the husband's bloodshot eyes even as a green bay tree. They fatten on their dainties.

"'There is the rich money-lender who has paupered thousands, the betting-man who has prospered on the turf, the gaily-dressed woman who has lost her fair name, and they all smile and dine and laugh. It teaches him how good it is for bodily ease and comfort to stray from the path of virtue. Forgive me, Miss Meredith, if I tire you, but this is not a sermon but a history. Remember I am telling a tale from life—every word is true.'

"'Is that so?' asked Moore, raising her finely-pencilled eyebrows and pausing a moment in her work.

"'Oh, yes. I do not care for fiction.'

"'Tell me more.'

"'It was gradual, the downward road to ruin and disgrace—a moral slope is far more dangerous than an actual precipice. It is so alluring. He fell into the hands of a false friend, one who fêted and flattered him, but by degrees drew him into cruel meshes beyond escape.

"'He made a tool of this young fellow, who was as wax in his hand. He held out the dazzling prospect of wealth and power to be obtained by the simple art of copying a signature. Oh, it is not difficult, only to turn the name upside down, and draw the words backwards.

"'He taught him to perfection, this clever man, and then persuaded the novice to do his dirty work, with the

(*Concluded on page* 796.)

Digitized by Google

"A new preparation which bids fair to revolutionise medical science."—*Sheffield Independent.*

The New Permanent Cure for Corpulency

Restores Beauty of Figure with Renewed Health, Strength, and Energy.

SOME PLAIN FACTS.

The Problem Solved. Stout persons who have for years been vainly seeking some means of *permanently* reducing weight, and who have undergone all sorts of privations in the way of restricted and disagreeable dietary, as well as exhausting physical exercises, hot baths, drugging and purging, will welcome "Antipon" as something providential; for this wonderful specific solves the problem of the radical cure of obesity once and for all."

What "Antipon" is like. "Antipon" is the result of a new discovery, or, rather, of a combination of discoveries. It is an entirely harmless liquid, pleasant to the palate, containing no mercury or any other mineral substance, in appearance like a light red wine, and is taken in small doses at stated times. It has no purgative effect, nor does it cause the slightest discomfort or nausea. On the contrary, it is refreshing and thirst-quenching, and an excellent tonic drink mixed with a mineral water. "Antipon" can be had of chemists, price 2s. 6d. and 4s. 6d. per bottle, from stock or on order, or, should any difficulty arise, may be obtained (on sending cash remittance) post free, under private package, direct from the sole manufacturers, the Antipon Company, 13 Buckingham Street, Strand, London, W.C.

Its Effects on Fat Deposits. Excessive and persistent obesity is a disease, and a dangerous one. Masses of fat form round the vital organs and interfere seriously with their naturally healthy action. "Antipon" gradually but surely destroys these unwholesome fatty deposits, dissolves them and banishes them from the system. It eliminates the root-evil, and the fat does not form again. These accumulations of fatty matter are sometimes enormous, and when "Antipon" throws them out of the system the beneficent effect upon the general health is positively magical.

General Reductive Results. "Antipon" is generally effective in the destruction and elimination of the subcutaneous fat that renders the personal appearance so uncomely. Not only does the waist measurement become normal, but the unnecessary fat over the entire body surface disappears: the double chin, the flabby cheeks, the bulky neck, the "podgy" limbs—all become healthily normal again, the whole body symmetrical and elegant.

Rate of Decrease. "Antipon," the most potent of fat absorbents, is so prompt in asserting its reductive power that there is a calculable difference in weight within a day and a night of taking the first dose—from 8 oz. to 3 lbs. in ordinary cases, as much as 4 lbs. in exceptional developments of the disease. There is thereafter a steady diurnal decrease until the attainment of proper weight and graceful proportions, when the doses should cease.

No Change of Diet Necessary. "Antipon" is a treatment in itself, and dispenses with drastic rules as to food and drink. Common prudence is the only auxiliary required, as every common-sense person will realise. The semi-starvation dietary prescribed by many methods is altogether opposed to the treatment of "Antipon," whose tonic effects are such that appetite is rendered keener, and a greater amount of food is required.

Tonic Effects of "Antipon." Not only is a healthy appetite promoted, but the whole digestive apparatus is toned up and strengthened; assimilation and nutrition are wonderfully assisted with marvellous effect upon muscle, nerve and brain. "Antipon" prevents a sluggish circulation by keeping the blood in a normal and healthy condition, so that the waste in the system is properly eliminated instead of being deposited by the blood on the tissues.

Physicians' Approval. The ingredients of "Antipon" having been separately investigated by several doctors, have received their warmest approval, and the opportunities they have had of testing its practical results have confirmed their opinion to the full.

Conclusion. Such, then, is "Antipon," the greatest of known specifics for the *permanent* cure of corpulence. A course of "Antipon" is like a draught of some elixir of life, for not only is the subject unburdened of superfluous fat, but he (or she) feels a new being, increased in strength and vitality, full of energy, and capable of enjoying the good things of life once more.

WHAT THE PRESS SAYS ABOUT "ANTIPON."

"'Antipon' not only speedily absorbs and throws out of the system all superabundant adipose matter, but increases strength and vitality."—*Illustrated London News.*

"'Antipon" will prove a lasting blessing to thousands."—*Lady's Realm.*

"Readers troubled with *embonpoint* will find in 'Antipon' a reliable and permanent cure, exceedingly pleasant to take, and being a powerful fat absorbent, it dissolves and eliminates from the body all superfluous adipose, both the internal fat and the subcutaneous. It also forms a strength-giving tonic, improves the appetite, assists digestion, and tones up the whole system, without the sufferer incurring any distressing restrictions as to diet, exercise, &c."—*Weldon's Lady's Journal*, May, 1903.

"'Antipon' may be counted upon to take off within the first day and night an amount of superfluous fat ranging from 8 ozs. to 3 lbs., and the reductive action continues until the desired symmetry of form and figure is reached."—*Methodist Recorder.*

"'Antipon' increases muscular strength and helps to revitalise the nervous system."—*Penny Illustrated Paper.*

"'Antipon' is now among the great remedies of the age. It is pleasant to the taste, purely vegetable, and absolutely harmless.'—*Eastern Morning News.*

"ANTIPON" can be had of Chemists, price **2/6** and **4/6** per bottle, from stock or on order, or, should any difficulty arise, may be obtained (on sending cash remittance), post free, under private package, direct from the Sole Manufacturers—

THE "ANTIPON" COMPANY, 13 Buckingham Street, Strand, LONDON, W.C.

Bankers: UNION OF LONDON and SMITH'S BANK. Telegraphic Address: "CORPULENCE, LONDON."

Digitized by Google

promise of much profit, assurances of safety, and no chance of detection. It was a very complicated affair; but the temptation was too strong; the bridegroom of a year and a half back fell to the level of a common defrauder.

"'Such acts seldom remain untraced; there are always bloodhounds to run the transgressor to earth; their way is indeed hard. His evil-doing was about to be brought to light, when he confessed the truth to his stricken wife, and left her to fly the country—a criminal escaping justice. Perhaps his last words to her were the hardest to bear of all: "It was for your sake, Nan; I did it for you."

"'He called her "Nan," though it was not her name. He held her in his arms for the last time; he pressed those pure lips, and whispered good-bye in the little shell-like ear, which had learnt his guilty secret in sorrow and dread.

"'Then he left her numb and petrified, to pass to an unknown land, out of her life for ever. Through a well worked-out plan, even in her feeble state of health, this loving, heart-broken woman, widowed through his crime, misled the search being made for her husband.

"'By a letter left in his handwriting—some missing garments near a rushing torrent—it was generally supposed he had destroyed himself, and his flight was never known. Shortly after this his little daughter, whom he was destined never to see or know, was born to Nan—all that she had left of that wrecked life, all that remained of her ill-fated marriage.

"'Alone and deserted, she pined and died a lingering death in the old country home.

"'The man—her husband—in distant climes, yearned for news of his dear one, whom he had so terribly wronged. Through the agency of a friend, in whom he could trust, he learnt that his punishment was fully complete—the wife he loved—was dead! crushed by the weight of suffering and shame.

"'His child had been adopted out of pity by a rich relation—he would never see her. His last hope that some day both mother and child might rejoin him, when he could make a fresh home and new start was dashed to the ground. Nothing remained but the unending torture of regret, the scathing fires of remorse! Separated from his own flesh and blood, banished from his native land, the exile lived on.'

"He paused in his narrative.

"'What became of him?' asked Moore. 'Did he go from bad to worse, or lead a life of honest toil?'

"'He lived on,' repeated the man, 'how, I am not at liberty to say. He may have done some good, some harm—all careers are mixed. He neither murdered nor stole; but he made enemies and pals, he had rises and falls, bad luck, misadventures, sickness, and sorrows.'

"'How like a true tale—nothing happens in the end after his first false step except the commonplace, ordinary routine of existence. If you had invented the story that man would have become rich and powerful, or rushed on madly down the hill to destruction, we should have seen him in every imaginable predicament. I have sometimes fancied that if it were not for my art I should have turned my attention to novel-writing. I must always be doing something, inactivity is impossible to my temperament.'

"'Suppose then,' said the man, 'that what I have told you was the foundation of a plot for a book, and I were to ask you to finish it for me—your brain is more fertile than mine. Should the father and daughter meet again in years to come, when he is old and strangely altered, while she, the very image of her dead mother, is young, proud, beautiful, what would she say to him—how view his sorry case?

"'Put yourself, Miss Meredith, in that girl's place. She has learnt, we will imagine, the history of her father's sin, and the cause of her mother's death, for the first time. He has come back to her after a life of penitence and misery to pray her to pity and forget.'

"'In a book,' replied Moore, 'I think it would make a popular ending if your heroine's heart were to melt at the sight of her father. She could swear to forgive, in touching language, that must bring tears into the eyes of the sympathetic reader. Not only does this most self-sacrificing daughter fall into his arms in the excitement of the moment, but herself solemnly declares that she will follow him to the other end of the world. There they'll dwell in fairy-like fashion and "live happily ever after." It sounds ideal, but in real life, of course, it could hardly be the case.'

"'Why not, Miss Meredith?' asked the man, leaning forward anxiously to scan her face. '*Now* we will say that the case is reality; it steps from the realms of fiction and faces us as a fact. What then? You shall be the judge!'

"'You ask my personal opinion? Well, I will give it, though you may call me harsh, unnatural, cold. But I have a keen sense of justice, and my sympathies do not go with your prodigal. I believe in everybody reaping what they sow. Either the man should suffer in silence, and never let the shadow of his crime darken the daughter's life, or die. After all, if I were writing that story, I should say the man had better die. There is really nothing else for him to do.'

"'But,' he persisted, 'if it were true, and the man lived?'

"'Then the daughter might rise up and kill him, to revenge her mother's shattered life and early death. Or better still, to save herself from hanging, give him up to justice.'

"'You really think that?' cried the man, and his voice sounded husky and harsh. 'You would relegate him to his far-off home in lonely solitude? There would be no place for him in his daughter's heart, no corner for his loveless soul? Judging by yourself, it would be wiser that he should stay away and never seek her out. A sad ending truly to the story—a *just* ending!'

"He laughed bitterly, but his eyes were moist with unshed tears. Moore was busily putting the last touches to her work, she did not see his pained expression.

"'There!' she exclaimed at last, with a sigh of satisfaction. 'It is finished. Come and look. I am satisfied. Is that very conceited?'

"'It is saying a great deal,' he replied stonily, as he rose and went to her side.

"He hardly glanced at the striking portrait of himself, his gaze was fixed steadfastly on the face of the girl in the picture.

"'Who is that?' he asked, under his breath.

"'I took it from an old miniature of my mother. She is beautiful, indeed.'

"'Have you done with me?' he asked coldly.

"'Quite, thank you.'

"'It is ended, like my story.'

"'Yes; and if ever you write that idea as a book, don't let the old ruffian return and impose on his daughter. It would be far more artistic for him to die. I like a sad conclusion.'

"He bit his lip and moved away.

"'I hope,' she said, 'you will come and sit for me again some day.'

"'No,' he answered sadly. 'I am going away abroad, to-morrow, perhaps.'

"'I am most grateful for your services, but your sitting was arranged in such a hurry, we did not settle about terms. Please accept this.'

"Moore pressed some gold into his hand, and opened the door for him to pass out.

"He faced her with flashing eyes, and spoke contemptuously:

"'I don't want your money, not a farthing of it.'

"He flung the coins fiercely at her feet, and with a satirical laugh that sounded like a sob, rushed from the house, muttering bitter words.

"She gazed at him in speechless surprise, and turned to her picture.

"There it stood, the portrait she had unconsciously painted of her father, whom she believed dead—the mother's face at his side, vividly portrayed by the daughter's hand.

"'The only thing for him to do was to die!'—Moore had said it—and the words resounded in his ears like a death knell, when he went as he came—a stranger and unknown!"

(*Next week: "Mrs. Lyndsey's Daughter."*)

Digitized by Google

Colds in the Head a Cause of Catarrh.

The medical explanation of the causes and symptoms of catarrh is an interesting item of a quarterly medical Journal just at hand. The Editor is anxious that people should understand the serious consequences which may result from neglect of a cold or of a series of colds in the head. In fact, the beginning of many of the most obstinate forms of catarrh can be traced to what the patient thought a simple cold. This fact is emphasised by a series of cases taken from the records of the Drouet Institute. These cases also serve to illustrate the treatment of catarrh by the Drouet Method, which the Editor points out has been successful in a large proportion of instances after operations and other special procedures have failed. Names and addresses being given, this issue of the "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases" will be of use to everyone who has any form of catarrh. A free copy of the "Review" can be obtained by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10, Marble Arch, London, W. The "Review" also contains a Special Report Form by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to treatment. The Editor advises patients, however, when possible, to visit the Drouet Institute, for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are—in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultations.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 Brownie is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2½ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK Ltd., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Cold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches*: 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

Icilma

THE ONLY GUARANTEED AID TO BEAUTY.
Nature's remedy for Complexion and Skin Troubles, whether caused by heat, cold, age, irritations or accident. Send 1d. stamp for postage of Free Sample & Booklet with Guarantee.—Icilma, (Dept. 127) 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%
repayable on demand.

The Birkbeck Almanack, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT *Managing Director.*

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles**, and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc.

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6 0 0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN**, The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

To CURE Drunkards

Mrs. Geo. Fuller, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

CLERGY ENDORSE THEM

We sell a great many cycles to **clergymen** in all parts of **the world** on easy payments. No guarantors required. We supply **both sexes, all ages, all occupations.** We want **YOU** to write for our circulars.

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, **124-128, City Rd., London, E.C.**

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr Cranham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1 stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

Digitized by Google

TO CURE SICK HEADACHE.

Sick headache means an overtaxed stomach and a derangement of the digestive organs.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

have proved themselves a boon for removing that distressed feeling and discomfort. A dose will remove the immediate cause, and if repeated for a few days will enable your system to work normally.

Sold everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills) and 2/9 (168 Pills).

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

SAPON, The Ideal Cleanser is a new and marvellous invention which cannot be imitated. Makes washing-day, play-day.

Send Post Card For Trial Packet.

Try it for Silks and Laces and

FOR WOOLLENS

Never roughens the hands or injures the most delicate fabric. Must be used **without SOAP OR SODA.**

SAPON, Ltd., Dept. 68 St. Swithin's Chambers, London.

Digitized by Google

Woman's Fault.

The Maid: "Whose fault is it if women lead aimless existences?" The Man: "Woman's, of course. They ought to practise throwing."

No Chance for Him.

He: "So you don't know that if I might linger by you for ever I should be another man?" She: "Well, it will be another man that does linger there."

Precisely!

"Just by way of a hint, you know, I told her she looked sweet enough to kiss." "Well?" "Well, she said that was the way she intended to look." "And so——" "Precisely."

A Sensible Girl.

He (timidly): "Now that we are engaged, I—I presume I may—may kiss you as much as I please, mayn't I?" She (encouragingly): "Yes, indeed. Make the most of your time, dear. There's no telling how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know."

Equal to the Occasion.

Mr. Shoddy: "Yas, that's the armah used by my ancestah who came ovah with the Conquerah." Young Lady (after examining the armour carefully): "It says 'Made in Germany' on the gauntlet." Mr. Shoddy: "Oh, yes. My ancestah—er—*started* from there, don't yer know."

What Papa Said.

Mr. Slimpurse: "Wha-what did your pa say when you told him we were engaged to be married?" Miss Beauty: "He was awfully kind. He said if you would call for him to-morrow with a brougham—I think he said your brougham—he would go with you to look at the Bayswater mansion you think of buying for me to live in."

Dangerous Ground.

He: "Jolly conservatory, Miss Matchems, isn't it?" She: "Yes; quite renowned for the number of proposals that have been made here——" He: "H'm—yes. By-the-bye, they're beginning to waltz." She: "It was here that Charlie Gudgeon proposed to Miss Pyke. They were sitting here, just as we are now, and he said, quite abruptly, just as you might say to me, 'Will you be mine?' and she said, as I might say to you——" He: "Ah, yes—quite so; but hadn't we better have a spin round?"

Poor Miss Clara!

The Young Rector (in evident embarrassment): "My dear Miss Clara, I"—trying to leave his chair—"I believe I have formed an—attachment, and——" Miss Clara (blushing furiously): "Oh, Arthur—I mean Mr. Greene—this is so unexpected. I must——" The Young Rector (frantically): "I Beg pardon, Miss Clara; but I was about to say I have formed an attachment for this chair, due to the presence of a bit of cobbler's wax placed here by that unregenerate brother of yours." (Intense delight of the small boy in ambush.)

She'd Stolen his Property.

"Sir, you have been following me for an hour!" "Quite natural, miss. You've stolen my heart!"

Couldn't Marry More.

She: "Ada has married one man out of a thousand." He: "Well, how many did you expect her to marry; two or three?"

Didn't Like a Coolness.

He: "Why do you flutter that fan continuously?" She: "Do you object?" He: "I object to anything that could produce a coldness between us."

Sure Signs of Industry.

"Claudia, is the young man industrious to whom you are engaged?" "Industrious? Why, papa, he intended to propose to me a month ago, but was too busy."

Just the Man!

The Heiress: "The man I marry must be very handsome, afraid of nothing, and clever. Money's no object to me." Mr. Broke: "Doesn't it seem like fate that we should have met?"

The Sound was Similar.

When a certain Liverpool young lady parts from her young man, who is too bashful to understand the nicer usages of his position, she says: "William, if you were to kiss me, you might be afraid ma would hear it; but if I creak the gate, she won't know the difference."

Spoilt the Compliment.

The Professor: "I declare, Mrs. Blombard, you look as young as your daughter." Mrs. Blombard (much flattered): "Do you really think so, professor?" The Professor: "Yes, indeed. No one would ever believe there was such an extraordinary difference in your ages."

She Wasn't Asleep.

He had come upon her dozing on a sofa, and when she woke up, she accused him of stealing a kiss. "Well," he said, "I will admit that the temptation was too great to be resisted. I did steal one little kiss." "One!" she exclaimed indignantly; "I counted eight before I woke up."

Old Beaux Were No Use.

"You are an iceberg!" exclaimed her elderly but well-preserved adorer, pale with anger and mortification. "A dozen Cupids, with a hundred arrows each, could never find a vulnerable place in your heart!" "Not if they used an old beau to shoot with, Mr. Wellup," coldly replied the young and beautiful Miss Flyppe.

Silence was Safer.

"What if I were one of those husbands, my dear, who get up cross in the morning, and bang things about and kick everything over just because the coffee is cold?" "John," responded his wife, "I would make it hot for you." As her words admitted of more than one interpretation, John said nothing about the coffee.

Double Pressure.

Mr. Pendragon weighs eighteen stone. He called on Miss Flyrte the other evening. "Oh, Mr. Pendragon," she said, "I am so glad to see you. Would you mind sitting in this big chair? I put a portfolio of seaweeds underneath the cushion yesterday." And later in the evening Mr. Pendragon suggested that she should help him press them.

Not the Only Reason for Moving It.

"Darling," said the young man, as he tenderly raised the lovely head from the place where it had rested an hour or more, got up, sat down again on the other side of the beautiful maiden, and once more drew the golden curls to his bosom, "you have no objection to a slight change of position, have you?" "No, Alfred," she murmured softly, "your heart is on this side." "Yes, my angel," responded the young man, his voice trembling with deep feeling, "and my waistcoat will now get worn alike on both sides."

Digitized by Google

IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

An Unwise Trick.

"I MEET a man every day in the street," writes "DAISY," "and have taken such a fancy to him. He looks as though he feels the same towards me. How can I get to know him? Should I drop something in the street, and let him pick it up, or how?"

* * * * *

I would not do anything forward which you might afterwards regret. Perhaps he has set you rather on a pedestal, and would be shocked to think that you would have recourse to an obvious trick. I should wait until something happens which will really bring you together. If he is as keen on knowing you as you are on making his acquaintance, depend on it he will sooner or later find his way to do so becomingly.

A Lonely Man.

"How is a man to get to know girls?" asks "LONELY." "I live by myself in lodgings, but can never meet any nice girls—that is, of the kind a fellow likes to know. There are plenty of the other sort. Meanwhile, I am growing to feel lonely, and fear that very soon I shall be too old to attract the girls."

* * * * *

It must be in a measure your own fault, "LONELY," that you have drifted so apart from the other sex. Surely you have men friends who have sisters and cousins, and if they know you well, they ought not to fear introducing you. Why not try asking them? Failing that, join a church choir, musical or amateur dramatic society, tennis club, or some other institution where men and women meet socially. To meet the "right sort of girl" you must go to places where you are likely to find her, and must be able to attract her by some social qualities when you do meet her.

Shipboard Acquaintances.

"R. T." recently returned from a sea voyage. While on the ship he made the acquaintance of a married lady and her daughter, with whom he got very friendly. When they reached port, the ladies bade him farewell, and expressed pleasure at having met him, but said nothing as to his calling on them or continuing the acquaintance. As he got very friendly with the girl, should he take some steps to resume their acquaintance?

* * * * *

Of course you know that shipboard acquaintances are not necessarily life-long friends. To relieve the tedium of a voyage, people often become too intimate with their fellow passengers. But it does not follow that on getting ashore things are to continue on the same footing. If the married lady and her daughter had really taken a great fancy to you, they would certainly have given you an invitation to call on them, and the address and time at which such a call would be expected. Not having done so, you must take it that they did not regard you as other than a temporary acquaintance.

Should Husbands Play Cricket?

"GERTY" was married at Christmas. Until last month, her husband was scarcely ever away from her, and very rarely saw his male friends. Now that the summer has come, however, he often goes cycling or cricketing with them in the evenings or on Saturday afternoons, and leaves his wife at home. Do I think this is right? "GERTY" has not yet complained about it, but thinks she has a grievance.

* * * * *

Well, I don't think he ought to give up all his Saturday afternoons to his men friends, while he has a young wife who would like an outing as well as he does himself. If he goes cycling, or walking, he ought to arrange for you to be his companion. As to occasionally cricketing or cycling in the evenings, well, I don't think you ought to grudge him a few hours' necessary recreation in the summer, provided he does not carry it to the extent of leaving you alone too often.

* * * * *

A man ought not to entirely neglect his old "pals," and a little of their society ought to rather benefit your married happiness by making him feel that he is still a free agent. Have you not a few girl friends whom you could visit or go shopping with while your husband is on one of his outings?

A Rejected Man's Woes.

"I WAS very friendly with a girl," writes "F. T.," "and we used to go out together a lot. Then she went away for a holiday in the country. There had been a slight coolness between us before that, but I put it down to ill-health on her part. Now she has returned, and when I met her in the street the other day she cut me dead. I have since seen her about with another man, and she never looks at me. One day, I got so madly jealous that I stopped her while with him, and tried to speak to her. To my surprise, the man turned round, and said that if I dared interfere with the girl he would knock me down. How can you account for her amazing conduct?"

* * * * *

I think she has treated you very badly indeed, but for your sake think matters may be for the best. Evidently the girl took a dislike to you as a result of the "coolness," and while on her holiday met a man with whom she fell in love. When she saw you, she was probably afraid to meet you and tell the truth, so thought it better to cut you outright. It was harsh, but perhaps she preferred that way to deception. You should not have tried to speak to her against her will, while with another man. It was undignified. Always avoid scenes in public. They are rarely forgiven.

The Boarding-House Young Man.

"ELSIE" is receiving attentions from a young man in a boarding-house. He is something in the City, and has travelled a great deal. Should she encourage him?

* * * * *

You ask my advice in strict confidence about the young man. Don't think me unkind if I am quite candid about him, but I don't quite like your description. I may be wrong, but I seem to know that young man. He is a very regular frequenter of the boarding-house of the kind at which you are staying. He has generally travelled a lot, talks delightfully, knows how to pay a compliment, is free with his money when out with you, and is—something in the City.

* * * * *

He may be thoroughly genuine, but I think the majority of young men of the cosmopolitan order are seldom matrimonially inclined, and carry on such flirtations with every pretty girl they meet. Further, just get your brother or somebody you know to make a few inquiries about his position in the City before you let him squeeze your hand again, and get to know something about his family antecedents before you next turn those pleading grey eyes upwards to his in a glance of half affection, half doubt.

Cynthia

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

PROGRESS.

This Trade Mark appears on every Gramophone and every Gramophone Record.

A NEW KIND OF GRAMOPHONE RECORD.

THE "MONARCH" OR 12-INCH RECORD, PRICE 7/6 EACH.

In placing before the public this Catalogue of the first twelve-inch Gramophone Records ever issued, we wish to call attention to some of the many advantages which a Record of this size possesses over discs of a lesser diameter. Not only does the Record play considerably longer, averaging about four minutes, but, owing to the less acute curve which the sound waves are called upon to traverse, the sounds are reproduced with even more exactness and truth to nature than is possible in a ten-inch Record, perfect as the latter are. A twelve-inch Record is not necessarily louder; it is in the quality and breadth of tone that the improvement is most noticeable. Furthermore, in a record of this diameter, it is possible to reproduce in the minutest detail all those little delicacies of treatment which true artists impart to their work. Without hesitation we say that the twelve-inch Record marks a great and distinct advancement in the science of sound recording and reproduction.

H.M. SCOTS GUARDS.

(Conducted by Mr. FRED WOOD).

01 Selection from "The Silver Slipper" (Leslie Stuart).
02 Overture to "The Bohemian Girl" (Balfe).
03 "Raymond" Overture.
04 Reminiscences of Scotland.
05 "Hallelujah" Chorus.
06 "Zampa" Overture.

Mr. BEN DAVIES.

02000 Tom Bowling (Dibdin).
02003 I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby (Clay).
02004 Salve Dimora, "Faust" (Gounod).

INSTRUMENTAL—'CELLO.

Mr. F. CORRI.

07850 Fantasia on "Faust" (Gounod).
07851 Aria from "Samson and Delilah" (St. Saëns).

ORCHESTRAL SELECTIONS

THE COURT BAND OF ST. PETERSBURG.

020500 Finale from the opera "La Juive" (Galevy).
020501 Daybreak.
020503 Fantasia from the opera "Birdseller" (Zeller).
020504 Czardas from the opera "The Waywode's Shade" (Grossman).
020505 March and Harlequinade from the ballet suite "Masquerade" (Lacom).
020506 Finale from the ballet suite "Masquerade" (Lacom).
020507 My Dream Waltz (Waldteufel).
020508 Spanish Dance (with castanettes).

Mr. DAN LENO.

02001 Going to the Races.
02005 The Huntsman.

Mr. DAN LENO—COMIC PATTER.

01000 The Robin.

On receipt of a postcard, Catalogues of Records and Price-list of Gramophones will be sent together with the name and address of the nearest dealer in our Gramophones.

THE GRAMOPHONE AND TYPEWRITER LTD.,

21 CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C.

And at Berlin, Hanover, Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Brussels, Amsterdam, Milan, Sydney, Calcutta and Barcelona.

Digitized by Google

The Cocoa "Par Excellence."

Fry's Pure Concentrated Cocoa

300 Gold Medals, &c.

"I HAVE NEVER TASTED COCOA THAT I LIKE SO WELL."

Sir CHAS. CAMERON, C.B., M.D.,
Ex-President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland.

Sold only in 6d. Packets—¼, ½, & 1lb. Tins.

WHITE AND GOLD LABEL.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 756.] Week ending June 27th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

NEARER AND NEARER CAME THE MOTOR-CYCLE; MORE AND MORE DEADLY BECAME THE AIM.

Digitized by Google

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "A Dangerous Suitor." See inside.)

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says: There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

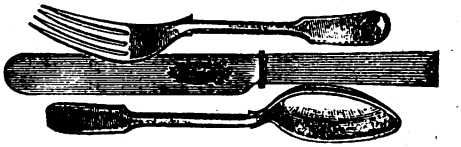
Neuralgia

"LET'S TALK OF GRAVES' Cutlery"

...THE... "ENTERPRISE" PARCEL 25/-
Of Household Cutlery and Plate.

Containing: 6 Table Knives and 6 Dessert Knives, made of reliable Sheffield Steel and fitted with polished white 'Ivorette' Handles. "Ivorette" is the best substitute for genuine African Ivory. The Plate consists of 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Mustard Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, 1 Pair of Sugar Tongs, 1 Moist Sugar Spoon and 1 Pickle Fork.

The Spoons and Forks are made of "Columbian" Silver, a hard white metal. It is the finest substitute for Sterling Silver known, will wear white throughout, and is unaffected by acids or exposure.



51 PIECES FOR 25 SHILLINGS.

J. G. Graves is the only Manufacturer who supplies the Public direct, and the whole of the above Goods are made in the Firm's own factory in Sheffield.

TERMS. Send 5s. with order and complete purchase in five more monthly payments of 4s.; or HANDSOME BONUS PRESENT for full cash payment.

All orders are executed under **Positive Agreement** to refund the full amount of the deposit if you are not perfectly satisfied.

No. 1 Catalogue of Watches, Cutlery and Plate, etc., Post free.

Good Agents Wanted in spare time. No Risk. Good Pay.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division St., SHEFFIELD.

If you wish to SLEEP WELL
—TAKE—

BEECHAM'S PILLS

You will SLEEP WELL,

because **BEECHAM'S PILLS** gently calm irritation of the Nervous system, while by their stimulative and cleansing action upon the Liver and Kidneys, Digestion proceeds with normal regularity, so that at night the tranquillised mind and body are prepared for "Nature's sweet restorer"— peaceful slumber. Should one feel restless after an exciting or convivial evening a dose of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** will quickly induce refreshing sleep.

Sold everywhere in Boxes, price 1/1½ (56 Pills), and 2/9 (168 Pills).

One Hundred Million Pounds

of "elbow grease" have already been saved by Sapon, the Ideal Cleanser. Buy some—and use your spare "elbow grease" for shaking hands with yourself.

Free packet on receipt of post card with grocer's name, to Sapon, Ltd., Dept. : , 33, St. Swithin's Lane, London.

SAPON THE IDEAL CLEANSER

"For WOOLLENS" and all home Laundry Work.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 756.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 27th, 1903.

A Dangerous Suitor.

A STORY OF LOVE AND JEALOUSY.

Containing the incident depicted on the cover.

A Woman and Two Men.

"CAN you tell me the way to Thurston?"

The questioner was a young man in dusty, but well-cut tweed garments, a peaked cap of leather, and high-leather leggings, and he balanced, as he stood on the edge of the wild moorland road, a much muddied, yet swift and powerful-looking motor-bicycle. The grey-bearded Yorkshire farm-hand, whom he had accosted, scanned the machine and its owner with a kind of disdain.

"Thurston!" he said, in the broad dialect of this county, "you're in Thurston." And he relapsed into his stare of silent disdain. The cyclist laughed and glanced about him at the prospect of low, dark hill-sides and sweeping, deserted road, rendered more melancholy by the cloudy warmth of the summer afternoon.

"That's all very well so far as it goes," was his tolerant answer; "but I suppose there's some sort of a village that calls itself Thurston? And then there ought to be a big rock hereabouts—at least if this is the Thurston I've been making for."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"Humph!" the cyclist was told. "I reckon it's the Stone you want. You're not the only one that's come a fool's jaunt to see it. It's no rock—only a big pebble on the lip of a hole. I wouldn't go a dozen yards to see it."

The cyclist put a shilling into the speaker's withered palm and slapped him on the back.

"All right, Father Christmas," he said cheerfully, "every man to his taste. But you might show me how I can get to the Stone—then I can make up my mind what *I* think of it."

The old Yorkshireman chuckled with unexpected good temper and, pocketing the coin, pointed up a hilly footpath that diverged from the main road.

"Go up the brow there," he directed, "the Stone's just over it, in front of you. And I wouldn't go far on that thing of yours, for there's a nasty drop on the other side of the Stone and the path winds a bit to get by."

The cyclist nodded and sprang on to his machine, to pedal a few yards before touching a lever. The motor began to cough loudly, after its fashion, a whiff of petrol floated back on the air, and Allan Menzies, house-surgeon of St. Anne's Hospital, London, was sailing up the indicated slope as easily as if it had been down instead of up-hill.

A length or two from the crest of the hill he touched the lever once more. Another instant and the bicycle was over the rise. A low whistle broke from the young surgeon's lips, his fingers went to the brake-handle in a flash, and the heavy cycle, run deftly on to the soft moorland at the rim of the path, slowed sharply. Allan Menzies got off.

Before him was an abrupt descent in the reverse slope of the hill, a descent falling almost perpendicularly to an irregular hollow. The bottom of the hollow was eighty feet below, and held a wide, wind-ruffled pool that opened out in shallowing stretches to the lower levels of the moor.

On the lofty verge of the descent, whose height and sheerness might have entitled it to the name of a precipice, was poised a huge, flat-topped boulder, of the species known as "rocking-stones."

The young surgeon leant his machine against a bank and mounted the great slab. It oscillated beneath his weight, threatening to plunge him into the depths below. But he did not wince—he was an enthusiastic student of archæology, and he understood that the Stone was firmly fixed on its unstable base.

Centuries before, according to tradition, it had been a Druidic altar, on which human sacrifices had been offered to the God of Thunder, and as Thor's Stone it had given its name to the neighbouring village.

Allan Menzies sat down upon it and contemplated reflectively the surrounding panorama. Not far off, round the foot of the hill, he could see the roofs of the village and the tower of a tiny church. Higher up, on the flank of a commanding hill, and incircled by an ugly fenced park, was a gaunt, grey house, with tall gables.

The cyclist produced a red-backed guide-book, laid it on the Stone, and planting his elbows on either side of it, and resting his chin in his hands, leisurely perused a page.

"'Thurston-by-Ottery,'" he read, "'a small village and perpetual curacy in the parish of Ottery, known for a rocking-stone, said to have been used as a Druidic altar, and for other archæological remains. There is a picturesque little church, dating from the seventeenth century. The present holder of the curacy is the Rev. Octavius Vaughan, M.A., author

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

of "The Druidical Monuments of Thurston," and other works. Ottery Hall, near here, is the seat of Mr. Cunliffe Frobisher, J.P., and a severely plain type of Yorkshire manor-house. The high-road does not pass through the village, but may be regained by turning to the left, opposite the Green Man Inn.'"

The reader checked the swift, scarcely-audible murmur in which he had been running over the various items of information. He had been interrupted by an exclamation. It came from a point below where he sat, and yet it seemed to be close to him.

"Please! Please! Mr. Frobisher!"

The voice was a woman's, and the inflection—at once pleading and protesting—was unmistakably girlish. Allan Menzies, struck by the repetition of a name he had just read, raised his eyebrows, and, drawing himself to the edge of the Stone, peered over.

Below him, moving slowly by, and apparently too absorbed to notice the motor-cycle he had propped up in full view, were a man and a woman. They had come over the hill by the same route as had Allan Menzies, and were passing the Stone on their way into the valley.

The man was big, muscular, and smartly dressed in the garb of a country gentleman, though his full black beard and heavy features lent him the air of a gamekeeper. Over his arm were looped the reins of a weight-carrying bay mare.

The woman at his side was both youthful and pretty, her figure slender yet vigorous, and her girlishly-curling brown hair set off a dainty head. She was simply dressed and wheeled a none-too-new "ladies' safety"—the firm brown fingers on the handle-bar were full of character. Her companion halted and bent upon her a gaze that, to the unseen watcher, seemed almost ferocious in its passion. Allan Menzies, fearful of embarrassing them, had hesitated to reveal his presence.

"Miss Vaughan," said the horseman huskily; "you are very cruel. Do you not understand that it is an insult to me that you should persist in riding that machine, clumsy and worn-out as it is, rather than use the one I gave you."

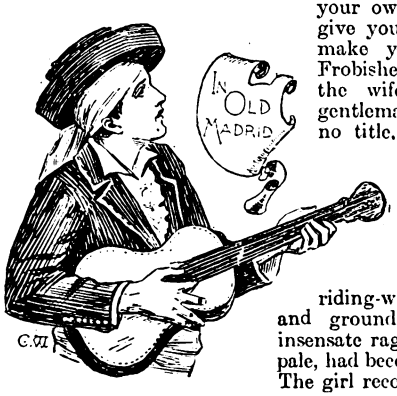
The person addressed shook her head.

"The one you offered me, Mr. Frobisher," she corrected; "I did not take it—I could not take it. You would not have it back, it is true, but I did not accept and I cannot use it. But I did not mean to insult you. And, oh, please let us talk of something else."

"Pshaw!" retorted her companion roughly, "we will talk of what I choose. I say that you insult me—me, the man who loves you better than anyone else can or will."

He silenced her by a fierce gesture, and when she would have passed on detained her by laying a hand upon the cycle she was wheeling.

"Your father's curacy," he continued, "does not provide a living for the proverbial church-mouse; I offer you, if not wealth, at least luxury and leisure. You were made to live in the sunshine—to travel, to see the world, to enjoy pictures, and music, and flowers, to wear pretty frocks, and ride in your own carriage. I can give you all these. I can make you Mrs. Cunliffe Frobisher, of Ottery Hall, the wife of an English gentleman, who, if he have no title, is the equal in descent of a dozen peers. Yet you refuse. Why? To spite me, to insult me, to thwart and trample on me."



He bent his riding-whip almost double and ground his teeth in an insensate rage. His face, from pale, had become a glowing red. The girl recoiled.

"I—I am very sorry," she faltered, "but really you are wrong. It is only because I do not love you—I do not love anybody like that. It would be wicked of me to say 'yes'—it would, indeed."

Cunliffe Frobisher started forward.

"No, it wouldn't," he cried; "you must say 'Yes.' I don't care whether you love me or not, I won't let anyone else have you. It would kill me. Elise, Elise, say you will marry me!"

Elise Vaughan sighed.

"I can't, Mr. Frobisher," she said. "I wouldn't marry any man I didn't love. I would rather die."

Her companion put out a pair of hands that quivered with passion.

"Suppose—suppose," he answered, "I gave you your choice—to die or to promise. You are killing me, Elise, what if I were to make short work of it all, and take you with me?"

Elise abandoned her machine and retreated—the expression on the countenance so close to her own was sinister in the extreme. He flung the impeding bicycle aside and advanced ominously. A cry burst from her lips.

The cry wakened Allan Menzies from his inaction. At a bound he leapt from the rock above on to the level of the path, and crossed, with an assumption of polite unconcern, to the motor-cycle that leant against the adjoining bank. Then he turned, lifting his cap to Elise.

"I—I fear I have been," he observed, "an involuntary eavesdropper on the conversation I have just interrupted. Perhaps, having regard to this gentleman's last remark, you would prefer not to—not to be left alone with him. In that case, I—I——"

He hesitated significantly. Cunliffe Frobisher uttered a terrible imprecation, but the young surgeon got out his pocket-book, and, with imperturbable self-possession, presented a strip of pasteboard to Elise.

"I am very much at your service," he continued; "as you see, though just now on a vacation, I enjoy the advantage of being that eminently respectable person, a professional man. May I offer you my escort as far as the—the village?"

Elise paused, undecided, yet attracted by his tact and friendly bearing.

"I—I am not really afraid of Mr. Frobisher," she said, "but I don't think he is quite himself at the moment. I—I will ride on."

Allan Menzies bowed, and proceeded to rescue her machine from the turfy roadside on which Cunliffe Frobisher had allowed it to fall. He delivered it to her gravely and stepped back for her to mount. She put her foot on the pedal, then glanced round at the two men. They were looking at each other in the grim English fashion that portends storm. She motioned to Allan Menzies—a girlish, half-beseeching gesture.

He understood and wheeled out his own machine. A faint, relieved smile flitted over her young features, as though she were pleased at his obedience. When she had ridden off he mounted quickly and the motor-cycle followed the shabby "ladies' safety" down the hill.

Cunliffe Frobisher remained standing. A little trickle of blood flowed over his bearded chin. He had bitten deeply into the flesh of his lower lip.

A Sudden Declaration.

"INDEED, Mr. Menzies, and I could wish that your stay in Thurston might have been extended. I assure you it is a great privilege for a hermit like myself to meet and converse with one who belongs to that outside world from which circumstances have isolated me and mine. Elise, my dear, give Mr. Menzies another cup of tea."

The Reverend Octavius Vaughan, perpetual curate of the chapelry of Thurston, was a small, spare man, in worn clerical garments, with a fresh complexion, fast whitening locks of ruffled brown hair and kindly, absent-minded blue eyes. He was lounging, as he spoke, by the open windows of a sunny country sitting-room, a half-emptied cup at his

Digitized by Google

elbow, his spectacles between a finger and thumb, thoughtfully regarding the young house-surgeon.

Allan Menzies took his own cup to the little afternoon tea-table over which the curate's daughter was presiding. His hand touched hers as she possessed herself of the cup, but Elise did not look at him. Yet he could see, by a sensitive angle of her mouth, that her lips were quivering.

"The privilege has been mine, Mr. Vaughan," he said; "and I am loth to leave your quiet hermitage for the hurly-burly of the Big Village. Yet it must be done, my vacation ends to-day, to-morrow I must free my substitute at the hospital. But I want to carry off with me the book you so kindly promised me. Forgive my reminding you of it."

The other rubbed his thin, soft palms together.

"My dear sir," he answered delightedly. "I am honoured by your interest in the little volume. How could I forget it! Of course, of course, a copy of 'The Druidic Remains of Thurston.' Let me see, I have some copies in my study; you shall have one immediately."

"And if I may suggest your autographing it——" added his visitor.

"Certainly, certainly," said the archæologist, flattered, and he hastened off, adjusting his spectacles as he went.

Elise Vaughan was bringing the house surgeon his second cup of tea. He turned to meet, and take it from her. Their hands touched again—this time his closed upon both her fingers and the delicate china. Elise's gaze was still averted.

"Miss Vaughan," observed Allan Menzies, gently; "do me the favour to look at me."

His request was obeyed, slowly, and he saw that the large brown eyes were full of tears. He put down the cup of tea and clasped her hand in his own strong ones.

"Miss Vaughan," he said, huskily, "I have only known you a fortnight. Dare I—ought I—will you not think that I am paying you a very doubtful compliment, or will you—will you understand——"

Elise's head had drooped; he bent a tender glance upon it.

"Some men love once and for all," he said, "I have been too busy for flirtation, too busy even to realise, in the romantic sense, that I have a heart. But when I saw you I felt, in a flash, that you were the sort of woman I could love. I have lingered in Thurston, hardly knowing what I was doing, yet hoping to cultivate, as I have been audacious enough to do, our chance acquaintanceship. You have not shunned me, thank Heaven, and in the conversation which I overheard from the Stone, you said you loved no one, really."

He broke off, she had not changed her position, or offered to speak.

"I wonder," he murmured, "if you are only sorry for me. There were tears in your eyes a moment ago. Don't pity me, Elise, tell me I must think no more of you, if you must, but don't pity me—I could not bear it; I——"

He stopped again. Elise raised her head; her eyes were still wet, but she was smiling through her tears.

"I—I was pitying myself," she faltered. Allan Menzies came so close to her that she could feel his bosom heave.

"Why?" he asked her. Elise swayed to him as a young sapling sways before a wind too strong for it.

"Because you are going away," she said. Allan Menzies uttered an inarticulate cry, and clasped her in his arms. She sprang free of them just in time, her father was re-entering the room, and with him was a tall, broad-shouldered figure in riding-dress.

"Ah, Mr. Menzies," he exclaimed, "here is the book, and here is a friend of mine whom I have been wanting to make your acquaintance, only, somehow, you have not happened to meet. But I have spoken to him of you frequently. Mr. Menzies, Mr. Frobisher—Mr. Cunliffe Frobisher, a near neighbour of ours."

Allan Menzies stepped forward, with cool self-possession. The big Yorkshireman's face was flushed and twitching, and there was a glow in his black pupils that startled the house surgeon. It was a strange, wild visage that stared into his—strong with an almost uncontrollable strength, fierce with a well-nigh ungovernable passion

The calm glance of the young medical man encountered the other's ferocious one, and his brows contracted slightly. He recognised that his rival was on the verge either of a paroxysm of insanity or an apoplectic stroke.

Was it possible, he asked himself, that the big Yorkshireman had marked the interrupted embrace, and drawn his own conclusions? He could not be sure. In any case he must do something to relieve the intolerable tension.

"I am pleased to meet Mr. Frobisher," he answered, conventionally, "but I fear it was scarcely worth while troubling him with so brief an acquaintanceship. I am on my way out of Thurston at the moment," he added, turning to Cunliffe Frobisher, "I have lingered here all too long as it is."

The other murmured some commonplace of regret, and the surgeon addressed himself to his host, to relieve the curate of the promised volume.

"Yes," he continued, with a glance at Elise, "I was to have cycled back to London, but I have stayed so long in Thurston that I must avail myself of the railway—I hope to catch the night express at Leeds."

"Sixty miles," said Cunliffe Frobisher, more politely, "a rather heavy run, is it not, in so short a time."

"Not on a motor-cycle," replied Allan Menzies, gravely, pocketing the Reverend Octavius Vaughan's masterpiece, and shaking hands with him warmly. "Sorry I must say farewell, Mr. Vaughan, in such a hurry. I shall count on seeing you again one of these days."

"I hope so," said the little archæologist, heartily; "good-bye to you, Mr. Menzies."

The surgeon bowed to the stiff, black-bearded figure behind the curate, and took his departure. On the threshold of the room he lingered to clasp Elise's hand.

"Did you see his face?" she whispered, "he was just going to burst out—I am sure he is mad."

"Who wouldn't be, over you?" answered the surgeon lightly. "But see here, I'm not going like this, my darling. I can't speak to your father yet awhile, old folks don't take kindly to love at first sight. But won't you come and say good-bye to me? I have to go back to the inn, I will be in the lane by the church as soon as it is dark. I can get to Leeds easily over these roads in three hours and a half. You will come, sweetheart?"

Elise answered with her eyes. The answer satisfied Allan Menzies, and he went off, with a louder and more formal farewell. The big Yorkshireman, ostensibly talking to the Reverend Octavius, had been covertly watching the young surgeon.

Shows What Happened.

ALLAN MENZIES had been staying for a fortnight at the Green Man, the quaint old inn in the one straggling main street of Thurston. Bound on a cycling tour as far as the Highlands he had lingered in the Yorkshire village day after day, snatching, on one pretext and another, glimpses of the girl with whom such a singular circumstance had made him acquainted.

An audacious introduction of himself to her father as an amateur student of antiquities, and an admirer of those of Thurston in particular, had served a purpose he dare scarcely own to himself.

Digitized by Google

He had cycled with Elise, he had walked with her, he had gossiped and talked of books with her. But he had never spoken of love till the sight of those wet eyes—wetted by the thought of his departure—had surprised him into speech. He strolled back to the old inn, humming a gay air; he had never been so happy in his life.

Happiness and hunger are near cousins, and he attacked with an excellent appetite the meal he had ordered to await his return. He had made himself a favourite with the folks at the Green Man, and the landlord came and chatted with him as he sat at a table in the cool bar-parlour.

Little by little the day failed, and the dusk settled down on the Yorkshire uplands. Allan Menzies paid his bill, overhauled his cycle, lit the lamp, washed the grease and mud from his hands, and bade farewell to his host and hostess.

Springing into the saddle he pedalled off, touched a lever, and the coughing of the motor rose sharply on the night air. He sounded his horn as he swung round the bend beyond the inn.

Not far away the little spire of the ancient "chapel" showed duskily against the sky, he switched off the motor as he neared the end of the lane of which he had spoken to Elise. Turning into the lane he pedalled down it, looking for her. The high hedgerows darkened the lane, and he could not penetrate the shadows. He sounded his horn again, knowing that she would recognise the familiar *teuf teuf*.

A cry answered it—a cry in her voice. "Allan, Allan!" floated to his ears. The cry was far away down the lane, and there was terror in the girlish tones. He set over one of the small levers at his knee, and the cycle shot forward along the deeply rutted thoroughfare.

He heard the cry once more, faint and retreating, "Allan, Allan!" A superstitious thrill shook him, but he held on his course. It was dangerous steering, the ground beneath was bad, and the lane grew narrower.

Suddenly it ended. He had emerged upon the beaten path that crossed the moor towards the loftier crest and Thor's Stone. The moon was up, and by its light he caught a glimpse—or thought he did—of a horse and rider, moving in great bounds, like those of a flying thoroughbred, along the path. Nothing else broke the stillness of the rolling moorland.

Allan Menzies sounded his horn again, and again there came the cry of "Allan, Allan!" It floated back to him down the vague night breeze. He set over the gear lever of his machine, and the motor-cycle sped up the slope as only a high grade petrol-engine could have made it. It overtook the flying horse and rider, and he saw by the moonbeams a bearded face that glanced back at him. The rider was Cunliffe Frobisher, and he had something on his saddle-bow—something that struggled and screamed, in a voice that was the voice of Elise Vaughan.

The house-surgeon carried a revolver, as do many cyclists who tour much by night on lonely roads. He drew and loaded it.

"Stop!" he cried hoarsely. "Stop, you mad fool, before I have to put a bullet through you."

But the flying horsemen only laughed, and continued his desperate career. Elise, ceasing to scream, redoubled her efforts to free herself.

Nearer and nearer came the motor-cycle. Another instant, and it was alongside the galloping mare. The big Yorkshireman stared down at his pursuer with eyes of flame.

"You shan't have her!" he shouted. "You shan't! I will take her with me! You thought you had fooled me nicely, didn't you? But I heard, oh, yes, I heard, and I was waiting for my lady, here. Be still, you jade!"

He crushed Elise in his arms, and laughing wildly, urged the mare to her utmost speed. Before them loomed the crest of the hill, with the flat mass of Thor's Stone showing above it, and marking the edge of the cliff above the lake.

The slope of the hill eased somewhat, and the cycle, freed from the strain of the sharp incline, shot forward. As he came level with the galloping mare, Allan Menzies threw away his weapon, and snatched at the rein. It was the only way; he dared not risk a shot. Elise was in too close proximity to her captor. The house-surgeon had drawn up one foot, and set it on the edge of the front fork of his machine. With the speed of light, for his life depended on it, he loosed his handle-bar, and leapt high to clear his legs of the swerving cycle. It swung aside, and, hurtling into the dark of the moor, pitched over, throbbing loudly.

Allan Menzies clung to the mare's neck and hung on. The jerk at the rein had brought her round, she galloped in a new direction, dragging him with her. Cunliffe Frobisher struck at him savagely with a clenched fist, and shouted to the mare.

But the poor brute was winded and faltered in her stride. The young surgeon felt it, and swung himself up to grapple with the madman in the saddle. The other closed with him, and Elise, half fainting, slipped to the ground.

The struggle was brief. Allan Menzies was no match for his huge and maniacal opponent. He was hurled to the ground and the mare, frightened by the conflict thus suddenly terminated, plunged into the night with her rider.

Allan Menzies had fallen on soft turf, but one arm was doubled beneath him, and the shock had jarred his brains into a temporary dizziness. He recovered his scarcely-lost consciousness to feel a soft cheek against his own, and a pair of clinging arms about him. Elise, guided by the moonlight, had found her way to him, and his face was wet with her anxious tears.

* * * * *

Some farm-hands crossing the moor early the next morning, found and caught the mare. She was grazing near the edge of the pool in the hollow below Thor's Stone, her coat scarcely dry, her hoofs and legs muddy. Nor could she be easily induced to leave the spot.

A whisper of her owner's strange doings was already abroad in the village, for Allan Menzies had been carried back the preceding night to the parsonage with a fractured collar-bone, and a little party had set out from there at dawn to search the moors. The brute's attachment to its master was well-known, and her reluctance to leave the neighbourhood of the pool had in it something ominous.

Later in the day the sullen water was dragged, and the great hooks brought ashore the giant form of Cunliffe Frobisher. He had been drowned, but there were not wanting evidence of severe physical shock. Whether in his madness—for neither Elise nor her lover had any doubt that he was mad—he had ridden the mare into the pool from its lower bank, or had leapt her into it from the lofty platform of Thor's Stone, will never be ascertained.

Cunliffe Frobisher lies in the little burial ground of Thurston Chapel. His desperate wooing ended less horribly than he would have had it, but Elise and Allan, though they shudder to think of that grim struggle with the mounted madman, do not judge him.

His was a rarely passionate and ill-controlled nature, and he had been kind, in his own way, to the poor, and a just landlord to his tenants. Nor was he the first whom an ill-starred love had driven across the borderland of reason.

In all true love there is a spice of madness, let not those to whom Fate is kind judge those on whom she turns a sterner countenance. It is enough that his madness harmed none but himself. Elise and Allan are happy.

R. Norman Silver.

Ted: "Was it hard to tell Miss Prim you loved her?' Ned: "Not very. The hard part came in a month later when I had to tell her I had made a mistake."

Jane: "I shall marry no man unless he has strong temperance sentiments." Bess: "Of course not. You will want a man who isn't easily driven to drink."

Mr. Trotter: "Why did you place Foster and Bell opposite each other at dinner? Don't you know they are bitter enemies?" Mrs. Trotter: "That's just it. I did it on purpose. They spent so much time in glaring at each other that they couldn't eat much."

Digitized by Google

The Heart of a Stripling.

Telling of How it Was Broken and Mended.

Young Thorne rang three times before a little maid in cap and apron responded.

"Mrs. Redwood is out," she told him, "and Miss Redwood, too? No, sir, I don't know where she's gone. No, sir, there was nobody with her."

Thorne considered for a moment, looked up and down the road, and made off towards the river. Fifteen minutes later, with a sigh of relief, he pulled alongside a little boat which was being idly paddled down stream. He stared straight across the boat sides, from under his down-pulled hatbrim, into the face he had come to see.

"I'm here," he announced briefly, without returning the rather constrained smile of greeting she gave him. "I told you I'd come once more. You told me not to. I did not try not to. It wouldn't have made any difference if I had. I should have come just the same. May I get into your boat?"

"I suppose it would be of no use to forbid you." She was trying to speak lightly. "You are not good at obeying."

"It would be of no use at all," he declared stoutly, as he got quickly into her boat, and tied his own to the stern. "I must see you and talk with you, and you might as well let it be here. It's the most advantageous place for you," he added bitterly, with a keen look into her downcast face. "You can keep me at arm's length without half trying. I wish you couldn't," he added under his breath.

She answered nothing, and he took her oars and pulled along swiftly for a few minutes without speaking. Presently he swung the boat round into the mouth of a little creek which wound invitingly away from the broader river, beneath arches of overhanging elms.

"Not up there," she protested.

"Only a hundred feet or so," he told her determinedly. "Just round the bend. Surely you'll let me get you a little bit away from all these other boats. You don't want everybody to see my defeat, do you? They all know my case, anyhow.

"When I go by your row of cottages I feel those women's eyes looking right through me. I know what they're saying: 'There's that fool of a Lawrence Thorne, come up here to let Julie Redwood refuse him for the third time.'"

He drew his hat further over his eyes without looking at her, and pulled rapidly round the bend. There, under the shadow of a great down-drooping elm, he dropped the oars into the boat, and catching a branch held on lightly by it, while he faced his companion.

"Now, Julie," he said softly, "look at me."

Unwillingly Miss Redwood's eyes turned upon the young fellow's face. It was a fine one, handsome, with more than ordinary well-turned features, and pale just now with fixity of purpose. A powerful pair of dark eyes looked into hers with such ardour that her own drooped beneath them.

"Just let me go over it all once more," he pleaded. "No, don't shake your head. I can't help it. I must try this last time to make you see things as I do. I suppose all I said a month ago has gone for nothing. You haven't even thought about it in the interval, have you?"

Julie Redwood raised her head and tried to smile in a frank and friendly way.

"Surely I have, Larry," she said gently, "your words are not so easily forgotten as that. But—it hasn't made any difference."

"I knew you would say that," he told her, with a long breath. "I knew you would say it the minute I gave you a chance. I'd have been a fool to expect anything else. All the same I hoped——"

He stopped for an instant, twisting the branch he held with nervous strength, then finished with a shake in his voice, "I hoped, in spite of all, Julie, that I'd made you think of me just a little more kindly."

"I couldn't think of you more kindly, Larry."

"Yes, you could," the branch snapped in his hand as he spoke. "You call it kindness to say 'no' to me because you are older than I—older!—and I have to be with you and look at you, and hear you talk about yourself as old—*you!*"

Julie Redwood flushed rosily. Her exquisite, girlish-looking beauty seemed to sustain his words. But she faced him patiently, and began to say to him what she had told him more than once before.

"Larry, dear——"

"Don't call me that. You don't mean it."

"I do mean it. I've always called you that, and loved you"—the young man stirred impatiently—"as if you were my brother—better than I could love a brother. But, Larry, think. When you were a little fellow in dresses I——"

"Used to hold me on your lap—yes, I know—and curl my hair. I've heard it all a hundred times from everybody. Great Heavens! What difference does that make?"

Thorne flung one oar into the water, plunging it savagely to the bottom and seizing it as it came up as if it were the horn of his dilemma. "Honestly, what difference? You were fifteen and I was five; you were twenty and I was ten. Then I was fifteen and you were twenty, still. I was twenty—and you—*were twenty!*"

"You do my mind and heart great honour," she said quickly. "I stood still while you went on——"

"You know well enough what I mean," he interrupted, in his turn. "You are ten years older than I in knowledge, in accomplishments, in everything but appearance. But you don't look as old as I—and you won't," he went on hurriedly. "You won't. You need never fear that by-and-bye people will begin to see the difference. Look at your mother. Only last night I heard a man wager that she wasn't over forty-five."

There was silence for several minutes while Thorne waited with an odd shortness of breath which he tried in vain to overcome. Then Miss Redwood began once more, slowly, as if she were trying to think out her argument as she talked.

"Larry, dear—please let me call you that just as I always have—I don't know how to tell you any plainer than I have already, yet I can't make you understand. It isn't only that I'm older in years, and must be forty when you are thirty, and fifty when you are——"

"Forty, and a hundred when I am ninety. That's right, rub it in!"

She sighed and hesitated for a moment, looking down into the water, while her fingers absently pulled a water-lily bud into pieces. "It's more than that. You know how much I care for you——"

"Oh, yes, I know," muttered Thorne beneath his breath.

"I shall always care just as much. You are the dearest boy——"

"Oh, Julie!" cried the young fellow desperately, "spare me that, I used to like it, when I was a boy. I'm not a boy now, if I am only twenty-three. I used to be happy when you called me that and think it meant something. I know now it means about as much as a pat on a dog's head—to keep him quiet. It won't keep me quiet any longer. I'm not your 'dearest boy.' I don't want to be. I want to be your——"

"Larry!" she stopped him with a heightened colour in her cheeks, as his eager voice reached the dangerous word, so sweet to him, so unwelcome to her. "You mustn't say it. You can't be that. I've told you so over and over again.

"I try to make you realise that with all my love for you I

can't love you—*so*. You make me have to put it very plainly; and I hate to hurt you, but I must. It isn't so much that I'm too old for you—it's that you are not old enough for me.

"It isn't your fault. Ten years from now you will begin to be old enough to marry a woman of thirty-three; but now—dear—can't you see? You are just a boy, and that—isn't *enough* for me."

The words had grown softer and slower and more gentle with each sentence; but Julie Redwood saw with an aching heart that each one had dealt a cruel blow.

Thorne winced beneath them like a lad under a lash; and as they ended, he suddenly seized the oars, flung them into the locks, and began pulling as if for dear life.

With his head bending and falling before her as he rowed, his mouth with its handsome curves compressed into one narrow, straight line, his unhappy eyes fastened upon the bottom of the boat, Thorne was trying to take his sentence like the man she had said he was not.

At last Miss Redwood broke the silence, beginning tenderly, "Dear, you will get over it——"

"Don't!" cried Thorne, so wildly that she stopped, frightened, and hardly dared to look at her young lover, rowing with a short, quick stroke which sent the two slender boats through the water like one long arrow.

She waited then, her heart beating fast, for she was really very sorry for the young fellow, whose boyish adoration had grown into this great and unmanageable passion.

For one pitying moment it seemed as if such love—immature as it appeared to her—might satisfy her from its very intensity, even though it lacked the qualities she longed for. But when Thorne spoke at last, the very words which deepened her pity for him hardened her heart against his suit, they were so characteristically boyish.

"I've tried all my life to please you," he pleaded, looking up into her face with eyes which made her own fill. "From a little lad I've thrown over my own will whenever you asked it.

"I learnt to play the violin—when I hated the bother—because you wanted me to. I went to college instead of into the warehouse with father because it was your wish.

"I kept straight all through, where lots of other fellows went to the devil, because you said you couldn't kiss any but clean lips. God knows what I've forsworn for the sake of those two kisses a year—one when I came home for holidays, and one when I went back."

His voice broke; with a hasty movement he drew one white flannel sleeve across his eyes. After a minute he went on a little shakily—

"You think me boyish, yet since eighteen I've had but one hope and one ambition—to get old enough and wise enough and worthy enough to win you. I've had little affairs with girls, of course—what fellow doesn't? But never for one moment has my ideal changed. Is that boyish? Five years of trying to grow fit for one woman?

"And now I've got myself ready for the work you wanted me to do, and have a good start and an independent income, to say nothing of father's promises. I thought when I reached that you would be pleased and proud enough to reward me. It's all I've lived for. And now you say I'm only a boy. What makes a man, Julie—only years?"

He was looking at her so despairingly that she felt it hopeless to try to comfort him. Yet she made one more attempt.

"Larry," she said, giving him one long look out of the beautiful eyes which were so dear to him, "I can only tell you that if you are still a boy, you are a very manly one, and I'm proud of you. I wish with all my heart I could give you what you want, even though I know it isn't best."

"You wish you could," he cried, wresting from her words one more vain hope which she had not meant to convey; "then *do* it, Julie—*darling!*—Listen——"

Regardless of possible onlookers, he dropped into the bottom of the boat, and grasping the hem of her gown pressed his lips to it, while he looked up into her face with eyes as beautiful in their pleading as her own—"Love you?—*oh!*"

It was almost a groan, and it hurt her tender heart as she realised how the boy longed for her. She had to turn her head away and steel herself to answer in a whisper, as she tried to draw him to his feet:

"I know you do, dear, and it's very sweet to me. You mustn't think I don't appreciate all you have done to please me. I do, and love you dearly for it. Nobody will ever be to me what you have been—in one way. But, Larry—I can't change my answer, and you must not ask me to again."

* * * * *

During the following years of travel with an invalid mother, Miss Redwood heard nothing from her old friend, Lawrence Thorne.

The morning after her arrival at their country home, the second year after Larry had left her with a gloomy last "Good-bye," she was early upon the river.

For some reason she found herself rowing towards the little creek, and as she did so, she caught sight of a boat slowly approaching her in the narrow opening. A pretty girl sat in the stern, and the athletic figure of a young man occupied the middle of the boat.

Something about the outlines of this figure struck Miss Redwood as strangely familiar, and as she looked more intently at it the young man glanced over his shoulder and their eyes met.

Julie Redwood gazed into a handsome, laughing, flushing face, with a light in the eyes so different from the melancholy expression she had so long remembered, that her first thought was one of reproach at his fickleness. But the next was a sense of relief that Larry was happy again, and a very genuine pleasure at sight of him.

Twenty minutes later Lawrence Thorne's boat, bearing only himself, raced up the waters of the creek, and touched sides with Julie Redwood's trim craft. She smiled into his joyful, anxious eyes.

"You're glad of it, Julie?" he asked breathlessly. "You wanted me to be happy?"

"Indeed I did, Larry."

"That's like you. Well, I am happy—happier than I thought I ever could be—that day—you know when. It took me a year to even begin to get over that. But I had to love *her*. She's like you in ever so many ways—she is, really; don't laugh. She is the sweetest—I am the luckiest——" He broke off, laughing shamefacedly.

"I'm so glad, Larry, dear; I can't half tell you," she began heartily, when the distant splash of oars made them both look up. Another boat was coming rapidly towards them, propelled by a solitary figure. As Miss Redwood recognised this gentleman, she blushed charmingly in her turn.

"Larry," she explained hastily, "this is—a—friend of mine who is coming. I'm glad to have you meet him. I must tell you—he is——"

"I see," whispered Thorne, laughing whole-heartedly under his breath. "Your face gives you away, Julie. Well, I'm glad—now. But tell me, dear—is he *old enough* to marry you—surely?"

"Yes," she whispered gaily back, rejoicing with her whole soul that the cure was so complete. "He's eleven years my senior!"

Then she waved her handkerchief, and Larry watched a fine-looking fellow whom he would have thought not over forty row up to them and greet his *fiancée* with a look of happy confidence. And so she introduced her friend to her lover, and the two men shook hands cordially across the boats.

Grace S. Richmond.

BROWN (of the firm of Brown and Jones): "Why did you countermand your order for those fountain pens?" Jones "The agent took down my order with a lead pencil."

"THE first step towards wealth," says an author, "is the choice of a wife." "And the first step to securing a good wife is the possession of great wealth," says another. Here we have one of those good rules which work prettily both ways

Digitized by Google

Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN.
FIRST PRIZE,
£25.

CASH DOWN.
SECOND PRIZE,
£10.

CASH DOWN.
THIRD PRIZE,
£5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*
And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

• • • • • • •

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink), in the space left for that purpose, the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:
ABGHIIMMNR... Birmingham.

FOURTH LIST.

37. AEFGHN .....
38. BILORST .....
39. AAEGMRT .....
40. CDNWYY .....
41. AHMNOOPSTTU .....
42. EENNOQSTUW .....
43. AABHORRT .....
44. ADEEFIKLOW .....
45. AEFGGLNR .....
46. CDHIMNOR .....
47. ABELNO .....
48. ADEIKLR .....

Name..... Address.....

.....

Digitized by Google

STERN DUTY.

Which Tells How a Woman's Love Foiled a Man's Pride.

BERYL CLYVE hastily ran down the steps of Taunton Lodge, then, as she reached the bottom, she turned to wave a laughing adieu to an elderly man who was watching her from the hall door.

"Good-bye, pater, dear," and she daintily kissed the tips of her fingers to him as she lightly stepped into the dogcart and gathered the reins in her hands with the skill of an experienced driver.

If there be any truth at all in elfin lore, then surely all the good fairies must have been present at Beryl's birth and given her simultaneously all good gifts, of which they generally only grudgingly bestow one or two on each child as it comes into the world; for she had grace and beauty, wit and cleverness, besides being liberally endowed by fortune.

Being the only daughter and heiress of the fabulously wealthy Mr. Clyve, whose immense warehouses were the busiest and largest in London, Beryl found herself the centre of an adoring crowd of suitors, but she persistently kept them at bay with her oft-repeated:

"Oh, I do not want to get married for another ten years, if I ever do make up my mind to desert my darling old pater, who spoils me so."

The only cloud in her bright young life had been the absence of a mother's love and care, and even then it is doubtful whether she ever fully realised the void, as she could not remember the delicate, frail young mother who had never lived to have the joy of bending over her baby's cradle.

When he lost his wife, whom he had passionately loved, Mr. Clyve centred all his hopes on his idolised daughter.

Past the carriage drive and between the massive pillars of the gateway the dogcart sped on its way to London, down the Richmond High Street, and on towards the busy thoroughfares of the Metropolis.

Beryl drove at the rather excessive speed which she was wont to drive even in the very heart of London; she was such a good hand at driving that it made her rather reckless. The groom leant respectfully forward and ventured to remonstrate.

"Be careful, miss, this is a nasty bit."

But Beryl turned back smiling.

"Don't be nervous about me, Burrows, I know what I am about."

Hardly were the words out of her mouth when a huge van, driving at furious speed from a side street, came full tilt right into the dog-cart.

The shock literally made Burrows fly from his seat to the ground, where he lay stunned by the violence of the fall; the reins were jerked out of Beryl's hands, and fell across the affrighted horse's neck; he snorted, reared his head aloft, and then, quick as lightning, bolted down the street at such a mad speed that the unfortunate Beryl was absolutely helpless to try even to check him.

Naturally a brave, high-spirited girl, Beryl did not lose her presence of mind; she resolutely held on to her seat. Once she tried to bend down over the horse's back and catch hold of the fallen reins, but this she soon found was impossible, and she felt she would only be thrown right over the horse and trampled under his hoofs.

It was an appalling sight to see this snorting, infuriated animal careering down the street, flying onwards to a terrible doom, while this beautiful girl, with hat blown off and her golden hair rippling over her shoulders, sat with strained, distorted eyes and clenched hands while a thousand thoughts sped through her brain.

It is a well-known fact that the speed of thought is quicker than any known mortal thing. Her whole life seemed to print itself so clearly on her brain; she felt an infinite pity for herself, as if she were embodied in another person and no longer Beryl Clyve.

"So young to die, without any preparation or warning! And her pater, oh, her poor darling pater, it would surely break his heart!" And though she had shed no tears for herself at the thought of him, a great dry sob escaped from her parched throat, and then in the intense agony of approaching death, she uttered one long agonised wail:

"Stop him, oh, stop him, for Heaven's sake!"

Alas! her appeal remained unanswered. In front of them everyone cleared the way, no policeman was at hand, and no brave man was to be found in that motley crowd of faint hearts to rush to the horse's head, and so attempt to save the life of the hapless girl who sped on at lightning speed to her awful doom.

By some extraordinary miracle the foaming animal did not collide with any other vehicle, but suddenly it dashed itself with fearful force against a lamp-post. A thundering crash was heard, the horse, panting and bleeding, stood still at last.

As for the unfortunate Beryl, she had been thrown out of her seat, and she fell heavily on the edge of the kerbstone; a slight moan escaped her, and then she lay perfectly motionless, apparently lifeless.

She was soon surrounded by a gaping throng; a young man pushed his way through the crowd, who made way for him, when he peremptorily announced:

"I am a doctor, let me pass."

He knelt beside the fallen girl and gently raised her head.

"She is seriously injured; make room all of you, let her have air," and he waved them back, while he raised the wounded girl in his arms.

Carrying the still unconscious Beryl, he walked deliberately to the opposite house, and into his consulting-room, resolutely shutting his door in the face of the crowd and police.

Very carefully he laid her on a couch and proceeded to examine the extent of her injuries. She had fallen with her face on the kerbstone, and was terribly cut and mangled about the eyes, nose, and mouth, a deep gash gaped right across her forehead.

Poor Beryl! No one would have recognised the beautiful, smiling girl who had left her home an hour ago; she was disfigured past all recognition; her lovely soft, silky hair hung around her tangled and soaked with the blood which flowed from her wounds.

"Poor child!" muttered Meredith Carruthers, as he gently

Digitized by Google

washed away the blood and dust with antiseptics; "she is evidently quite young, and I think she must have been pretty, but now—I must try to save her from being disfigured at all costs. What a cruel blow it would be to a fair young girl if she were to have her looks spoilt for ever."

As he tended her he could not help putting her to a certain amount of pain, and this very consciousness of suffering made her heave a deep sigh, and her eyelids flickered.

Gently Meredith Carruthers passed his arm round her and raised her head. She opened her eyes, and as her gaze met his an exclamation of wonder escaped her.

"What has happened? Where am I? And——"

She stopped as a hot flush suffused her brow and cheeks when she noticed his arm supporting her, and she tried to raise herself and move further away on the couch, but the intense agony of the movement made her involuntarily cry out, and, helpless, she fell back with her head on his shoulder and her eyes closed once more.

He bent over her, and with a voice of infinite tenderness and soothing whispered:

"Don't be frightened, you have had an accident, and have been hurt, but I am a doctor. You fell at my very door. It must have been Providence which brought you under my surgery window, so that at least you can have medical attendance at once.

Beryl fell heavily on the edge of the kerbstone, and lay there perfectly motionless.

"Surely you are not afraid of me? My name is Meredith Carruthers. As soon as I have seen to your injuries I shall let your friends know of your accident, and they will come to fetch you."

Patients of Doctor Carruthers often said that they felt better directly they heard his voice, there seemed to be such a calming power in those tones, so gentle and yet so full of authority, as if sickness and pain must give way before him.

Beryl seemed to feel that strange sort of fascinating sway Meredith Carruthers exercised over all those with whom he came into contact. As she slowly reopened her eyes she let them rest trustingly on his, and with infinite tact he slipped the arm away which was supporting her, and putting an extra pillow at her back, continued to see to her injuries.

"Am I hurting you very much?"

"No, Dr. Carruthers, you are very good to me," she murmured.

"Nay, I wish I had been in time to save you. Will you stop here quietly while I tell my man to get you a cup of tea? I think you would like one, would you not?"

"Oh, yes, the very thing."

"Don't move till I come back. I shall only be a minute away."

What woman ever obeys orders! Beryl was no exception to this rule. Hardly had the young doctor left the room when she threw off the rug, and, struggling to her feet, in spite of the intense pain and of a sick feeling of faintness, she moved by leaning on various pieces of furniture, and placed herself in front of the mirror over the mantelpiece.

When she beheld the ghastly sight reflected there, her eyes bruised and bloodshot, her lip cut open with a nasty wound, her nose painfully swollen, and a horrible crimson gash right across her brow, no one would ever have recognised in this pitiful plight the lovely Beryl Clyve, the beauty of so many London drawing-rooms!

Beryl was not vainer than any of her sex, but she was only a woman after all, and what woman would have remained indifferent to the absolute destruction of her looks? With a piteous cry she swayed forward, and would have fallen to the ground if Meredith Carruthers, who had just re-entered the room, had not caught her in his arms, and carried her back to the couch, where he laid her.

"Now, this will never do; you must obey the doctor's injunctions." He spoke in an authoritative voice. "You are a most undisciplined patient!"

"Please forgive me, Dr. Carruthers. Don't scold me, I am afraid I repay your kindness very inadequately."

She put up her two hands over her face, as if ashamed of her weakness, or perhaps to hide her appalling ugliness even from his sight.

"Will I remain thus? Am I disfigured for ever?"

Meredith Carruthers was possessed of a very tender, sympathetic heart; he had often been heard to say that he never operated on a child without feeling intense pain at having to inflict suffering on this little unconscious being, who could not understand what was really for its good.

Beryl's distress now keenly appealed to him.

"Poor child, do not fret; you will look bad for weeks, nay, perhaps for two or even three months; but the injuries are not deep, the skin will heal and grow again, and you will not be disfigured."

In spite of this emphatic assurance she remained with her face buried in her hands, and did not move except to murmur.

"Oh, yes; I suppose you are just saying this to comfort me: Just a sort of doctor's promise!"

He bent over her, and taking her two little hands in his, drew them down from her face.

"No, I never make what you call *doctor's promises*. When I cannot tell the truth to a patient I say nothing. Won't you trust and believe me when I tell you that you will certainly not be disfigured if you follow my instructions implicitly?"

She glanced up, and looked straight into his honest, loya

Digitized by Google

eyes, and all her doubts fled; it seemed so impossible not to put faith in his word.

"Yes, I believe you, Dr. Carruthers."

"When your people remove you from here they will, no doubt, put you into the hands of your own family physician, and you will naturally follow his prescriptions; but you must never omit to use this ointment which I shall give you; rub it on your face morning and evening for two months, till all the scars disappear. If you do this, I promise you no trace of your injuries will remain. Now you must take some tea," and he rose from her side as his manservant entered with the tray.

Meredith returned to the side of the couch holding a cup of tea in his hand.

"Oh, I can't possibly swallow it, my mouth feels so painful with this horrible gash on my lip."

"You must try," he said gently but firmly. "Come, I shall help you," and, filling the spoon, he held it to her lips.

As she swallowed the tea she winced with pain, but she bravely tried to please him by doing his bidding. The second spoonful did not hurt quite so much, and as carefully as he would have fed a child he applied spoonful after spoonful to her lips.

"Oh, how refreshing!" she said at last. "And how good you are to me. How can I ever repay all your great kindness? You do not even know my name or anything about me!"

"Well, it was more urgent to sew up your lip and bind up your wounds, was it not, than to put you through your catechism?"

"My name is Beryl Clyve. You must have heard about my father, Richard Clyve, the big City man?"

"Yes, everyone knows Richard Clyve by reputation at least. So you are his daughter? Well, our paths in life lie apart; I do not expect that you and I will ever meet again after to-day."

"Oh, please do not say that, we must always be friends; how can I ever forget all you have done for me to-day?"

"You will easily forget in the busy vortex of fashionable life."

"Never!" she said emphatically.

"Well, we shall see," and he smiled incredulously. "I shall never seek you out to remind you of your promise!"

"Well, then, I shall have to seek you," and a wintry smile passed over her poor distorted features.

"Now I must send my man to your father's office to tell him of your accident."

He was still busy applying lotions when the door burst open and Mr. Clyve rushed into the room.

"Beryl, my child! Oh, good gracious, what *has* happened to you?"

The agonised father was absolutely horrified to see her in such a state. Could this disfigured girl be his beautiful Beryl?

"Pater, dearest, don't worry about me," she murmured softly. "I shall soon be all right, thanks to this gentleman. Let me introduce you to Dr. Carruthers, who has acted the part of the good Samaritan to me. He says your little Beryl is not going to remain the hideous monster she is at present!"

Mr. Clyve turned at once to the doctor and warmly grasped his hand, exclaiming—

"God bless you, sir, for your kindness to my child!"

"I only did my duty." The young man bowed and retired discreetly to the window.

"Beryl, my darling," said Mr. Clyve, "I must have you moved from here at once. We must get the opinion of a really good physician. I do not expect this young fellow knows much."

"Oh, hush, hush, pater; if he were to hear you he would feel so hurt, and he has been so good to me."

"Well, but child, he may be very good, but that does not make him a clever doctor."

"He *is* clever," she asserted, "and I would rather trust to his diagnosis of my case, than to that of the greatest of London physicians."

"We shall see about that. Now I must attend to your being taken home."

He turned to Meredith Carruthers.

"There is, I suppose, no danger in moving my daughter at once to her own home?"

"No, not if she is borne from here lying full length in a carriage."

"I shall at once order one round, and also telephone for a couple of trained nurses to accompany her."

Mr. Clyve bustled out of the room; Meredith left the window and drew near the couch.

"Thank you, Miss Clyve, for so warmly advocating my humble skill, and especially for trusting me."

"Oh, Dr. Carruthers, you heard what my father said?" she exclaimed, horrified.

"I do not blame your father, it is his great love for you which makes him so anxious, and I do not wonder. But I shall never forget that *you* believed in me."

Shortly afterwards Mr. Clyve returned. A carriage with soft springs, a couple of nurses, everything which money can procure in London at a moment's notice, had been secured by Mr. Clyve. The nurses carefully lifted Beryl from the couch and bore her to the carriage. When she was comfortably settled, Meredith drew near to bid her farewell.

"Good-bye, Miss Clyve; don't forget about the ointment, I have given some to one of your nurses."

"Good-bye, Dr. Carruthers, we shall meet again soon, I shall want to renew my ever grateful thanks to you."

Mr. Clyve again shook hands with the young man, hastily repeated his thanks, and took his seat by his daughter's side.

When the carriage slowly moved on, Meredith returned to his surgery, and a half sigh escaped him.

"Fool that I am, I shall never see the girl again, and——" He stopped short, and a deep frown gathered on his brow as he caught sight of a ten pound note lying on his table.

"Confound it! I won't accept such a fee. I shall return it by post to Mr. Clyve."

Just then he espied on the floor a tiny rosebud and a sprig of maidenhair fern, which Beryl had worn tucked into the bosom of her dress. On the white rose lay one ominous red spot.

"There can be no harm in my keeping this," and he pressed the soiled flowers to his lips. He next addressed an envelope to Mr. Clyve, in which he inclosed the ten pound note. Then he hurried off to the hospital, and tried to dismiss from his mind all thoughts of Beryl Clyve; this was indeed a difficult task he had set himself to perform.

Days, weeks, and months slipped by, and Meredith Carruthers grew weary of waiting for tidings of Beryl. Her father had never acknowledged his note. He had been deeply hurt that Mr. Clyve had not asked him to look in and watch the progress of his daughter's case, and he was too proud to call at Taunton Lodge and inquire about Miss Clyve.

"Nay," he remonstrated with himself, "'tis best so. She and I move in different spheres of life, and 'tis better she should pass entirely out of mine."

Meredith Carruthers set himself to work with renewed energy; he thought, and rightly enough, that intellectual labour is the only panacea for all the troubles with which our frail human lives are assailed. Three months after the carriage accident Dr. Carruthers was busy in his study when James looked in.

"Please, sir, a lady to see you."

"All right, show her in."

A lovely girl entered the room richly clad in the costliest of costumes; an evidently expensive hat shaded the purest and fairest of faces, just then suffused in rosy tints.

She paused on the threshold, then, quickly crossing the room, she moved up to the young doctor with her hand outstretched. He gazed at her in such evident surprise that she stopped irresolute, and a pained expression overspread her features.

"Oh, Dr. Carruthers, you do not remember me!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

The silver tones of her voice were engraven on his heart, he recognised them at once.

"Oh, Miss Clyve, forgive me, your voice I knew at once, but your face——"

Digitized by Google

She laughed.

"Well, yes, I suppose you could not be expected to recognise my face. I was such a pitiful object the day you picked me up from the gutter, whereas now I am, thanks to you and your directions, fairly presentable. I might pass in a crowd—don't you think so?"

And she looked at him with the sweetest and most girlish coquetry. She knew she was beautiful, and she wished this one particular man to bow before her sovereignty of beauty. Little cared she what tribute the whole world paid her if Meredith Carruthers did not think her lovely.

Enraptured he gazed at this vision of pure, womanly loveliness, which seemed by its presence to shed a halo of glorious light in his dingy study.

She gracefully dropped into a chair and loosened her wraps as if she meant to make herself quite at home.

"Tell me now, Dr. Carruthers, did you not think me an ungrateful wretch all these long months, that I never gave you sign of life?"

"I had no right to expect anything else, Miss Clyve."

"Oh, but you know, I promised to come back and thank you!"

He did not answer, he was too proud to acknowledge how often he had thought of this promise of hers.

"Then you did not wonder why I never came, why I never wrote to you? If I had not come now you would not have cared! In fact, from the day I left your house you never cast another thought on me?" She spoke in low, rapid tones, but there was an angry quaver in her voice.

It was the first time that any man had appeared so absolutely indifferent to the beautiful, wayward, spoilt child of fortune.

Suppose this damsel in distress had lost her heart to the knight, what then?"

"No, Miss Clyve, you are wrong. I thought of you again and again, but our stations in life are so different that I felt it was best that we should not meet again."

"Why?" she asked.

He smiled somewhat sadly.

"Did it not strike you, Miss Clyve, that *even* a doctor has a human heart, and—but this, of course, is only a ridiculous supposition—that a doctor might lose the heart he is generally not supposed to possess at all to a beautiful damsel in distress, whom a casual chance had allowed him to succour. Of course, I repeat, this is only a mad, impossible supposition."

She lowered her eyes, and began toying with the end of her sable boa.

"Suppose this damsel in distress"—she spoke very low, and never raised her eyes to his—"had lost *her* heart to the knight who had been so noble, chivalrous, and good to her, that during the many weary days and nights when she could not come to him her thoughts had dwelt ever on him, what then?"

He grew pale to the lips, a great longing seized him to take this lovely girl in his arms, and tell her how passionately he loved her, how he had yearned for her return, but he controlled his feelings, and in a cold, hard voice, replied:

"Supposing such an impossible thing had happened, it would be the stern duty of this young man to inform the rich young heiress that she had allowed her romantic feelings and an exaggerated sense of gratitude for a very small act of kindness shown her to blind her to the true state of things, and to imagine herself in love with a person totally unsuited to her.

"The difference of fortune between them would be an insuperable barrier never to be got over. No self-respecting man would ever consent to wed a woman rolling in gold, while he himself had nothing."

"Not even if he loved that woman, and if he knew she loved him, and that she never could be happy with any other man?"

"He would bid her forget her romantic fancy for him, sprung from a certain chain of circumstances. In her own set she would soon meet a man more suitable to her in every way, she would marry him—and forget the other."

She did not answer, and there followed a few minutes of absolute silence between them, then she looked up.

"What a long way our digression on 'might have beens' and suppositions has led us," and she laughed rather nervously, "and I have not yet told you why I remained so long without writing or coming to thank you.

"Well, when pater got me home he had tip-top London physicians down to see me; I expect they proved too much for me altogether! *You* would have taken far better care of me." She paused to see if he would acknowledge the subtle flattery, but he took no notice, and she proceeded:

"Whatever the real cause (they said it was the terrible shock I had experienced), but that very same night I became delirious, and the next morning I was pronounced to have brain fever."

"Good Heavens! and I knew nothing of this—you might have died!"

"Would you have been sorry?" she asked gently.

He turned his face abruptly away from her.

"How can you ask such a thing?"

"I do not know; I thought perhaps you might be like the young man of our recent suppositions, and that stern duty might veto your being oven sorry for the luckless heiress!

"Well, to make a long story short, for nearly three weeks I lay between life and death; mercifully one of my nurses to whom you had given instructions about the ointment applied it morning and evening, and so my beauty was not quite spoilt! Was it, now?" and she turned her glorious azure eyes full on him.

Digitized by Google

He could not help laughing.

"Poor Miss Clyve, if you are fishing for compliments, I warn you, you are fishing in muddy waters—I do not know how to pay compliments like the gay Society men to whom you are accustomed!"

"Well, Dr. Carruthers, you are mean; but never mind, I must proceed with my story. When I was at last pronounced to be out of danger, the doctor declared a change of air to be absolutely imperative. Then we went to France and Italy. I had never seen Rome, and after a time I begged of pater that we should go there.

"Hardly had we been in Rome a week when my darling pater caught malarial fever. He was dangerously ill for weeks, I watched by his bedside night and day. Thank God he recovered, but the convalescence was long. We moved to Mentone as soon as possible, so that we have only just returned to London."

"What a terrible strain you have had through all those weary months!"

"Yes, indeed. Often I thought of writing—nay, I think I must have begun about twenty letters, but I did not know how to write to you." She hesitated and blushed. "I tore them up and made up my mind I should come to see you as soon as I returned to London. We only arrived last night, so you see I have lost no time."

He bowed.

"It was very good of you, Miss Clyve."

She rose to go, but seemed half reluctant to do so, and lingered over the rearranging of her boa.

"Won't you come and dine with us quite in a friendly way, Dr. Carruthers?"

"No, thank you, Miss Clyve, my professional duties never leave me time for any social functions."

She sighed.

"Stern duty, I suppose. You wish this to be our final interview, Dr. Carruthers?"

"Believe me, Miss Clyve, it is best so."

"As you will. Good-bye," and she held out her hand to him.

As he took it, a mad impulse possessed him to press this dainty little hand to his lips, but pride again mastered him, and he relinquished the hand which was so willing to be detained in his. Beryl stepped into her carriage while Carruthers, erect and stern-looking, stood by. She waved one last farewell to him, and then the carriage drove off.

"I know he loves me," she murmured, "so I don't care one little bit for his stern duty and all that rubbish. I shall conquer in the end——"

* * * * *

Another couple of months went by and Meredith Carruthers heard nothing more of Beryl Clyve.

One morning James ushered into his study a lady very quietly and unobtrusively dressed.

"Miss Clyve," exclaimed Meredith, in glad but astonished surprise.

"Yes, I am glad, Dr. Carruthers, that you have not quite forgotten me. I am in sore trouble, and I want your help and advice."

He scanned her white face anxiously.

"You may command my services, Miss Clyve. I shall do everything in my power to help you, though I am afraid I can do but little."

Still holding her hand, he drew an easy chair towards her, and she let herself fall wearily on the seat. She seemed terribly agitated and unnerved.

"Dr. Carruthers, can you advise me—I wish to begin training as a hospital nurse; how am I to go about it?"

He laughed incredulously.

"*You*, Miss Clyve? A hospital nurse?"

"Yes, I would rather do that than be a governess to exacting, spoilt children, or companion to some cross-grained old lady, and I *must* earn my bread. My father is ruined; to-morrow the whole of London will talk of nothing else—the failure of Richard Clyve's firm."

She stopped abruptly, and, hiding her face on the cushion, she sobbed convulsively. In a second Meredith Carruthers was kneeling by her.

"Miss Clyve—Beryl, my darling, do not give way so, this is terrible news indeed; but be brave—let me help you to bear the burden. If I am not absolutely repellent to you, give me the right to stand by you and guard you from all evil and trouble. Beryl, will you consent to be my wife?"

A long, shuddering sob was the only answer to this appeal.

"Beryl," he resumed sadly, "I know a marriage with me is but a poor lookout for you, but 'tis better for you than to battle your way alone in this hard, cruel world. I cannot bear to think of you, my delicate, dainty darling, struggling to earn your daily bread. Beryl, in pity to yourself, try to love me a little. I shall work and toil so for you if you will only grant me the privilege of doing so."

He put his arm round her waist and drew her bowed head down on his shoulder.

"Nay, Beryl, my darling, I shall not kiss you till you give me leave. Won't you give me an answer? Surely you cannot be so absolutely indifferent to me, when you yourself sought me out in your hour of sore trouble and need?"

"Oh, Dr. Carruthers, forgive me—I never realised how terribly hard it would be—but I love you so—I love you so!" she wailed out in piteous, broken sentences.

"Beryl, you love me! I thank God for this priceless treasure of a good woman's love," and he imprinted a kiss on her lips.

But this kiss seemed to burn her as if she had been branded with a hot iron. She sprang away from his incircling clasp and fled to the couch where months before she had lain while he tended her. He followed her.

"Beryl, what is the meaning of this? You say you love me and yet you shrink from me as if you hated me."

"Alas, it is *you* who will shrink from me when you know all. Doctor Carruthers, I am not a good woman, as you called me just now. I came to you with a lie on my lips."

"A lie from you, Beryl—why, it is impossible!"

"You have told me you loved me, you have asked me to be your wife, Meredith"—she breathed his Christian name very softly, as if almost afraid to use it—"nothing can alter *that!*"

"No, indeed, no power on earth or in Heaven!"

She flung herself into his arms.

"Oh, Meredith, do not spurn me from you when you know all; if I have done wrong, it is out of my great love for you. For weeks past I have dwelt on this one subject—how to conquer your pride and force you into telling me you loved me—and I planned the little scheme I have carried out, but it overwhelms me with shame to think of it; in theory it seemed so easy, in practice it makes me feel so despicably false. I told you a hideous lie. My father is not ruined, all I said to you just now was absolutely false."

Meredith Carruthers only her closer in his embrace

"Beryl, my poor child, I alone am to blame; it was my stubborn pride which drove you to take this step."

She gave a little gasp.

"Oh, Meredith, you will not cast me off, then; you will love me still?"

"My precious darling, a thousand times more than before, now that I realise the sacrifice your great love for me impelled you to make; your true, loyal nature degraded itself into telling this falsehood, no matter how abhorrent the action was to you, all for love of me! While I let my ungovernable pride rule supreme and tried to crush the cravings of my intense love for you—ay, and worse than all, I bruised and blighted your tender heart. Ah, Beryl, my darling, how much nobler you are than I am. It is I who crave your forgiveness for all I have so selfishly made you suffer."

"What nonsense, Meredith, and please don't go to the other extreme and make a heroine of me. It was all sheer selfishness on my part, because I simply could not do without you!

"And so, Dr. Carruthers," she looked up archly at him, "there is to be no more talk of stern duty."

"No," he laughed, "I see now that my stern duty lies another way, in the matrimonial line!"

Lily Butler.

Digitized by Google

A Question of Women's Rights.

Which Brought About the Marriage of Gerald Sinclair and Ethel Walrond.

ALTHOUGH I have from time to time described life at Laburnum Villa (inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Sinclair), I do not think I have ever told you how these two came to meet one another, and finally to become engaged. I will, therefore, endeavour to set down to the best of my ability and remembrance this history.

It was in the early summer of the year 189—, one of the nineties, at any rate, that Gerald Sinclair was lazing aimlessly in the Park, when his shoulder was smitten violently in that fond way that our athletic friends have. When he had recovered sufficiently, Gerald turned round, his hand being grasped by a particular friend in the shape of Richard Cunnyngham, Esq., better known as Dick.

"Hullo, Gerald, my boy! Just the man I wanted to see!" An analysis of this speech will reveal the island of which the speaker was a native.

"What's up, Dick, why so enthusiastic?"

"It's like this, old chap! I've promised to take someone with me to-night to dinner at the Ansteys', and you're just the chap."

"But I don't know the Ansteys," protested Gerald.

"Of course you don't! They knew that when they asked me to bring someone, and I suggested your name. So you must come."

"Well, I haven't anything else on to-night, so I might as well."

"That's all right, then. After dinner Miss Walrond is going to talk on 'Women's Rights.'"

"Wh—at?" cried Gerald, who began to regret that he had agreed to go. "How disgusting! If there's anything I detest, it's the 'Women's Rights' woman."

"My boy, Ethel Walrond is a fair stunner. Jolly nice-looking girl, and a ripper to talk to. If it wasn't for that fad of hers she'd knock spots off any girl I know."

That is how it happened that Gerald dined that particular evening at 18 Carlton Terrace, and made the acquaintance of Miss Ethel Walrond in the following quaint manner.

There was a large crowd at the Ansteys' that night, several of whom Gerald knew, and a number more to whom he was introduced, but hadn't the faintest idea who they were.

Eventually he found himself alongside a young lady of prepossessing appearance, and there he decided to anchor. They conversed as is customary at these gatherings. First of the occasion, then of the weather, then of theatres, and then of anything they could think of. They were in that last stage when Gerald said with his usual bluntness,

"I understand some lady is going to make herself ridiculous after dinner."

"Oh!" rejoined his companion. "What is she going to do?"

"Speak about women's rights," replied Gerald in a very disgusted tone. "Much better if she'd stay at home and—and—er—and look after the children."

"I don't think Miss Walrond has any children to look after," came the answer, accompanied by a delicious laugh.

"Well, at any rate," answered Gerald, somewhat discomfited, "she oughtn't to make an exhibition of herself. One of these women who want to wear trousers and smoke pipes, and all that sort of thing, I suppose."

His companion leant back and gave vent to a peal of laughter.

"You are too ridiculous!" she gasped eventually.

"I'm quite serious," cried Gerald, to whom this subject was as a red rag to a bull. "I call it perfectly disgusting, and a disgrace to the sex for a woman to make such an exhibition of herself. I can imagine her—wears spectacles, short, straight hair, freckles, plain as they make 'em. That's like her, isn't it?" He had quite forgotten Dick Cunnyngham's description.

"Well, not very much. She doesn't wear glasses, and I don't think she has any freckles. She has quite a curly lot of hair too."

"H'm! Do you yourself believe in this Women's Rights business?"

"Oh, yes, most certainly I do!" quickly came the decided response.

"Really?" Gerald queried in a discomfited tone. "Well, I am surprised. Surely you don't think that woman should give up her sacred duties and go out and work amongst men?"

"I do, when a woman has nobody to fall back upon, as thousands have not. What is she to do, starve? Woman can keep womanly, although she works for her own living."

And then ensued a long discussion on that much discussed question, Gerald standing against it tooth and nail, laughing at its advocates, and particularly Miss Ethel Walrond.

They were only interrupted by the announcement of dinner. Dick Cunnyngham suddenly appeared saying Gerald was to take in Miss Walrond. Gerald's face became gloomy, and he turned to his companion saying:

"Well, isn't that rough on a fellow? I have to take in the person I object to most in this select gathering. It is a shame. And he gazed sorrowfully at his companion's sweet face.

"By the way," he suddenly said, "which is Miss Walrond?"

"I am afraid you happen to be talking to her just now," was the low reply.

"I—but I'm talking to you!" spluttered Gerald.

"Yes, and I am Ethel Walrond."

"Oh-h-h!" He had bitten the dust absolutely. Why didn't the floor open and swallow him? What an absolute ass he felt. He must say something or do something. But what could he say or do? All the time Miss Walrond was gazing at him with a very amused expression.

"You oughtn't to do it, you know, Miss Walrond," Gerald

Digitized by Google

at last blurted out. What she ought not to have done was not very clear. "I'm awfully sorry, though. You see, I didn't think—that is, I didn't know—er—that is, of course—er—oh, let's go in to dinner. Unless you won't have anything to do with me now," he added as an afterthought.

That evening ranked in Gerald's mind as absolutely the most enjoyable of his whole existence. Notwithstanding the very vexed question of Women's Rights, which went very much against the grain, he managed to fairly well monopolise all Miss Walrond's spare moments.

At the conclusion of the evening there was some misunderstanding over the carriages, and Miss Walrond found herself without the wherewithal wherein to ride. This was Gerald's opportunity, and he jumped at it.

"Will you allow me to see you home?" he asked. "I have a hansom waiting, and I shall be only too delighted to help you along."

"But won't it be out of your way?"

"Oh, dear no," cried Gerald, "I go very close to your home!"

"It's very kind of you, I am sure!" she exclaimed as Gerald assisted her into the cab.

"Will you excuse me for one moment?" he said, and then rushed back into the house.

Oh, mankind! Verily thou art the flower of hypocrisy, and Gerald Sinclair, thou, too, art an orchid of the species. For why was it he begged to be excused? Simply this, that he might find out where Miss Walrond lived. And he had just assured her that his way lay quite close to where she lived. Oh, Gerald, Gerald!

Never would he forget that ride. To feel her so close to him. The very contact sent the blood tingling delightfully through his veins. To him, this very ordinary conveyance was a corner of Paradise. How he blessed that horse, too, which was very slow, and which moved slightly as he helped Miss Walrond out, which necessitated him clasping her with both arms to prevent her falling, and also meant half a crown extra for the driver.

Gerald lay awake that night, or rather morning, thinking. And when he did sleep he dreamt. The subject of both thoughts and dreams, it is needless to add, was Ethel Walrond.

Time went on; occasionally they met at garden parties, and once at a house-party up the river. The house they were both staying at was near by Marlow, and their sojourn extended to almost a week. Blissful memory! It was a remarkable thing that Gerald should happen to be catching the identical train back to town that his divinity did, but such was the case, anyhow.

"This time next week I shall be in the West of England," remarked Ethel, as the train sped on towards London, with what seemed to Gerald absolutely unnecessarily rapid speed.

"Will you really, Miss Walrond? What a strange coincidence, for I myself will be down there too. I shall be on a cycling tour." The excessively diplomatic Gerald, whilst intending to go away, had not at all made up his mind where to go until the last two minutes. He knew, too, that a cycling tour covers a multitude of towns, so that he could always turn up wherever he found it necessary to suit his desire.

Paddington was reached all too soon, and Gerald sorrowfully observed that the Walronds' carriage was there to meet his companion.

"I wonder if she really does care for me?" he mused. "She always seems pleased to see me and to enjoy my society."

This was entirely free from conceit, I can assure you.

However, Gerald saw nothing more of the girl of his heart until in the West of England he—but I am too hasty.

The Walrond family were bound for Lynmouth, where they generally spent a few weeks every year. Lynmouth is an ideal place, lying as it does on the border of two of the fairest counties in England—to wit, Somerset and Devon. There it is, too, that they that honeymoon abound.

Well, it came about that the Walronds duly arrived at Lynmouth, and proceeded to enjoy themselves to the best of their abilities. It also came about that Gerald started on his cycling tour through the West. His first day's ride ended at Chippenham, where he put up for the night at the old hostelry of Patterdown. And the next day, passing through Bath, Wells, Bridgwater, and Watchet, right across lovely Somersetshire, he arrived at Minehead.

Minehead is, or was at the time I write about, an old-fashioned, quaint West Country town, and here Gerald had elected to make his headquarters. Awaiting him at the "Plume of Feathers" was his portmanteau, forwarded there by his directions.

On the following morning, after an early dip, Gerald elected to have a run through the country round about and up on to Exmoor. He started away through Watchet and then bore sharply to the right, skirting North Hill until he was near to Lynmouth.

"I wonder if I might cycle in and call?" he said, apparently addressing a small sparrow, who, with head on one side, was regarding this human being with a most cheeky air. His sole audience gave no reply and manifested slight interest in his concerns by flying home to Mrs. Sparrow and family.

"It's a bit soon," added Gerald. "Besides, I'm in my cycling togs. But that would certainly be more in keeping with my cycling tour. But, still, I think I'll wait a bit!"

He rode on several miles further until just where the road crosses the Lynn and rises over Wodley Hill he dismounted. The road stretched away downhill for some long distance, eventually turning sharply at the edge of a deep pool, called Wodley Pool, which was locally reputed to be bottomless.

The scene before him, as he meditatively gazed over his pipe, was most beautiful. A rolling stretch of low, wooded hill with pasture land in the valleys. Occasional streams wandered, seemingly at their will. Here and there tiny hamlets lay snug in a wooded fold, whilst around the edge of the picture lay the seeming infinity of the ocean.

Then Gerald turned to look above him; for he had paused, as I said, in the centre of this long hill. Suddenly a cyclist appeared over the brow and commenced to rapidly descend. Then, as he looked, Gerald saw the arms of the cyclist give a sudden jerk downwards, and then he saw the rider held the handlebars apart from the machine.

"Good Heavens!" he cried. "It's a girl, and she's smashed her handlebars, and—— Good Heavens! It's Ethel!"

For now the machine, with its helpless rider sitting in the saddle with nothing to steer with or hold by, had flashed past him. The consciousness of her great danger was written on her face, which was still and white as marble. The machine was running steadily with the free wheel in action, the rider holding in her hands the broken handlebar with the useless brake hanging limply thereto.

As she flew past Gerald, he jumped at his machine and in a second was tearing madly down the hill after her. Still her machine ran steadily, but he knew that she would never get round the corner by Wodley Pool. The front wheel of her bicycle, too, might hit a stone, which would mean that the machine would turn and throw its rider. And at the pace at which she was travelling that would have almost the gravest of consequences.

On, on, he tore, but his quarry had had a good start of him. On, on, he pedalled, as he had never pedalled in his life before, and every minute that fearful corner grew closer and closer. And now he was so near that the whirl of the wheels of her machine was quite apparent. Then he cried out to her:

"Keep calm, Ethel; I'm here—Gerald Sinclair!"

Then he put every ounce into his work and closed right up, nerving himself for the final effort. The corner by Wodley Pool was now only about two hundred yards off, and it must be now or never!

He was tearing along beside her, but he dared neither look nor speak, the tension was too great. With a hasty glance at the speeding landscape on the right of him, for Wodley Pool was on the left, and with a silent prayer, he suddenly threw his left arm round the waist of Ethel Walrond, and with a vicious tug, turned his flying bicycle into the hedge.

As he turned he took his remaining hand from the bars and held Ethel from him with both arms, whilst, with a tear-

Digitized by Google

ing, sickening crash, he was thrown violently into the hedge.

And then it seemed he fell down—down, all the time holding Ethel out of danger. On and on he seemed to fall until he lay so peacefully, as it were, in the deep blue sea which always seemed to be below him as he was falling. Then he remembered nothing more until he opened his eyes and they encountered those of Ethel Walrond.

His wandering gaze wandered round the room wherein he lay. He didn't know it at all, and what was Ethel doing? Why did his arm hurt so?

"Oh, thank Heaven!" murmured Ethel, as she saw his eyes open. But when she saw the wondering, vacant gaze, she bent over him, crying:

"It is I, Ethel Walrond. Don't you know me, Mr. Sinclair?"

"Yes, I know you, Ethel," came the feeble response. A blush dyed her face as he used her Christian name, which became more and more pronounced as the sufferer, with his glance running vacantly around the room, muttered: "Ethel dear, my Ethel!" Then he relapsed into unconsciousness again.

It appeared that in falling he had broken his right arm and sustained a slight concussion of the brain. But, beyond the shock, Ethel had received no injury whatever. Her bicycle had jumped the fence of Wodley Pool and lay secure in the mud at the bottom thereof, where it is doubtless lying this very day. Gerald had been picked up and carried into a neighbouring house, where the inhabitants had, like good Samaritans, taken him in and cared for him.

A doctor had soon arrived from Minchead, and in a couple of days, with the exception of his broken arm, Gerald was high on the road to perfect health.

Ethel had constituted herself as his nurse, and Gerald told himself he would willingly have broken both arms and legs to have secured such attendance. How sweetly she had thanked him too, and he was ready to swear that he had felt her hand moving back the hair from his forehead when he was supposed to have been unconscious.

She was at his bedside now with that confounded medicine the physician had sent him. He gulped it down and returned the glass. As Ethel went to take it their hands met, the glass fell from Gerald's grasp on to the bed, and he held her hand a safe prisoner.

"Ethel," he whispered, "don't go away from me."

Shyly she gazed at him, and then, kneeling down by the bedside so that his left arm incircled her, she softly said:

"I don't want to, Gerald." Then, tenderly, so as not to disturb the broken arm, she placed her arms around his neck and kissed him on the lips, whilst he, hardly knowing whether he was awake or dreaming, strained her to him as well as he was able with his one sound arm.

"Now I can thank you properly for my life!" she whispered. And she did.

And that is how Ethel Walrond became Mrs. Gerald Sinclair. And that is why she gave up her work in connection with "Women's Rights," although they always bless the cause because that was the first thing that brought them together.

E. Newton Bungey.

[*Other Laburnum Villa stories which have already appeared are*:

"A Romance of an Unpaid Bill."—February 21st.
"What's in a Name?"—May 16th.
"Vice-Versa."—May 30th.]
"The Gentle Art of Cooking."—June 20th.

"Herbert is just a plain, everyday young man," said Mabel to her father. "There's precisely the objection," was the prompt reply. "I might stand him every other day, but this business of calling seven times a week is getting tiresome."

Your Editor Chats.

The fourth list of letters in the Juggled Letters Competition is published on page 807. Back numbers containing the lists that have already appeared can be had through any newsagent or direct from this office.

On page 823 you will find a story called "A Matter of Course." This is the eighth of the series of Love Problems which appear from time to time. The problem dealt with this week is "Should a Husband be a Complacent Person?" I shall be glad to have my readers' views on the subject, as to whether they agree with the story or not. If any readers care to send suggestions for Love Problems suitable for working up into stories, I shall be pleased to pay five shillings for each idea used. Mark your envelope "Love Problem."

Next week's cover will consist of a reproduction of the "Clan Macfie" Tartan. This makes the tenth tartan which has appeared in this way. Scottish readers should ask their newsagents to be sure to save them a copy of next week's issue.

This week sees the finish of the tales told in the Brighton express—the last one, "Mrs. Lyndsey's Daughter," is on page 826. From the many letters I have received I am glad to hear that they have been much appreciated by readers. A new series will be coming along shortly, full particulars of which will be announced in due course.

On the last page of *Pearson's Weekly* this week it will be seen that a number of kind friends have sent money enough to the Fresh Air Fund to defray the expenses of a whole party of children. The day on which these children go into the country will be called by the donor's name. If *you* send along £8 2s. or more, *your* name will be given to a day.

It is not necessary that the money should come out of your own pocket entirely. You can collect it or raise it by some other means—holding a bazaar or jumble sale, or something of that sort. If you cannot afford to send, or are not able to raise so much as £8 2s., smaller amounts will be very acceptable. It is impossible to have too much money. The number of children wanting a day in the country is always increasing, and at present the Fund is only able to touch the large towns.

Many smaller towns contain large numbers of children who are equally in want of a breath of country air, but they have to be left out owing to lack of means. Every little helps to swell the total, so do not mind sending a few pence even. Ninepence pays for one child. It is so easy to get a few stamps or postal order and inclose them in an envelope addressed to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Won't you go out to the post-office *now?* All amounts will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. Collecting forms can be had on application.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Below is Our Great New Serial.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life. By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

The First Chapters.

LADY MAITLAND is the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland of Maitland Manor, Melton. She captivates everyone by her extreme beauty. Sir Trevor has three children—Jack, Agnes, and Muriel—by his first wife, and an only son, Woolf, by the present Lady Maitland.

Shortly after Sir Trevor's second marriage a baby-girl is found in the Manor grounds. She is intrusted to the care of Mrs. Parkins, the lodgekeeper's wife. The name of Ivy Strange is given to the child, and at the time of our story Jack Maitland is in love with her.

Heriot North, an old friend of the family, who visits the Manor to pay his addresses to Agnes, succumbs to the charms of Sir Trevor's young wife, to the great chagrin of Agnes, who is accordingly neglected. There is nothing Lady Maitland will not do for her boy Woolf. One evening when she goes to her room to dress for dinner she finds there an ex-convict and burglar—Mike Holland—who says that he was in gaol with her first husband, and unless she pays him well to keep silence he will blazon to the world the fact that she is a bigamist.

Lady Maitland protests that her first husband is dead, but to preserve the good name of her boy she consents to pay the price, and intrusts Heriot North with the first payment, twenty pounds, which is to be left at a certain place in London for Holland to call for.

Ivy Strange refuses to become engaged to Jack until the mystery of her birth is cleared up. This her lover promises to do, and to start with interviews Mrs. Parkins. The only information he gleans from her is that on Ivy's brow—hidden under her curls—when she was a baby there was a mark like the mark of a broad arrow! Jack goes to London to consult a detective, Gilbert Chase. Afterwards at his club he meets Digby Scarlett, a celebrated explorer. Scarlett accepts Jack's invitation to accompany him to Maitland Manor.

Lady Maitland recognises Scarlett as a man she had known during her first husband's lifetime, and she perceives that she is recognised, but for Woolf's sake she determines to stand her ground. During his stay at the Manor, Scarlett saves Ivy Strange from being ill-treated by Mike Holland.

Heriot North leaves his house, "The Hollies," to call at the Manor after dinner, and while passing through the wood hears the voices of a man and woman; the latter he thinks he recognises as belonging to Lady Maitland, but when he mentions the incident to her she says that it must have been Ivy—their voices are similar.

One evening, after Scarlett's return to town, he is told on arriving at his chambers that a man is waiting to see him. Something warns him of possible danger, and he slips a revolver into his pocket, then he goes to the door of his sitting-room and, softly turning the handle, walks in. As he does so a figure rises from a chair and comes forward slowly.

Digby Scarlett's fingers touch lightly the trigger of the revolver in his pocket.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Hast Thou Found Me, oh! Mine Enemy?"

"Who are you?" Digby Scarlett said sharply, standing near the door, still keeping his hand in his pocket, and eyeing the silent figure with startled eyes.

"Who am I?" replied the man, with a hollow laugh, and choosing his words painfully, as though speech were strange to him. "*You* ask *me* that! You, upon whose mind my name should be written in letters of blood! You, whose black villainy robbed me of my manhood—my ambition—my wife! *You* ask my name, Digby Scarlett—you, the murderer of my life!"

Digby Scarlett recoiled before the burning passion of his unbidden guest's words, and his eyes fell under the savage invective of the shabby, white-haired man who had flung so strange a challenge in his teeth. He put his disengaged hand to his lip, and stroked his moustache—the old habit returning, while on his brow a few drops of moisture stood.

"I am still at a loss to recollect your name," he said slowly. "Of course your—your strange language I can only attribute to—*one* cause!"

A dark flush stained the pallid, wrinkled face of the man, and a wild gleam flashed into his sunken eyes.

"Ah! so you want to persuade yourself that I am drunk, do you?" he panted. "Have you not done with perjury yet, Digby Scarlett? Do the old tricks still cling to you after all these years?"

Digby Scarlett glanced at him keenly. The threadbare coat hung on his spare frame like a rag on a peg, the unshaven chin revealed a not too recent visit to the barber's, while his whole appearance was similar to that of a strong young tree struck suddenly into premature old age by a lightning flash.

The keen eyes of Digby Scarlett noticed all—the poverty, the broken physique, and the empty, quivering hands, rough and discoloured-looking, as though the owner of them had done much manual labour. He smiled, and withdrew from his pocket his own well-shaped hand with its delicately manicured nails. There was no need for such precaution; one blow from his strong arm would be all the defence he would need should the man before him attempt to wipe out any debts—supposed, or otherwise!

"So," he said slowly, "you are the convict chap, are you? What do you want with me? I can't afford to give you money!"

"Do you think I have sought for you all these years that I have been free," the man panted hoarsely, "for the pleasure of begging from you? No, Digby Scarlett, you and I have a long-standing score to settle, and I mean there to be no balance to carry over! I saw you by a happy chance, leaving the hotel yesterday. I knew you, in spite of your moustache; for the years could add much, but they left your eyes the same!" He paused to wipe his brow with a shaking hand, and on the other he supported himself against the back of a chair.

Digby Scarlett shrugged his shoulders. It was obvious that he had a madman to deal with; he would let him rave, then kick him out!

"Why," said the man, speaking with clear emphasis—"why did you go to the house yesterday, where the blow

Digitized by Google

first fell, after you had done your diabolical work? What took you there?"

Digby Scarlett started, and for an instant his eyes flickered with a strange light. Then he laughed shortly:

"When I know for what purpose you have come here, I may consider any question you ask me."

"I have come," said the man, in a low, intense voice, "to get from you a confession of the infamy you perpetrated on me, so that I may go into the world—a beggar, perhaps, but with my name cleared from dishonour."

"Very pleasant—from your point of view!" sneered Digby Scarlett, "but where do I come in?"

"I vowed," continued the voice, unheeding the interruption, "to wrest that confession from you; to force it from your false throat with my fingers if need be!"

He took a step towards the man he had waited so long to meet, and half raised his hands as though to put his words into practice, and Digby Scarlett's fingers once again sought the derringer in his pocket, this time to bring it out and show it to the man, whose breath was rising to his lips in deep-drawn gasps.

"You see," he said coolly, "I am armed, and I warn you that any attempt to touch me will only end in throwing you into the place you have so recently left! With your reputation so well known to the police, I fancy you would not get the success you expect!

"It would be a difficult thing to set about," he sneered. "An ex-ticket-of-leave man blackmailing and threatening the man whose name he forged in the first place! I should advise you to think better of your great idea, or else spend a few thousands in procuring legal assistance in establishing your good name."

"You fiend!" burst from the lips of the baffled man. "You still have the devil on your side! I see now to strike you as I first intended would only be playing into your hands. As for the legal assistance!" he laughed bitterly, "you did well to suggest it to me, since I stand such a pitiful beggar before you! But don't think I shall forget!" he went on passionately. "The day will come yet; for God can't hide His face for ever from me, and then, Digby Scarlett, in the hour of my triumph, you will cry in vain for mercy! I will follow you, even if I do it on foot; dog your footsteps, and wait, as I have waited eighteen years! For all the shame I have endured *you* shall pay!"

He stopped and drew the back of his hand across his brow; it was pouring with the sweat of his soul's agony.

"I am going now," he said dully. "I am looking for someone else—my wife—Margaret!"

"Ah! I fancy I can tell you something about her," Digby Scarlett replied carelessly, placing the derringer on the table by his side and lighting a cigar.

"*You!*" breathed the man hoarsely. "You—know! Don't tell me that—that——" He stopped, and a red gleam shot from his eyes.

"Don't be alarmed!" sneered the other. "I saw her last when you did. I left England the day after. I read in a Continental paper sometime later that——"

"What?" gasped the man with livid lips. "For the love of Heaven have some mercy! Tell me, quickly!"

"That she—your wife, was—dead!"

"Dead!" he murmured. "Dead! Little Margaret—dead! I wanted to see her—to tell her that I was innocent!" Suddenly he caught his breath. "You are not lying, are you? Can I trust you now, after all your infamy?"

Digby Scarlett smiled: "You can, for it does not concern me now, whether she lived or died. That's why," he said quickly. "I called at the house to which you followed me yesterday. I learnt that her—baby—had died with her!"

He turned his back to throw some coal on the fire, and the stifled cry that came from the lips of the man sent a gleam into his eyes.

"Her baby!" murmured the broken-down wreck of manhood. "Oh, my God! I can't stand this! It is the last drop in my cup of bitterness!"

His hollow, panic-stricken eyes fell on the stooping figure of the man who had laid his life waste with such devastation, and robbed him of honour, wife, and child; and as he gazed there came into his mind the thought that makes murderers of men.

He looked round the room, and his eyes lighted on the derringer his enemy had left on the table.

Swiftly he leant forward and his fingers closed on it firmly; then he laughed, a low, gurgling laugh that sent the heart of Digby Scarlett into his mouth. It was the laugh of a man who had won an advantage.

He wheeled round quickly to meet the exultant, mocking eyes of the ex-ticket-of-leave-man, with death written in their depths; and his lips twitched under his dark moustache as the glittering light fell on the thing in the hand of the man he had wronged. It was his only weapon.

"So the tables are turned, Scarlett! You are in my power now! It is I who will make terms, and you who will obey them!" said the man grimly.

Digby Scarlett put out his hand to steady himself; as he did so he touched an electric button on the wall, still keeping his eyes on his enemy.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "what do you want me to do? You certainly have the game in your hands at present!" and an ugly smile crossed his mouth.

"Sit down and write your confession that will clear me from the charge of forgery!" replied the man loudly. "Although I have lost my wife and child, I will not rest until I have avenged their deaths, and let the world know that the man who was husband and father, was no felon!"

Digby Scarlett drew a chair forward, and sat down at the table, under the barrel of the derringer that was pointing straight at him. Death had been nearer to him in the wilds of Central Africa, but he had never feared it so much as now.

"And if I refuse?" he said, looking past the man at the door. "What then?"

"Unless your confession is in my hands in three minutes," said the other calmly, "I shall shoot you, then—myself! I don't want to live now; but I shall see that you don't live after me! Now write! I will time you!"

Scarlett took up a pen and examined the point. His eyelids were twitching and his teeth chattered as with sudden fever; a terrible wonder seizing him as to the strength of the button on the wall! In that had lain his one deliverance!

Suppose——!

A cold sweat broke out all over him.

"One—two!" said the monotonous voice of the man who waited to kill him; and with another furtive glance at the door, Digby Scarlett dipped the pen in the ink.

Suddenly the handle of the door turned, and instantaneously both men started. The next moment a servant entered the room, and looked from one to the other.

"Yes, sir?" he said, turning to Digby Scarlett, who once more resumed his haughty pose, while the other man shivered, put the revolver on the table, and grew again the outcast and degraded felon.

"Yes, I rang for you to show this—gentleman out," said Digby Scarlett. Then, turning to his visitor, he said smilingly:

"Good-night! Perhaps this will be of some use to you," and he held out a piece of gold.

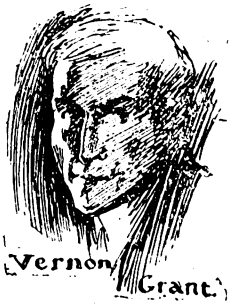
The man took it silently; then dropped it on the floor, and ground it with his heel.

"Beggar as I am," he cried passionately, "I refuse blood-money!"

Then, turning to the door, he followed the wondering servant downstairs and went out into the night.

Digby Scarlett flung himself into a chair and wiped his brow.

"Phew! I almost imagined that my luck had turned! The felon nearly got his own back!"



Digitized by Google

He rose, and staggered across to the sideboard where a decanter stood, and poured out a glass of neat brandy. He raised it to his lips with a laugh.

"Here's to the 'dead Margaret' and—and," his laugh died away, "to my future wife, 'Ivy Strange'!"

* * *

It was dark on the bridge, and the man looking over into the dull, glittering water, shivered, and drew back.

"Not to-night!" he murmured. "Somehow I lack now the spirit to take my own miserable life, when a few moments ago I would gladly have taken two!"

He walked on, then stopped, and raised his face to the stars that sparkled in the sky.

"I wonder which of you is the 'little one'!" he said sadly. "Perhaps she who spurned me is with you—her larger light guiding your lesser one! I cannot die with the eyes of my loved ones looking on!"

He hurried away, and, after a time, reached a poor street in the East End, in one of the houses of which he rented a room. He entered it wearily, and turned to go supperless to bed, when a voice stopped him.

"'Ere's a letter come for you, Mr. Grant!"

He took it silently. He sometimes heard from editors regarding some wretched contribution he had sent them, and which more often than not, came back doomed by the poor address.

"Another refusal!" he said bitterly. "Ah, well! There is one post left to me which I shall fill soon!"

He opened the letter; then, after a moment's bewilderment, read the curt inclosure:

Messrs. Black and Stackpool, having given your MS. entitled 'The Pariah,' due consideration, have agreed to accept it on their usual terms, pending your approval. Kindly call here 10.30 to-morrow."

"Accepted! Accepted!" he murmured, a great, dry sob quivering in his throat, and filling his eyes with mists. "It means money—money; and money spells revenge!"

He dropped the letter on the wooden table, and flung his arms out in a passion of grief.

"And I have no one to share it! No one to rejoice in it! In my joy I shall live alone, as in my sorrow!"

He sank into a chair and buried his head in his hands, and the cry that his joy wrung from him was:

"Too late! Too late! Too late!"

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gilbert Chase Takes Notes.

The bar parlour of the "New Age" Inn was always full, on market days especially, for through the villages of Chorlton and Melton many farmers passed on their way to Leicester, and on a cold, wet night the warm, cosy inn was an alluring temptation to all sorts and conditions of men.

The landlord, David Snaffle, was superintending his one barmaid, and serving in the bar himself, exchanging racing tips with one or two chosen companions. The entrance of a quiet-looking man with mild blue eyes and an unobtrusive manner was not noticed, and the stranger, after a casual glance round the bar, ordered a plate of cold beef and a whisky-and-soda.

"Can you let me have a room here for a night or two?" he said, when the barmaid attended to his wants.

"I don't know, sir," she said. "I'll ask Mr. Snaffle."

The landlord was asked, and came forward eagerly. "Well, sir, we have one room vacant we shall be pleased to let you 'ave. It's plain and homely, but clean."

The quiet-looking man smiled. "That will do amply. My wants are small, and I will take my meals down here, I like to see cheerful faces round me. By the way," he went on, buttering a piece of bread, "do you often have strangers down in these parts?"

"On and off, sir," replied the landlord; "mostly tramps, and such like on their way to other towns."

"Ah!" and the blue eyes flickered with a sudden interest. "Is this village Chorlton or Melton? I am afraid I am a bit shaky in my geography."

"This is Melton, sir. Chorlton is five miles yonder; and I'm glad it is Melton, too!"

"How's that?" queried the stranger.

"Because, sir," replied the man, "there's not many places of this sort blessed with such a squire and lady as Sir Trevor Maitland and 'is wife."

"Humph! A kindly old couple, I suppose?"

David Snaffle laughed. "Well, sir, the Squire is getting on certainly; but 'is lady is 'is second wife, and no lovelier lady 'as ever been seen in these parts before, and as good as she is beautiful, too; and as for age, she is not more 'an a few years older than Mr. Jack, the Squire's heir, who sometimes drops in 'ere quite pleasant like. I've seen him grow up from a boy."

Just then the loquacious landlord was called away, and the stranger leisurely finished his supper. As he raised his glass to his lips the swing doors opened, and a man stood on the threshold, peering round with furtive eyes.

Suddenly he saw the smooth face and fair hair of the stranger as he was busy pouring his refreshing liquid down his throat, and, with a muffled cry, the man drew back quickly, but not before the pale blue eyes of the man with the glass had flashed into his own.

Outside he paused, and drew his hand across his ugly mouth.

"Wot's 'e doin' dahn 'ere?" he muttered. "Is 'e takin' up the burglaries, or," and his eyes grew scared, "is she playin' a game of bluff? I'll hurry it on, it's wiser to take a lump sum down and clear out afore questions are asked, than stay and 'ave things quered by Gilbert Chase!"

The next morning the stranger left the "New Age," and went for a stroll into the village. In the post-office he scribbled a short note, and calling a boy, told him to take it to Maitland Manor at once and give it into the hands of Mr. Jack Maitland.

The boy went off, and Gilbert Chase stood outside the post-office looking in the direction of the Manor with thoughtful eyes.

"I wonder what that old 'lag' was doing with his head inside the village pub of Melton?" he murmured. "I will make it my business to find out, just for professional curiosity's sake. But at present I am on more important business than looking after a beggar like that. Time enough when I hear he's wanted!"

As he lingered on the post-office steps, a smart dog-cart came rattling up and stopped right in front of him. In it were four people—a man and woman in front, a girl and a boy at the back. But the blue eyes of the ordinary-looking man on the steps dwelt in amazement upon the face of the woman holding the reins.

The boy dismounted and ran into the post-office, presently coming out with some stamps in his hand. "Here they are, mummie!" he cried. "I got them all in halfpenny stamps! They are such a pretty colour!"

The woman laughed—a laugh that made her look even younger. "Oh, Woolf! You will never do to go shopping for me! Imagine if I sent you to buy me some dresses!"

As they drove off Gilbert Chase looked after them with a puzzled frown, then, stepping back into the post-office, he asked for some stamps. As the woman served him he said carelessly: "What a pretty little chap that was that came in just now!"

"Yes," said the woman; "Sir Trevor is real proud of 'im, being 'is youngest son."

"Ah!" he said, folding his stamps and putting them into his pocket, "So the lady driving was Lady Maitland?"

Digitized by Google

"She was," replied the woman; "and looks as young as she did when she came to Melton fifteen years ago!"

"Ah!" he said again; "she is certainly very beautiful." Then, when he was once more outside, he said to himself:

"I don't know if I am going silly, but I could almost have sworn that I had seen that face before. And I used to pride myself on my memory! Any way, I had better pull up, if I'm going to include the face of Sir Trevor Maitland's wife among my museum of horrors!"

After an aimless walk, he strolled along the road he had traversed earlier, when a voice hailed him. He turned round quickly.

"Is that you, Mr. Chase? said Jack Maitland. "I just got your note as I was leaving the Manor for a ride. I am glad you have come up; I was going to write to you."

"Well, Mr. Maitland," said the detective slowly, "it was no use my either writing or sending for you, or coming to see you, unless I had something to say."

"Then, from your presence here," said Jack eagerly, "I conclude you have some important news for me?"

"Not important," replied Gilbert Chase slowly; "rather interesting, though it may lead to an important clue later."

"What is it, then?" said Jack impatiently; the cold, impassive face of the detective damping his good spirits.

"I have found the woman who remembers the mark on the child's brow!"

"Where is she?" said Jack quickly. "Does she know the parents then?"

The man smiled, almost pityingly: "I advertised in several papers," he began slowly, "offering a sum of money—as you said expense was no object—for information regarding a girl nurse-child with a broad arrow on its brow, deserted about fourteen years ago. A few days later I had a dirty-looking letter from an address in Brentford saying the writer, a woman, could supply the information desired, but was unable to leave her home on account of being a cripple. Well, I went down there and saw the woman."

He paused and drew a cigar-case from his pocket. "It's not my way to smoke during a business chat, but if you don't mind, I will do so now, Mr. Maitland, it will keep me warm this cold day."

"Won't you come up to the house?" said Jack politely. "Or I will go with you to the 'New Age,' if you like?"

Gilbert Chase shook his head. "I don't want it to leak out that I am a detective," he said. "Last night I professed ignorance of these parts. It would not do for you to be coming to the 'New Age' with me this morning. But if I could have a quiet chat with you at the Manor, where I can go and come without attracting attention, it would be more comfortable for both of us."

"That will be all right," Jack said briskly, he was burning to hear what he had so longed to find out—the mystery of his sweetheart's birth. "I will say you are a messenger come to see me on important business, should I be asked."

They soon reached the Manor, and as Jack was crossing the hall with his guest, Lady Maitland came out of the library and watched them thoughtfully as they disappeared into Jack's special "den."

In the drawing-room she saw Muriel talking to Woolf, and, on seeing his mother, the boy said—

"Mummie, I just saw Jack coming in with the man who was standing on the Post Office steps when we drove into the village this morning."

"Yes," laughed Muriel, "he reminded me somehow of one of those detectives you read about in novels, Mother o' Pearl; a quiet, sly face, always trying to conceal the fact that he has a face at all!"

Lady Maitland laughed, but she did not hear the girl's speech.

"A detective!" she wondered, and a shiver shook her slight frame. "What is a detective doing at Maitland Manor?" Then her face cleared, and the light came back into her eyes.

"Why, of course, that foolish boy talked of seeking out the mysterious secret of his 'Ivy's' birth! That creature may probably be engaged on tracing it to a gipsy's van!"

In the meantime that "creature" was continuing his conversation with Jack Maitland, ignorant of the chance shot at his profession by Muriel Maitland.

"As I was saying, I saw the woman, who told me that before she was married she took in nurse-children, and that nearly sixteen years ago, so far as she could remember, a little girl baby of about a year old was brought to her by an elderly woman, who said she was to find a good home for the child, as the mother had gone to Australia, and when she returned she would send for it. A year's money was paid down and the child left, the woman gave the name of Mrs. Brown, but omitted to mention that of the child.

"Then," continued the calm, even voice of the detective, "this person, while bathing the girl one night, noticed the mark under the hair on the right side of the temple. It was very small, but quite easy to make out. But as the child's hair grew thick and long, it was not noticed.

"Well, exactly a year after, the same woman Brown called for the child and took it away with her, saying it was going back to its mother. Since then she had forgotten the incident until she saw my advertisement in the paper."

"And is that all?" said Jack, in a disappointed voice. "Was there no name on the linen; was nothing left behind?"

The detective shook his head. "I asked all those questions," he said shortly, "the child had been given into her hands in ready-made clothes; it left in the same sort. The only new discovery I made was an old bib, marked with 'G' or 'C.' She was not sure which baby it belonged to. Now, the next person to be found is Mrs. Brown."

He rose and looked out of the window; then turned round suddenly.

"Is there any chance of my being able to see this young lady without her knowing it? I just want a glimpse of her, that's all, as I suppose you never found that photograph you lost?"

"No, never. But I can ask her to look out of the window in the library," Jack replied. "She is in the house, I know, because she came up early to the Manor, then went with my young sister to do needlework or something."

"Very well," Gilbert Chase said. "I will walk round past your library window, as though mistaking my way, then turn back again, so I shall get two good looks at her."

Jack scribbled a few words on a piece of paper, then left the room. In the morning room he saw Muriel with his step-mother and Woolf.

"I want you, Kitten," he said. "I sha'n't keep you long."

The girl rose and followed him. "Do you know where Ivy is?" he murmured. "I want you to take this note to her."

"She was going to Mother o' Pearl's boudoir to copy some letters for her, some time ago," his sister replied. She was the only member of the family who approved of Jack loving the beautiful foundling.

"Then, Kitten, dear," Jack said smilingly. "I want you to take her this note at once."

"May I read it?" she laughed.

"Yes, there's nothing in it," he answered, "only a request. Go at once, dear,"

He left her and returned to his guest, while Muriel slowly wended her way to her step-mother's boudoir.

Suddenly she stopped, and a roguish smile lit up her face. "He said I might read it, so why not? I will just see what kind of a request it is."

She undid the folded piece of paper and read—

"DEAREST,—*Will you stand in the library window for a few seconds until you see me pass? I won't be long, and my reason for asking you is very important.*"

"What a ridiculous request!" laughed the girl. "I've a good mind—! Yes, I will! He will be wild with me, though!"

Hastily returning, she sought the library, and went to the window

Digitized by Google

that looked on to the path that wound round the house, and stood gazing out with an expectant look on her face.

At that moment Gilbert Chase parted from Jack. "I will go first," he said. "It will seem odd if I stand with you staring at her, then, after I have returned, you just walk briskly to the window and back again."

"Oh, bother!" said Muriel, with a yawn. "There's only that silly friend of Jack's gone by, probably mistaken his way, and now he actually has the insolence to stare at me too!" she exclaimed, as she met the intent gaze of her brother's visitor. He stood still for a moment, then, casting a puzzled glance round, retraced his steps and disappeared.

"I sha'n't wait," Muriel said. "I will give this note to Ivy now, and let her do his command. It is too slow for me!"

As she went out she met Ivy Strange at the door, looking pale and fragile.

"Ivy, Jack has sent you this note," she said quickly. "I know its contents," she added, laughing, seeing the girl blush. "And you are to stand in the window till he passes."

Ivy Strange stole up to the window in time to see her lover's face light up with a tender caress as he caught sight of her, and her tired violet eyes shone with a loving smile as she waved her white hand to him.

"Ah!" she murmured sadly. "If you only guessed, my darling, that I knew all concerning that fearful debt about which that horrible man is worrying Lady Maitland! But you never will, for I am trying to help her—and you—by taking him money from her!"

A short time afterwards, Gilbert Chase was sitting in the room he had engaged at the "New Age" Inn, before him was a substantial meal, and by the side of his plate there lay an open notebook, into which he occasionally glanced.

"Humph! Brown eyes and hair, rather cheeky-looking, but pretty! Nothing remarkable, though. I had an idea that she was fair, with unusual good looks. Anyway, there's nothing to keep me in Melton now, unless"—and he laughed softly—"unless I pay a visit to my friend, Mike. It shows a forgiving spirit to look up old pals!"

And no prophetic instinct warned the detective in what capacity he would pay his visit to the ex-convict.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I am your Father!"

THE new owner of the "Rest" had returned to Melton, and taken possession of his bachelor residence with a feeling of keen pleasure. Although the place was for the habitation of a single man, yet, strangely enough, it had been furnished for the reception of a mistress, and whispers were rife as to the unknown chatelaine Digby Scarlett was thinking upon.

The master of the "Rest" was occupied with thoughts very near the subject on the morning that he strolled across to pay a visit to his new friends, Sir Trevor and Lady Maitland, just ten days after his experience with the man who had so nearly extinguished his life.

A grim smile crossed his face as the memory of that evening came back to him, and as he inquired for the mistress of Maitland Manor the smile lingered in his eyes, and even his voice was more than usually caressing as he said to the servant:

"Tell Lady Maitland I would be most grateful if she could see me for a few moments; I have some news for her."

Lady Maitland was in her boudoir when the message was brought to her, and she knew that in the last words of it lay a challenge she dare not ignore. The gauntlet had been flung at her feet, and she must either pick it up or——! Her eyes fell on a certain photograph in a silver frame, and she made her choice.

When Digby Scarlett a few minutes later was shown into the boudoir he was received by a brilliantly beautiful woman with sparkling eyes and dimples lurking in the soft curves of cheek and chin.

"So you have returned to Melton for good, Mr. Scarlett?" she said gaily, her white fingers playing with the leaves of a crimson rose.

"Yes, Lady Maitland," he replied slowly, "I have returned; but whether for good or not time will show!"

"Time!" she laughed. "Surely time has nothing to do with our virtues and vices?"

Digby Scarlett smiled grimly. This woman, whose secret was no secret to him, wrung from him a reluctant admiration. He had been right when he had said she would show fight.

"Perhaps that may be so, Lady Maitland," he answered slowly; "but I fancy time has a very great deal to do with our—vengeance!"

She turned slightly from him, and gazed into the log fire with eyes that looked beyond the flames.

"You had some news for me, Mr. Scarlett?" she said, after a pause. "Will you not tell me what it is? My time is limited, and I must not waste it in discussing theories."

"And I do not come to discuss theories!" he retorted, with a scarcely veiled sneer; "unless you consider the existence of a man you thought—or hoped—dead, and whom I saw in London, a theory, Lady Maitland? Personally, I think it rather an awkward fact!"

The delicate pink in her ladyship's cheeks faded just a little, and the scarlet of her lips seemed to have given place to a pale, bloodless hue; but she raised her eyes to her inquisitor with a defiant courage and laughed softly.

"Come, Mr. Scarlett," she said, "why should you and I play with words? We have no time to fence with pretty speeches! After all, I wonder which of us a judge and jury would think the worst of," she went on passionately. "Myself—the half-frenzied girl, who madly sought to bury an ignominious marriage in oblivion; or you—the deliberate liar and perjurer, who sent an innocent man to a living death!"

"Ah!" she cried, in a low, hoarse whisper, "that went home, did it, Digby Scarlett? You thought I knew nothing of your diabolical plot to ruin the man you hated? But I had not the courage to speak then. I was only a weak girl, terrified by the whole affair, and eager to get away from it. Now you are here—what is the price of your silence?"

She lay back in her chair, and the lace on her bosom rose and fell quickly with each breath, but the smile on her lips lingered, as though trained to play the part she had forced upon them.

"Well?" she repeated; "your price, Mr. Scarlett! Name it! Don't hesitate! Men like you have always a price!"

The bitter taunt in her words stung him to a retort. The knowledge that she had known of his treachery had been an unexpected slap in the face; it had taken the wind out of the sails of his confidence. Suppose she struck back! But his eyes followed those of the woman in the chair, and he smiled—the boy would hold her tongue!

"My price, *Lady Maitland*," he said, with elaborate politeness, "is very light, in consideration of what it might have been. I wish you to help me in something I have set my heart upon—that is all. The other affair I regard as nothing as compared with what I have to gain by your co-operation."

"Your heart!" she murmured, with a bitter smile; "since when have you acquired such an encumbrance, Mr. Scarlett; and in what way is it within my power to aid you?"

A slow smile came to the man's lips, and a curious light flickered in his eyes, as he replied—

"I wish—nay, I command you—as the price of my silence regarding your bigamous marriage with Sir Trevor Maitland, to help me to gain for my wife the one creature in all the world I would marry—the girl at the lodge, with whom your step-son imagines himself in love—the waif, Ivy Strange!"

Lady Maitland drew a deep breath with astonishment. She had expected anything but this! It was so simple that at first she hardly knew whether to regard it seriously or not. But one look at the calm, set face of the man who had plainly given her his price for silence, told her that he was a man incapable of joking, and what he wanted he meant to get.

Digitized by Google

"The waif, Ivy Strange!" she repeated. "Can you know what you are saying, Mr. Scarlett? A girl with no birth—only a pretty face!"

He smiled grimly. "I am perfectly cognisant of all that, Lady Maitland; and I wish you to help me win her—to use your influence with the girl to look upon me as a favourable lover!"

"There is—Jack!" she said curiously. "Am I to persuade him to give her up?"

He snapped his fingers scornfully. "Leave him to me. I wish you to deal with the girl."

She closed her eyes, and for a moment looked swiftly at the bearing this new departure would have upon her own immediate affairs. Suddenly she smiled, and rose from her chair with a languid grace.

"I think you may leave that to me, Mr. Scarlett. It will not be my fault if I fail in bringing the girl to a reasonable frame of mind——"

"Fail!" he said quickly. "That is what you must not do! I expect success from you; or——" Their eyes met in a swift challenge.

"Exactly, Mr. Scarlett," she murmured. "I shall not fail you."

As he walked across to the "Rest" Digby Scarlett laughed noiselessly. "She will help me. Then, when she knows! I shall indeed have my cup overflowing."

Lady Maitland also laughed when her visitor had left her. "That was a capital idea of mine!" she murmured. "For a larger sum of money that creature will swear anything; and with the girl's quixotic sense of honour she would rather die than let Jack marry her with a stain on her name. Yes, I shall buy this silence very cheaply!"

* * * * * *

It was the half hour before dinner, and Ivy Strange was in Lady Maitland's boudoir listening with a white, frightened face to something her ladyship was saying to her in a low, sweet voice.

"You love Jack, you say, Ivy; then surely love prompts you to sacrifice?"

"Yes, it does, Lady Maitland," the girl answered in a pained voice, "but not to such a sacrifice as selling myself into a loveless marriage!"

"Loveless marriage!" said Lady Maitland, with a faint sneer; "surely a girl in your ambiguous position ought to feel honoured that she should be deemed worthy the notice of such a man as Digby Scarlett."

"Perhaps you are right," the girl murmured, flushing hotly; "but I can only repeat that I can never under any possibilities marry Mr. Scarlett. I fear him! He is a bad man; I feel sure of it; something tells me so."

"And yet," continued the low, even voice, "he saved you from possible harm some time ago at the hand of a—beggar."

"Yes, yes," Ivy cried eagerly, "and I was grateful to him for that; that man frightened me. But since then Mr. Scarlett has persecuted me, and made me regret having accepted a kindness from him."

She spoke passionately, and her usually shy manner had departed, giving way to a new, proud bearing that puzzled Lady Maitland.

"Take my advice," she said coldly, "and try to like the man who has set his heart upon you. There is another reason," she went on quickly, "why you should make this sacrifice. You would not care to drag Jack down into his father's bad books, which would most certainly happen if he married you, for—I know the secret of your—birth!"

She had spoken slowly, watching the girl between half-closed eyes, noting each wave and ebb of colour in the pale face.

"You—know!" gasped the girl. "Then tell me—in pity's name—tell me the worst, Lady Maitland. What is it that can be so disgraceful as to separate me from my lover?"

Lady Maitland drew back coldly from the girl's feverish clutch.

"I think the best person to tell you of your parentage," she went on thoughtfully, "is the man you will have to regard with a daughter's love—a daughter's filial obedience. He will tell you all. But I warn you," she went on, "that what you will be told will raise a barrier between you and the heir of Maitland Manor, and you should be thankful that another man, equally good looking, rich and well born, still waits to win you."

"My father! My father!" murmured the girl, clasping and unclasping her hands; "oh, Lady Maitland! tell me—how you knew this!"

"I promised to tell you nothing, Ivy. I have known a short time only. Now," she said, turning the conversation into another channel, "I wish you to take this envelope to—to the man you met before. Don't be afraid; he will not frighten you again!" she added hastily, seeing a look of terror cross the girl's face; "and also take this letter to him; tell him he is to read it, then destroy it immediately. Remember, he is to destroy it immediately," she reiterated impressively; "don't forget!"

The girl took the letters silently, and, bowing her head, left the room. She was consumed with a burning desire to hear the worst about herself, and even the fact that she was—as she fondly imagined — helping to stop the mouth of an importunate creditor of her lover, Jack, did not keep her mind from dwelling on the secret she must alone hear from her father's lips. But when! But where!

In the spinny all was dark and sinister, and a solitary figure, strolling to and fro, with stealthy steps, muttered an oath as the distant church clock struck ten.

Suddenly there was a slight rustle, as of a woman's gown turning over the twigs and dead leaves on the ground, and a slim, girlish shape approached the waiting man.

"Sent you agen, 'as she!" he muttered savagely. "She's fond of shielding 'erself behind others. Well," he whispered cautiously, "so it's you, young miss, is it? Oh, you needn't look skeered. I've too much to think of to take adwantage of yer sweetheart's knockin' me down! Wot 'ave yer got for me?"

The girl held out two letters silently.

"Two!" exclaimed the man, "wot's that for?"

"This one I was told to say was to be read now," she replied dully; "then you were to destroy it immediately before me."

The man looked at her, but could not decide whether she was playing a joke upon him or not.

"Read it!" he retorted with a coarse laugh. "That's not easy, young Miss, seein' as 'ow there's no bloomin' moon out, and they 'aven't thought of lightin' the spinny with electric light yet! But I'll strike a match, if you'll 'old me 'at for a minit and read this precious dockyment!"

With unwilling fingers the girl held the battered remnant of a hat, while the man opened the letter, then struck a match from a tin box he drew out of his pocket.

Slowly and with difficulty he went once, twice, thrice, over the few brief words under the flickering light of three matches. Then, with grave deliberation he tore the letter into several pieces, and, after satisfying himself as to the contents of the other envelope, he turned to the silent girl before him.

"Well, my girl," he said, with an ugly leer; "ain't yer goin' to say nuffin' to me afore yer go?"

She drew back coldly.

"Good-night," she said, then turned to go; but he caught her by the sleeve and laughed mockingly.

"Is that all—Ivy, my lass. After all these years, 'ave yer no kinder word for me than that! Me that's sought yer and only found yer when yer 'eart's turned agen me by yer 'igh and mighty friends!"

"What do you mean?" she said in a hoarse whisper. "Why do you speak to me like that? Who are you? Speak!"

The man lurched forward. "Come and kiss me, my girl," he whispered. "I'm the man that's been 'unting for yer all these years!"

"Your name!" she cried, recoiling; "your name, first!"

"My name?" he laughed. "It's Mike Holland—ex-convict and—yer lovin' father!"

(Another long instalment next week.)

Digitized by Google

A Correction.

HE: "I suppose you find a great many dull people here?" She: "On the contrary, it is the dull people who always find me."

The Landlord Had Been.

"YOU seem to be much put out," said the maiden. "I am indeed," replied the poet. "My landlord called for the rent this morning—and I hadn't got it."

Not the Only Way.

HE: "I do believe that some women go on the stage solely for the pleasure of taking a new name." She: "I—ah—there must be an easier way than that!"

Not Quite the Same.

"THEN you regard marriage as a civil contract?" asked the Sweet Young Thing. "No," answered the Savage Bachelor. "It's rather a contraction of civility."

Different Kinds of Choice.

"SHE says she has remained single from choice." "That's right. I wouldn't undertake to say whose choice it was, but the broad, general statement is unquestionably true."

A Tie, Anyhow.

"It's all foolishness to talk about anyone getting the worst of it in the matrimonial game," declared the big man with a silk hat. "How's that?" "Marriage is always a tie."

They were Society People!

"THAT elopement in high life was so romantic. They stole out——" "No, no, you mustn't say that; they belong to the best society. You should say, 'They kleptomaniacked.'"

Better Change the Line.

AMATEUR POET: "How's this line of my 'Ode to My Sweetheart'?—'Thy bright eyes outrival twin diamonds!'" His Sister: "Make it 'Thy rivals shall eye thy twin diamonds,' and she's yours for ever."

No Need to Worry.

NANETTE: "Ah, but beauty is only skin deep, after all. How do I know that the man I marry will not become cold when I begin to fade?" Gladys: "Oh, don't worry about that. The man who marries you will banish beauty from his consideration at the start."

Not Lasting Love.

"WHEN we were married," sobbed the young wife, "he said he loved me with a love more enduring than the everlasting granite!" "And it didn't last?" queried the sympathising friend. "Last!" echoed the young wife, drying her tears. "It didn't last as long as an asphalt pavement!"

Didn't Matter About Ancestors.

HE: "It is so good of you, darling, to accept me. But even my great wealth, I am afraid, can't make you forget that my grandfather was a common fisherman." She: "Why need I forget it? I will tell everybody about your ancestral hauls, and on your income we will be as happy as the day is long."

Indulgent to Whom?

"KATHARINE, you will always find me an indulgent husband." "Do you mean indulgent to me or indulgent to yourself?"

Idle *versus* Curious.

"MEN," said the Girl, "have as much idle curiosity as women." "More," said the Bachelor. "Women's curiosity is always active."

Unkind in the Extreme.

MISS DE VERE: "Ours is a very old family, Mr. Bloo." Mr. Bloo: "So I perceive. Have you no brothers or sisters younger than yourself?"

Her Assumed Name.

HE: "She is living under an assumed name." She: "Horrible! What is it?" He: "The one she assumed immediately after her husband married her."

Great Improvements.

"WHEN your wife was a young girl she used to paint still-life pictures prettily. Has she improved in her accomplishments since?" "Indeed she has! She can now cook all the things she used to paint."

In Another Country.

"I'M so happy," she said. "Ever since my engagement to Charlie the whole world seems different. I do not seem to be in dull, prosaic London, but in——" "Lapland," suggested the small brother.

How She Recognised Him.

IT was at a masquerade ball, and she recognised him at once. "How did you come to recognise me, darling? Was it the loud beating of my heart that gave me away?" "Oh, no," she replied, "it was your bow legs."

He Comforted Her.

"Do you know, Paul," said Ethel trembling, "I sometimes fear that you don't love me any more." "Right you are," said Paul, embracing her. "I couldn't." And Ethel heaved a sigh and settled down contentedly.

Children Not Wanted.

THE DEAR GIRL: "I am really astonished to hear you advance the proposition that a child should not be corrected in the presence of strangers." The Savage Bachelor: "He should not be, because he should never be in the presence of strangers; that's why."

He'd Learnt a Lesson.

"DON'T you think," said the pensive girl, "that people make mistakes by acting on generous impulses?" "Yes," answered the smooth-shaven man, "I acted on generous impulses for nearly two months once. Now, if I don't get paid on salary day I don't act."

The Infallible Cure.

A WOMAN cured her husband of staying out late at night by going to the door when he came home, and whispering through the keyhole, "Is that you, Willie?" Her husband's name is John, and he stays at home every night now, and sleeps with one eye open, and a revolver under his pillow.

Why Men are Distrustful.

"I WONDER why it is that so many men of talents become sour and distrustful of their fellow creatures?" mused the young woman. "I suppose," replied Miss Cayenne, "it's because they are constantly subjected to such emotional extremes. They can never tell whether a caller is an autograph-collector or a bill-collector."

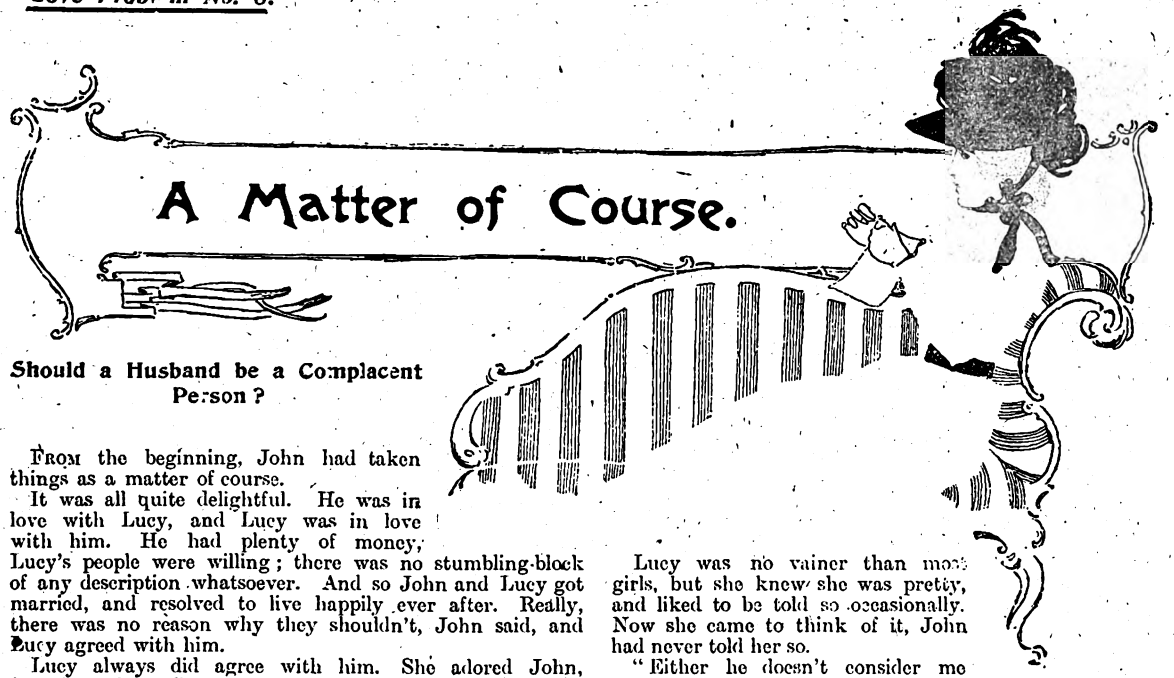
Too Much Consideration for Her.

"YOU did not go to the chemist as I requested you?" Beryl Montague's voice rang out clear and cold. As for Mr. Montague, her husband, he drew himself up to his full height. "No!" he answered haughtily. "Have I not given my word that I never would do anything to bring the blush to your cheek? Telegraph for your complexion and tell the chemist to send it up!"

Digitized by Google

Love Problem No. 8.

A Matter of Course.



Should a Husband be a Complacent Person?

FROM the beginning, John had taken things as a matter of course.

It was all quite delightful. He was in love with Lucy, and Lucy was in love with him. He had plenty of money, Lucy's people were willing; there was no stumbling-block of any description whatsoever. And so John and Lucy got married, and resolved to live happily ever after. Really, there was no reason why they shouldn't, John said, and Lucy agreed with him.

Lucy always did agree with him. She adored John, frankly and unaffectedly—which was most unwise of her, of course. John was a nice man, but he was only a man. He took the gifts the gods sent him quite as a matter of course.

He was well-to-do, and his business in the City prospered, as a matter of course.

Lucy loved him, as a matter of course. She was always bright, and cheerful, and affectionate, as a matter of course. She obeyed him in everything, as a matter of course.

She dressed in the way that pleased him best, she read the books he selected for her, she sang the songs he chose, she saw the plays he approved of, she entertained his friends, and dropped certain friends of her own whom he had said he didn't care for—all quite as a matter of course.

It never occurred to John that a wife may have wishes and interests apart from her husband's; that there may be something in the nature of a sacrifice in her complete dependence upon her husband's will, something which called for more than mere acceptance as his rightful due.

To do John justice, he was by no means indifferent to Lucy's charming qualities. He had simply got used to them, just as he had got used to an excellent dinner. He enjoyed both, and accepted both as a matter of course.

At first Lucy was too wrapped up in the joy and dignity of her new position and in her admiration for John, to notice anything amiss. But, by degrees, she began to notice things.

For instance.

"I'm going to bring a friend home to dinner to-night, darling," remarked John one morning at breakfast.

"To-night!" exclaimed Lucy. "Why, don't you remember, dear, mother has a box for the Lyceum, and you arranged to take me?"

"By Jove, I'd forgotten all about it! What a nuisance! I can't put Desmond off."

"Then we must give up the Lyceum, I suppose."

"I'm afraid so. I'll wire to mother on my way to the office. I daresay she can take Max and Kitty."

"Not a word that he's sorry, or—or anything," reflected Lucy. And, for the first time since their marriage, she felt a little sorry for herself.

From that day, John's habit of taking things as a matter of course gradually began to dawn upon Lucy.

Lucy was no vainer than most girls, but she knew she was pretty, and liked to be told so occasionally. Now she came to think of it, John had never told her so.

"Either he doesn't consider me pretty, or else he takes it as a matter of course," said Lucy to herself. "In either case, it's rather hard."

She found it rather hard, too, that all her pretty frocks made apparently no impression upon John.

In the early days of their engagement, John had expressed certain arbitrary views on the subject of woman's dress, and ever since then, Lucy had taken infinite pains to please him, even to the sacrifice of certain pet weaknesses of her own. And to all this, John apparently was blind. He found no fault, but neither did he dole out a single word of praise.

Now, a pretty woman likes to be complimented upon her dress even more than upon her looks, and Lucy, being no exception to the rule, began to pine for some positive sign of John's approval.

Now she came to think of it, he had never even told her that he loved her—at least, not in so many words.

"Every woman wants to be told in so many words," said Lucy.

By this time, the vague sense of injustice under which she had been smarting, half-unconsciously at first, had taken definite shape. She felt she had a grievance against John—a good, substantial grievance.

"He takes everything for granted," said Lucy to herself. And then it suddenly occurred to her that she, too, was taking things for granted.

"How do I know he really loves me, since he's never said so?"

"How do I know he cares what I wear, or how I look, or whether I'm fond of him or not? How do I know he isn't *indifferent*, and not merely thoughtless?"

The wretched suspicion, once conceived, haunted Lucy day and night. She thought of it so persistently that doubt at last seemed to be certainty, and finally—well, finally John began to notice a change in Lucy's manner.

All her pretty, affectionate little ways disappeared one by one. Frigid politeness took their place.

John had got used to being petted and caressed by Lucy. He was wont to look upon these endearments with a sort of happy complacency that suggested no corresponding obligations on his part. When Lucy put her arms about his neck, and laid her cheek against his, he would respond readily

Digitized by Google

enough, but it never occurred to him to take the initiative—he was so confident of Lucy; dear, demonstrative, impulsive Lucy.

When Lucy's little ways dropped from her, one by one, John felt at first surprised, then hurt, and finally alarmed. By slow and painful degrees he was forced to realise the fact that Lucy was growing cold towards him.

Most things endear themselves by virtue to their rarity, and kisses are no exception. To John, Lucy's kisses became desperately dear. At the end of a week, they had become priceless.

Other and less tangible proofs of Lucy's affection rose in value by precisely similar methods.

One day Lucy appeared at breakfast attired in a morning gown of pink muslin. Now, pink was a colour which John abominated. He could not have explained his aversion, but there it was, and Lucy knew it. She had a weakness for pink herself, because it suited her fair, fluffy hair, and dainty complexion, but to please John she had discarded the colour since her marriage—not without secret heart-burnings.

John stared at the pink muslin in displeased surprise.

"Whatever made you put on that thing, darling?" he demanded, a trifle irritably.

"What thing do you mean?" asked Lucy, in a tone of cool indifference.

John was not used to that tone from her. Somehow, it disconcerted him.

"Your frock," he murmured.

"What is the matter with my frock?"

"It's—it's pink, you know," he explained, almost meekly.

"Well?" said Lucy.

Her manner suggested polite inquiry.

This was too much for John.

"You know I hate pink!" he blurted out.

"Do you? I had forgotten. I'm sorry you don't like it, though, because I've decided upon pink for my new evening dress. It's my favourite colour, you know."

And Lucy calmly went on with her breakfast.

John was too taken aback to reply. He was so unaccustomed to this attitude on Lucy's part that he really didn't know how to meet it. Lucy, who had always shown the most touching regard for his slightest wish, what had come over her? It had never occurred to John, be it said, to describe this regard of Lucy's as "touching" until he had occasion to miss it. In fact, he had hardly been aware of its existence.

But the incident of the pink frock paved the way for a succession of small encounters of a similar nature between John and Lucy, in which the latter, by dint of a certain calm assumption of superiority, invariably had her own way.

And now John realised clearly what a gentle, affectionate, obedient little wife Lucy had been in the old days, before—before what?

What had happened? John asked himself miserably. Why was Lucy changed?

Try as he would, he could not evade the obvious answer—Lucy had ceased to love him.

At first, John fought against the suspicion with desperate indignation; but, as the days went by and Lucy grew colder and more and more distant in her manner, doubt became certainty, and John was forced to acknowledge to himself that his wife no longer cared for him.

And he had been so sure of her! So sure that, well—that the thought of losing her had never entered his mind and consequently——

With a sudden pang of self reproach, John realised the smug complacency with which he had always regarded Lucy's love for him.

"Fool! Presumptuous fool!" cried John.

"Meaning me, sir?"

John's confidential clerk looked up from his work with a somewhat scared expression.

John recovered himself with a start.

"No, Thompson, of course not. I—I was thinking of someone else. What's the time?"

"Ten to five, sir."

"Then I'll catch my early train. Good night, Thompson."

"Good-night, sir."

John had made up his mind. That night he would win or lose all. He would speak with Lucy, tell her everything that was in his mind—he would try to soften the heart she had hardened against him—he would appeal to her womanly pity and implore her to give him back the love he had lost.

He almost ran the half mile that divided his house from the station, and his hand trembled violently as he inserted his key in the latch and pushed open the door.

Everything within was quiet. Lucy did not run to meet him as she would have done once—it seemed so long ago now.

He ran upstairs, hastily changed his clothes, and hurried down to his wife's room. She was not there.

After what seemed an eternity, he heard the sound of the dinner gong. He wandered into the dining-room. Dinner was laid for two, as usual, with Clara, the maid, hovering in attendance. Lucy had not yet appeared.

"Where is your mistress?" asked John.

Clara looked surprised.

"She went out about an hour ago, sir, and said she might not be back for dinner."

"Is that all the message she left?"

"Yes, sir."

What did it mean? Lucy had never behaved like this before. To go out, leaving no other message than——

Not once since their marriage had she absented herself in this unaccountable way.

An hour passed—two hours—and still no Lucy came. John took up a book and tried to read. It was a new novel by his favourite author; John thought he had never read anything so dull. He threw down the book in despair, and glanced at his watch—five minutes past ten!

John walked to the window and lifted the blind. He could watch for Lucy from here, for the window commanded the only approach to the house.

He peered out into the dimly-lighted street, but could see nothing. Theirs was a lonely road that led nowhere in particular, and at night only an occasional belated inhabitant would pass their house.

John dropped the blind, and began pacing restlessly up and down the room.

Eleven o'clock came, but no Lucy.

John rang his bell, and Clara appeared in answer to the summons.

"You and cook can go to bed," he told the girl. "I am going to wait up for your mistress."

"Very well, sir, thank you. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, Clara."

John listened as the maids tramped upstairs past his door to their room at the top of the house. When all was quiet he sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Presently the clock in a neighbouring church tower began to strike. It was midnight.

John sat up in his chair and listened.

A cab was coming down the street. It stopped just under his window.

John ran down the stairs and flung open the door just as someone stepped out of the cab. It was Lucy.

She pulled out her purse, slowly and deliberately, and handed the cabman a coin. The man touched his hat and drove off.

Not till then did Lucy appear to notice John's presence.

She raised her eyebrows with an affectation of surprise.

"Oh, are you still up?" she remarked.

"Lucy, I have been mad with anxiety about you."

"That was scarcely necessary."

"Lucy, I don't understand; why did you leave that message? Where have you been?"

"My dear John, why all this excitement? And do you intend to stay out here all night?"

Digitized by Google

Without waiting for answer, she turned and walked into the house. He followed her in silence.

She flung off her wraps, and stood revealed in a dazzling garment of pink satin. He winced involuntarily as he saw the dress.

Lucy faced him tranquilly.

"I'm sorry you waited up for me," she said. "Really there was no need."

"No need! Lucy, where have you been?"

"I don't think it would interest you to know. Besides, I prefer not to tell you."

"Lucy!"

"Well?"

"What does this mean?"

Lucy stood tapping the carpet impatiently with one small foot.

"For Heaven's sake, don't adopt that tragic tone," she said. "It makes me tired."

Lucy had picked up the Americanism somewhere before her marriage, but had dropped it immediately afterwards at John's request. John hated Americanisms.

"Lucy, what does this mean?" said John, with a pale face.

For an instant Lucy hesitated. Then she laughed a hard little laugh.

"I don't choose to explain," she said, "and I wish you'd leave me alone. I'm tired."

John did not fly into a passion as she had expected. Without another word he turned away and left her. She heard him go upstairs to his own room and close the door. Then all was silent.

For several minutes Lucy remained motionless. Then she gathered up her satin gown, turned out the light, and stole noiselessly upstairs.

Softly she opened the door of her husband's room.

"John!" she whispered. "John!"

There was no answer. The room was in darkness.

She groped her way along the wall and switched on the light. John was sitting at his desk, his head resting upon his arms.

She came up behind him and touched him gently.

He started at the touch, and raised his head.

"John!" she whispered. "John! Do you really care so much?" And with a little sob she threw her arms about his neck and pressed her warm red lips against his white cheek.

"I do love you, John. I was only pretending—I thought you didn't care, and I wanted to punish you, and—and to find out whether you really did care—and—and I didn't think you did, and—and—oh, John, I've been so miserable!"

"Dear little girl, what put that idea into your head? There's not another man in the world who loves his wife as I love you."

"John! You never told me that before."

"Haven't I? Why, Lucy, Lucy, my darling, surely you knew—surely I've——"

"John, you've never said so. There are—there are heaps of things you've never said."

"And so you've been fretting. Poor little woman, I'm beginning to understand. What a thoughtless brute I've been. I—I've been taking things for granted, sweetheart. You've spoilt me. You've been too good to me. I've been an ungrateful scoundrel, Lucy, I see that now."

"But—but you loved me all the time?" asked Lucy, wistfully.

"My darling! Of course I did."

Lucy laid her soft cheek against his.

"You never told me. Women—like—to be told things," she said softly.

Grete Hahn.

MRS. WIGBALD: "No, my husband hasn't done much for twenty-five years." Mrs. Oldbrain: "Has he been an invalid all that time?" Mrs. Wigbald: "No, he's been a Government employé."

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS

THE FAMOUS HOUSEHOLD REMEDIES.

THE PILLS

have gained their wonderful reputation by sheer force of merit, because every person who uses them recommends them to others. They have positively no equal for thoroughly cleansing the system and putting the liver and kidneys in functional order, without pain or griping. They are the best known remedy for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dizziness, and the common condition of ill-health, known as "run-down" or "out of sorts." Females of every age find Holloway's Pills an invaluable remedy and aid.

THE OINTMENT

is known throughout the world as positively the best and quickest remedy for Bad Legs, Old Wounds and Sores, and Skin Eruptions of every kind, and should be used in conjunction with the Pills. It is also the speediest remedy for Rheumatism, Lumbago, Pains and Stiffness in the Limbs and Joints, Backache, &c. For pains and Soreness at the Chest, and for Throat and Lung Complaints arising from Cold or Weakness, Holloway's Ointment affords most welcome relief in a very short time.

A COMPLETE DISPENSARY IN THEMSELVES.

AND OINTMENT

Digitized by Google

Splendid Series.

Alice bounded in unceremoniously. "Here I am at last," she announced.

Mrs. Lyndsey's Daughter.

Being the last of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

"I suppose you are expecting my story to-night?" said Carter, as the six friends settled themselves comfortably in the carriage. "Well, I won't disappoint you; so here goes!"

"She was altogether charming. 'Mrs. Lyndsey? Oh, yes,' people would say when you mentioned her name; 'everyone knows her, and she is a very old friend of mine.'

"Each fresh acquaintance became a 'very old friend' in the course of a few weeks. They would quite forget the fact of their recent introduction to the fair widow.

"Though the bloom of youth had passed, there was still the attraction left of an elegant figure, handsome features, and burnished gold hair, bronzed by the sun of eight-and-thirty summers, which had glided lightly over Mrs. Lyndsey's head.

"She was one of those energetic and lively individuals who never rest. Wherever she went the widow entertained. She loved to gather her fellow-creatures round her, to be the centre of an admiring circle, to display her gifts as hostess. She knew exactly what everybody liked—who should meet who, and how to amuse them. It was always 'Liberty Hall' at Mrs. Lyndsey's. So many people invite their friends only to make them feel as if at school again, their pleasures being mapped out, while they are dictated to, and made to drive, ride, play golf, eat, drink, and smoke at stated hours. Dinner was the only immovable feast in the widow's establishment. You could breakfast, lunch, and tea when and where you pleased.

"Music was Mrs. Lyndsey's ruling passion. She took immense interest in it, from the fact that her family had all been great singers, while she could not produce a note in tune. She felt it her duty to compensate for this deficiency by becoming the patron of talented Nobodies, and bringing them to the front by her influence and power.

"Her latest discovery was a baritone, Bertrand Annesley, whose beautiful voice had first been heard at a large evening reception at her town house. It was given for his benefit, Mrs. Lyndsey having made up her mind to bring him to the fore. Society declared him a success, and since then he had become the fashion.

"He was a slim man with dark hair, deep-set blue eyes, clear-cut features, and straight, white teeth, which were displayed to advantage. I have heard them called aggressive teeth, since the singer always appeared to be showing them to you. He had a particularly fascinating manner, which alone should have made his way in the world of fashion. He was never humble, never proud, yet he always made you feel as if he were in want of some particular knowledge that you alone could supply.

"He was the only man I, for one, have ever met who could condole or congratulate without appearing at a disadvantage.

"'I adore "Buzz,"' Mrs. Lyndsey would say jokingly, since that was the nickname she had chosen to give Bertrand Annesley. 'It is so satisfactory to introduce a singer that everybody falls down to worship. I was his fairy godmother, you know. I call him my son.'

"This was a cloak with which she sought to conceal the open way in which she flirted with the young singer. It flattered her vanity that he should pose as her property.

"Directly the Goodwood week was over, Mrs. Lyndsey enlivened a country neighbourhood by descending upon it with a troop of London friends, and giving a series of garden parties.

"'I cannot think why the very word "garden" on an invitation card should instil the idea of boredom and insipidness to the average mind,' said Mrs. Lyndsey, looking up at Buzz. 'I pause before penning the word,' biting the tip of her quill doubtfully. 'It means those everlasting greenhouses, which the people *will* file through from a sense of duty, and pretend to admire the grapes.'

"'Yes; it is rather deadly.'

"'And the men won't come, Buzz. You cannot possibly talk to more than six girls at a time, while there are sure to be sixty.'

"It certainly sounded hopeless; Mr. Annesley looked perplexed.

"'But the local people will feel horribly defrauded if I don't give my dull afternoons.'

Digitized by Google

"'Why not try the effect of an evening garden party? These hot summer nights are made for it. Illuminate your grounds, and have singers on the lake. Voices sound enchanting across the water. You might get some really good professionals down for the occasion. Put them on a raft ablaze with red torches and coloured lights, and you will send all true lovers of music mad with joy.'

"'What beautiful ideas you have, Buzz! Think how romantic it will be!' cried Mrs. Lyndsey, her eyes sparkling with delight. 'Of course you will sing, though you had promised yourself a rest after the season. I could not attempt it without you as the "star." We must do the thing thoroughly well; but first of all I shall have to consult dear Mr. Bodkin; he is so dreadfully hurt if I get up anything without telling him.'

"'Who is Mr. Bodkin?' asked Buzz—the widow thought a trifle quickly.

"'Oh! don't you know? He is our fat old Squire; the best-hearted creature in the world. I make him my confidant in everything; he is so easily pleased and interested!'

"'Does Mrs. Bodkin share the confidence?'

"'How silly you are, Buzz! There is no Mrs. Bodkin. That's one of the dear Squire's most praiseworthy merits.'

"'He will be an acquisition, then, among the sixty girls, being a bachelor and well off.'

"'I am afraid I kindle the flame of jealousy in the heart of many a worthy village spinster. They tell me he is very solemn and morose when I desert the Hall—that he only waxes jocular once a year. As if I only saw him when I am here!'

"'Poor Mr. Bodkin, do not break his heart,' said Buzz compassionately.

"Mrs. Lyndsey rested her chin between her hands, put her elbows on the table, and, leaning forward, looked straight into Bernard Annesley's eyes.

"'Do you think I could?'

"'Why not?'

"'I am old.'

"He laughed.

"'Only the young can afford to say that,' he replied.

"'What night shall we have the party?' she said abruptly, changing the subject.

"'Friday week?'

"'No, an unlucky day.'

"'Surely you are not superstitious?'

"'Of course not, only dear Mr. Bodkin never fixes anything on Friday. He has some very strange practices and customs. Besides, if we put it off till Monday, Alice will be back. She'll enjoy it, you know. You have never seen my little girl, Buzz.'

"'It is a pleasure to come.'

"'She has been at a school in Germany—such a sweet child!'

"Mr. Annesley expected to see a girl of about twelve. To his surprise a beautiful young woman verging on eighteen arrived one evening, dusty and travel-strained, while they were at dinner.

"All Mrs. Lyndsey's guests were Londoners, and their costumes fairly dazzled Alice as she bounded in unceremoniously.

"'Here I am at last,' she announced, flinging back a long cloak and unwinding her veil. 'How do you do, everybody? How nice and clean you all look!'

"She crumpled her mother's chiffon in a fond embrace, and perched herself on the arm of a chair.

"'I've had an awful journey, darling,' she said, addressing Mrs. Lyndsey. 'Mariana, my maid, groaned all the time on the boat, though it was as calm as a lake. I believe she thought it was the right thing to do. I ran across some Americans I met in Paris fortunately, so they kept me company.'

"'In Paris, my dear! When were you there?' asked her mother wonderingly.

"'Don't you remember, Fraulein Wieder took me at

(Continued overleaf.)

DYSPEPTICS.

Nervous, debilitated, half-dead people will gain new life, energy and strength from Mother Seigel's Syrup, because it does the only thing which can give permanent relief—helps you to digest your food. Food is a strength-maker and health-maker, but it must be digested. Discomfort after meals, pains in the chest and shoulders, headaches, palpitation, flatulence, loss of appetite, broken sleep, constant weariness of mind and body, these are sure signs of indigestion.

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

The unfailing success of Mother Seigel's Syrup in curing all these weakening and distressing symptoms of imperfect digestion lies in the power of the root and herb extracts, of which it is composed, to regulate and tone the stomach, liver and kidneys. When they are clogged with the decayed products of indigestion, it clears them of their noxious load. When weak, it gives them tone and vitality, makes them equal to their work. Then food eaten with a relish and digested as a perfect mill grinds grain, makes and keeps your body strong and healthy.

WILL CURE YOU.

"For several years chronic dyspepsia was the curse of my life," says Mr. R. Locke, of 2 King Street, Hammersmith. "After eating I had a feeling of fulness in the chest, a gnawing pain and weight at the stomach and an incessant aching in the shoulder blades. I had little or no appetite and was literally afraid to eat.

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

I felt tired and lifeless, and at times my head was in a whirl with giddiness. Biliousness and constipation no doubt were the cause of this. Doctors could not cure me, and I was well nigh in despair, when a friend advised me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. After taking two bottles my appetite improved, and I could digest what I ate. Eight bottles completed the cure, and though seven years have gone by since then I have never again had an attack of indigestion."

CURES CONSTIPATION.

Easter for a week? You paid for it, anyway—the bill was enormous. Fraulein got all her summer things out of it.'

"'Oh, Alice!' exclaimed Mrs. Lyndsey with mild reproach.

"'Thank goodness, I am not going back. You will have to let me out now, Mammy, and I shall date you terribly.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey frowned slightly under her auburn fringe, though she smiled to her guests, with a pretty little shrug of her bare shoulders, as much as to say, 'I don't care.'

"'I shall want to be properly introduced when I am clothed decently and in my right mind,' said Alice, slipping off the chair, and throwing her cloak over her arm. 'I am dead beat and ravenous now, but will dine upstairs and tumble into bed, so good-night all. To-morrow you shall make my acquaintance.'

"So saying she walked to the door with an easy, gliding step.

"After dinner Mrs. Lyndsey went up and found Alice lounging in a white dressing-gown after a bath, with the remains of a hot chicken by her side.

"'They sent me up champagne, darling,' she said, 'but you know I drink beer.'

"'*Beer!*' cried Mrs. Lyndsey. 'A girl like you taking *beer?* It does not sound at all nice, and so very bad for the complexion!'

"'That comes of stagnating in Germany,' replied Alice with a smile. 'But I will try and tone down and do you credit. By the way, while we were waiting in London (three hours, you know) I could not sit in a hotel doing nothing, so I went to Madame Lottingdale and ordered some smart frocks. You are not angry, are you? I bought an exquisite pale pink dress for your evening garden-party. I look lovely in it.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey's face fell.

"'I say, you don't mind me looking lovely, Mammy, do you?'

"'What an absurd idea, Alice; only *I* was going to wear pale pink, and we shall be laughed at if we dress alike.'

"'All right. I will wear the blue. I bought it at the same time and it is just as pretty, so don't fret.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey returned to the drawing-room with a sigh. She thoroughly realised at last that she was actually the possessor of a grown-up daughter.

"'If only she could have stayed at school another year,' she thought mournfully. 'Fancy *me* a chaperon!'

"Alice made herself popular at once with her mother's guests—she was so merry and high-spirited. She inherited Mrs. Lyndsey's gift of becoming most intimate immediately with comparative strangers, and making them feel as if they had known her all their life.

"She treated Bertrand Annesley as a sort of elder brother, and very soon adopted the familiar term of 'Buzz,' hitherto reserved for Mrs. Lyndsey only.

"Fate favoured the evening garden-party, a glorious moon beaming on the revellers, and as Alice listened, enthralled, to Bertrand's voice swelling across the water, she thought she had never heard anything so beautiful in all her life.

"When he sprang to the shore from the boat Alice's eyes glowed. She laid her cool fingers in his palm, and spoke from her heart:

"'That was grand,' she said, '*grand!*' And her praise was so genuine that it pleased him well.

"'I wonder what you have in your throat to give you that voice?' she continued, after a pause. 'It comes out like the breath of your soul. I expect you will sing when you die, or if you groan it will be musical.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey moved between them.

"'Buzz, Lady Gallone wants to know you. Alice, my dear, do go and talk to that dreadful Mr. Sowerbutt, or I am sure he will tack on to someone and worry them to death. He is all right if you know his pedigree, who he is, and all about him, but I do hate a man who makes you feel hot when you introduce him.'

"'Sing again, Buzz,' said Alice, as she went away.

"'Buzz!' laughed Mrs. Lyndsey, looking after her daughter's retreating figure. 'You must excuse her, but she's only a schoolgirl still—a mere child.'

"The evening proved an immense success; even Mr. Bodkin said so, and he had prophesied a failure from the first.

"He raised Mrs. Lyndsey's hand to his lips under the shadow of the trees.

"'It is all so like you,' he said, 'utterly beautiful, original, fascinating.'

"She laughed and turned away.

"'Why had he stopped at her hand?' Mr. Bodkin asked himself afterwards.

"'He who hesitates is lost!' and then there was that singing chap, whom idle gossips termed, 'her latest.'

"The word struck terror to his heart.

"Whenever he tried to find her for a moment alone, some aggravating individual always intervened.

"The summer days of outdoor pleasures passed swiftly by, and Mrs. Lyndsey gradually began to ask herself why they were the happiest she had ever spent.

"Involuntarily her eyes turned to Bertrand Annesley as if in answer to the thought.

"How handsome he looked, seated at the piano, his hands straying idly over the keys, his voice singing snatches of song.

"Mrs. Lyndsey was reading in a low window-seat, but the words, and the sense, became jumbled in her mind. She was sure the heroine had just said something brilliant, for she scanned a page that struck her as clever, though a moment later she had forgotten it.

"Finally the book fell idly in her lap. She was tired of epigrams. They were alone in the cool solitude of her boudoir. She picked a rose growing in the window and began plucking off the leaves and rolling them between her finger and thumb.

"Then, glancing out, she saw her friends in the garden, and drew back behind the curtain; it was pleasanter here with Buzz.

"'This is the privilege of great friendship,' he said, speaking as he played. 'To be together in silence and not feel bound to talk.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey ceased rolling the soft velvet leaves, and looked across at Bertrand Annesley. She leant her head against the panel and smiled languidly.

"'Of *great* friendship,' she repeated, as if the words were sweet.

"'I hope,' murmured the man, and he touched the keys so softly that his music sounded faint and far away, 'that it may be always so, through all the years that are beyond. I seem to picture them stretching out before us, bright and beautiful, unchanging save for the uniting of a closer bond.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey's heart began to flutter; she caught her breath. A faint pink stole into her cheeks. The melody seemed surging in her ears; it breathed of love, of life—life as she had never known it. She remembered her wedding day with the rich man who had been so kind always and considerate.

"'He was very nice,' Mrs. Lyndsey would say, if questioned about her first husband.

"Now she began to feel the want of a companion—a man who would be her right hand in everything. Buzz was always ready to suggest and advise, she could rely on him to do her every wish, to help, to entertain, to banish *ennui*, to soothe a fretful mood.

"'I don't know how I shall tear myself away,' he said, as if reading her thoughts.

"'But you will not leave us yet? I should be quite lost here in the country without you.'

"'How good of you to say that. I only wish I could believe it.'

"'Buzz, do you doubt my word? Should I favour *you* with Society lies?'

"'Why not? They are very graceful things, made for pretty lips.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey tapped her foot on the soft carpet a trifle impatiently.

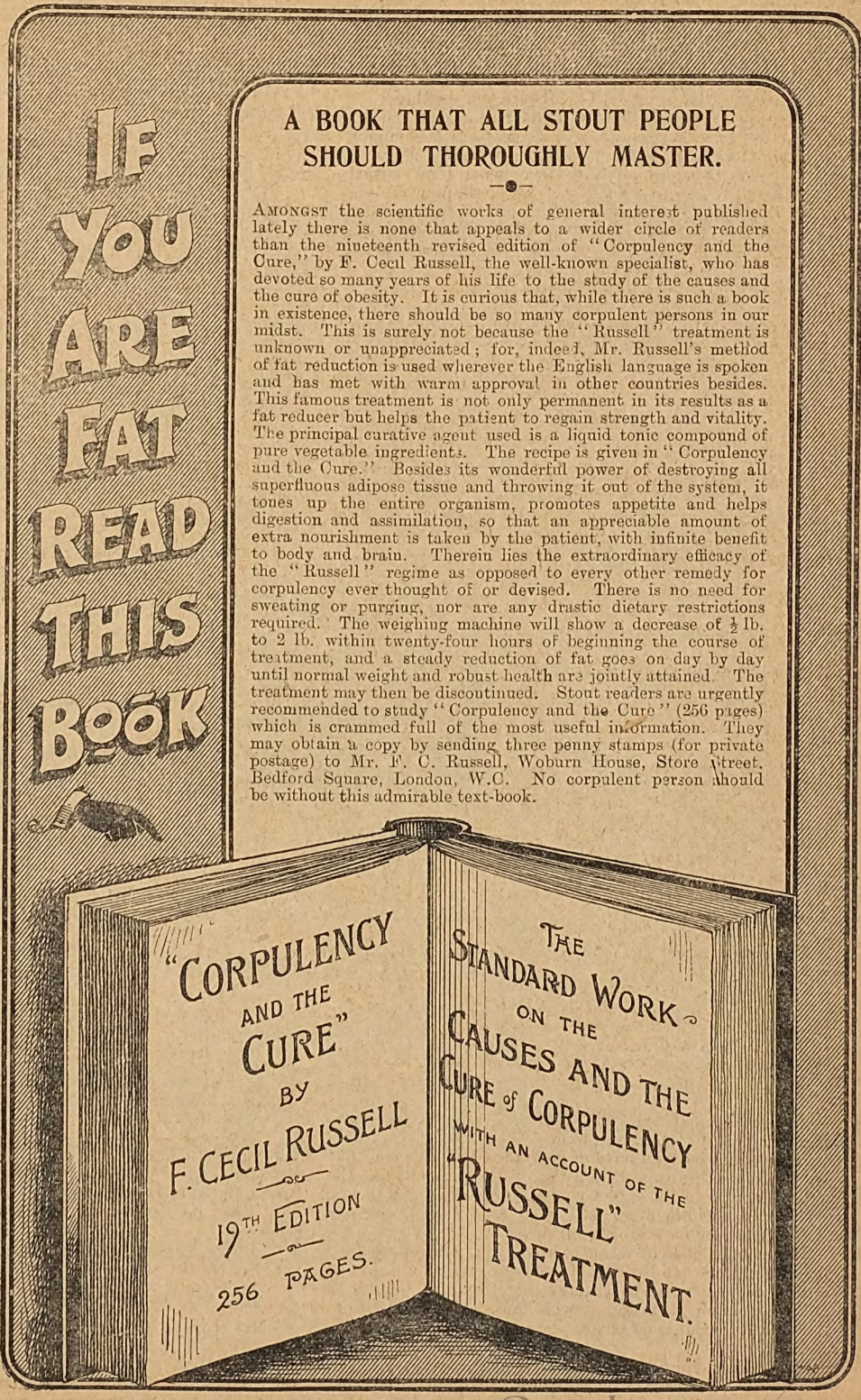
"'It is thanks to you,' said Bertrand, 'that I am what I am. You "made" me, Mrs. Lyndsey—there is no other word. I am now, through your kind help, a rich man.

(*Concluded on page* 830.)

Digitized by Google

A HINT TO STOUT LADIES.

LADIES are constantly complaining that they cannot retain their youthfulness of figure without either taking vigorous exercise in the gymnasium, wearing strongly boned and tightly-laced corsets, or going in for a course of semi-starvation, to all of which they feel there are the strongest objections And it is well that these objections are heeded, for all such drastic and exhausting methods of overcoming obesity, or of checking its approach, are weakening and debilitating in the extreme, and if persevered in, may leave lasting evil effects upon the system. Very different indeed is the simple and healthful method of *permanently* reducing a too rotund figure to beautiful proportions known as the "Russell" treatment. By means of this wonderful system the first day's reduction amounts to from ½ lb. to 2lb., and this decrease continues daily in the same ratio until normal size and weight are attained. The fullest particulars of the system are set forth by the originator, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, in his admirable book entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," which he will be pleased to send to any applicant who sends him her address and three penny stamps. For the benefit of our stout friends we append Mr. Russell's address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—Reprinted from the *Penny Illustrated Paper.*



Digitized by Google

You see our ideas of wealth are slightly different, yet I consider myself at least sufficiently well off to think of marriage. Lately, I have been deeply, seriously, considering the subject—for love, Mrs. Lyndsey, cannot be lightly put aside.'

"His eyes grew bright with passion; he ceased playing.

"'You said,' he continued, changing his tone to one of intreaty, 'that you and your daughter would come and stay with me when your visitors leave. I should be so proud to return, in ever so slight a measure, your hospitality. By conferring this favour on me you will——'

"But Mrs. Lyndsey interrupted him.

"'I did not know that you had taken it seriously, Buzz. I only spoke in jest. You know I should enjoy to come above all things, and for a moment I was tempted. But——'

"'But what?'

"'Well, come here, and I will tell you.'

"He crossed the room and seated himself beside her.

"'You see, Buzz dear, people talk so dreadfully; the world is not kind to lonely women. If you were a relation it would be different; but, after all, we are nothing to each other.'

"'Would you let me be something, then?' he asked, his face paling with sudden anxiety—'a relation, for instance? I have longed to tell you the secret of my heart, but at last I believe you guess it—you know and understand. Till now I have not had the courage to speak to you. I never realised before I came here what it was to love, and then I was appalled at the thought of my own unworthiness—till I saw that my passion was returned—I——'

"He seized her hand, and as he did so the door opened, and Alice, radiant, breathless, entered the room.

"She had a tennis racket in her hand, which she flung on the sofa.

"'I have won the tournament—congratulate me, Buzz!'

"'Well done! How clever you are!' Mrs. Lyndsey's cheeks were aflame, her eyes gleamed in an odd, excited way, while her fingers nervously tore the roses, and let their crushed leaves fall scattered on the window-seat. Her heart swelled with pride and joy as she gazed tenderly at Buzz. The sweet truth had been revealed at last—he loved her! he loved her! Oh, why had Alice come so inopportunely, as the words trembled on his lips. She was always obtruding her personality when least wanted, contrasting her young freshness with matured bloom.

"'What are you two doing?' asked Alice, with a look at Bertrand that Mrs. Lyndsey could not understand. Was it possible that the girl was in the habit of vulgarly chaffing him about his devotion to her mother?

"'Oh!' as if suddenly remembering something, 'I met Mr. Bodkin—he was trying a new horse, *such* a beauty! I thought it would kick his dog-cart to pieces. He gave me this letter for you, mamma—said it was *very* important, and you were to read it at once—alone!"

"Mr. Annesley took the hint, for Alice gave him a look that plainly said: 'Go!'

"As she left the room, Alice went over to the piano, and began to strum.

"'Pray have some consideration for my nerves,' sighed Mrs. Lyndsey, tearing open the envelope. Her mind was so full of Buzz that she could hardly grasp the sense of Mr. Bodkin's elaborate epistle. She read it with a strange expression in her eyes.

"'Poor man!' she thought, a pitying little smile flickering over her proud lips. 'Fancy him competing against Buzz! Alice, my child, come here. I want a serious talk with you.'

"The girl sprang to her feet with an inquiring look.

"'Yes, mamma, what is it?'

"She came to her mother's feet, and drew a low stool forward, resting her arms on Mrs. Lyndsey's knees. There was a glance of suspicion in her eyes as to the nature of this conversation. The widow hesitated, her cheeks as crimson now as the fallen rose she had destroyed. Then she bent down her head and raised Alice's face with one of her heavily-ringed fingers under the girl's chin.

"'I am going to ask you a straight question,' she said abruptly; 'answer me truly.'

"A moment's pause.

"'Alice, would you like to have a step-father?"

"The girl laughed, as if the words brought no surprise to her wide-awake soul.

"'How well she is taking it!' thought Mrs. Lyndsey, hardly able to conceal her delight, as she thought of the young and talented lover she had brought to her feet.

"'Darling!' cried Alice with good-humoured approval, 'it's just the thing of all others I should most desire. I want to see you happy, as I am. It is quite horrid of me not to have confided in you before; but I've often heard you declare that early marriages are a mistake, and of course I know it would be very dreadful to be a grandmother, so I was afraid you would say no. But now that the overwhelming influence of love has come into your life also, I feel it is time to speak. Here is another straight question: Mamma, would you like a son-in-law?'

"Mrs. Lyndsey's astonished eyes expanded. She still looked on Alice as a mere child. This was a revelation.

"Her mother was speechless from sheer surprise.

"'You see,' the girl continued, 'of course he knows I am rather young and inexperienced, and fears that you will blame him for stealing me so soon. It is rather greedy, isn't it?' with a short little laugh, and a quickening of her pulses. 'He has meant to ask your consent every day, but something always happened to prevent him. I really wonder we ever got engaged at all, with so many visitors in the house.

"'Naturally I can guess who you are going to marry, and I am sure Mr. Bodkin will make you an excellent husband. I believe an old man's darling has the best of it in the end. Of course, I don't mean because he dies sooner. Oh, mamma, in your new-found happiness, surely you will never refuse me Buzz? He said he would tell you about it, but I don't believe he has.'

"Alice looked down with a shy smile, her cheeks were burning, and she did not notice the horror and anguish that dimmed her mother's eyes.

"Mrs. Lyndsey pressed one hand to her throat, and dug the pink nails of the other into her small palm.

"The struggle lasted a moment, then she regained her composure.

"'Tell him he may have me,' pleaded Alice.

"Mrs. Lyndsey's voice was strained and faint.

"'I am too fond of Buzz,' she replied slowly, 'to deny him anything.'

"'You *dear!*' gasped Alice with a sigh of relief. 'But, oh, how selfish I am to worry you at such a time with my own affairs! May I see Mr. Bodkin's letter? Or are proposals always strictly private? I would rather like it in black and white. Do let me have one peep; he is to be my father, so it can't matter.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey, now calm and collected, rose and went to her desk.

"'If you will write now, mamma, Buzz and I will walk to the Manor House and leave your letter at the lodge.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey sealed the envelope and handed it to her daughter. She drew a long breath that sounded rather like a sob.

"'Take it,' she said. 'There will be one heart happier for this afternoon's work.'

"Then she went back to the window-seat, and watched them down the drive."

THE END.

A NEW SERIES

will be starting in a few weeks' time.

WATCH CAREFULLY

for further particulars, which will be duly announced

Digitized by Google

What Deaf People Should Avoid.

The things that deaf people should avoid are well summed up in a few brief hints entitled "Don'ts for the Deaf," part of an article on "Hygiene of the Ear," contained in the latest number of the "Review of the Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases." Turning the leaves of this popular magazine one also finds much of interest in the way of general information on deafness and different forms of catarrh. The routine treatment of the aural specialist comes in for much criticism, and new methods are thoroughly discussed, preference being given to the new treatment based on outward applications behind the ears. This treatment, the Drouet Method, which can be applied at home, is said to have effected a large number of cures in cases where other methods failed. Those who are interested in the subject can obtain a copy of the "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases," free by post, by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10, Marble Arch, London, W. Another Special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged if given by correspondence.

The Editor advises patients, however, whenever possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are, in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultations.

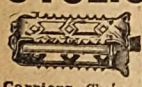
Plain Women Become Beautiful.

Beautiful Women Intensify Their Beauty.

A Wonderful Book Free.

The Peralia Perfumery Co., of 73 Camden Street, North Shields, will send to every reader of SHORT STORIES mentioning this paper, and enclosing a penny stamp with their application, a wonderful booklet, entitled "Beauty's Boudoir." This book, which reveals many astounding secrets of immense importance to every woman, will be sent strictly under cover. Amongst the many items of information it tells how to remove in one night all Wrinkles, Crow's-feet, Blackheads, Facial Defects, &c. How to make the pimply, freckled face as fair as the lily. If the bust is undeveloped, you can learn how to develop it. If you are too short, how to increase your height. This marvellous book also deals with the hair and informs you how you can curl the hair and permanently keep it in curl without the use of curling irons; in fact, if you are interested in your personal appearance at all, we advise you to send 1d. stamp and your address in full, at once and the Peralia Perfumery Co. will forward you per return this charming book, which deals in a clear and explicit manner with many matters in which women of all ages are interested. There are some wonderful proposals in this book, and no lady reader of this paper can afford to miss this chance of gaining the valuable information contained therein. Address:—The Peralia Perfumery Co., Dept. 14, 73 Camden Street, North Shields.

CYCLISTS' GOODS



Immense stock, at prices that defy competition. No trash, prompt deliveries on orders by post. **Brakes, Pedals, Bells, Lamps, Tyres,** Inflators, Tools **Oils, Free Wheels,** Shoes, **Carriers,** Chains, **Bags,** Saddles, Road Maps, etc. Send for **No. 9** catalogue, post free.

SYMONDS' LONDON STORES,
124-128, City Road, London, E.C.

DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS
Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

TRIUMPH Cycles.

£10 10 to £19 19
or by Deferred Payment System.
"The Best Bicycle that British Workmanship can produce."
CATALOGUES GRATIS.
TRIUMPH CYCLE CO. Ltd., COVENTRY.
4 and 5, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.
30 Deansgate Arcade Manchester 4 King Edward St. Leeds

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."*

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietor, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Countess Furstenberg, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well." Mrs. Crossley, of Ros Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

PUREST & NICEST.

PINK'S JAMS

A good housekeeper thinks
The "pink" of Jams is PINK'S.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model C is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for **Cash is £8 8 0**, or **12 Monthly Payments** of **15/10** each. Gentleman's machine same price. All a Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns **Juno Cycles. Trailers** from **£5 5 0**, or **10/6** monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free.—**JUNO CYCLE Co.** (S.S. Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Giving Your Address.

"G. H." has grown very intimate with a gentleman who lives some distance away from her home. He does not know her address. Should "G. H." give it to him, or would that be a forward thing to do?

* * * * *

If you have grown very intimate friends it is only natural that he should know where you live. If you are going to be sweethearts, some day or another he will have to meet your parents or friends, so it would be as well to let him know your address now as then.

Girl versus Relations.

"TROUBLED." You have left your usual place of worship and joined that of your sweetheart, and, as a result, have offended your old friends, and relations. When you took your young lady to see your parents they were very cool, as they did not favour your change of views. Would I advise you to keep her away from your parents for awhile?

* * * * *

If you changed your views sincerely, and not merely to join the same congregation as your sweetheart, then you should have the courage of your convictions. Let your parents and old friends see that you are sincere and in earnest over the matter, and they will respect you ultimately. Meanwhile, perhaps you had better not bring your young lady into too close touch with them. Wait until your parents and friends have appreciated the sincerity of your action, and then re-introduce the girl to them.

A Self-made Man's Worries.

"R" began as a porter in a very large business. Now he is manager, and engaged to a girl very much above him in social position, whose family is very well connected. "R." is nervous as to how to conduct himself in society, as he was only poorly educated, and never mixed very much amongst people. How can he acquire the necessary manners?

* * * * *

If "R." has worked his way up to be manager of his business it is clear that he must have one very great quality—common sense. If that stood him in good stead in business, and brought him to the top of the tree, so will it in society. Let him just be natural, and not assume any airs and graces which are not inborn, and people will take him at his right merit. If he pretended to be what he is not, people would surely see through the mask and his position would be less agreeable.

* * * * *

After all, let people talk as they like, there is always an admiration for people who are successful. At the same time, it would not do "R." any harm to make himself acquainted with the ordinary rules of etiquette, by reading one of the books on that subject. There are little things which one does not gather instinctively, but must learn from experience or study. In "R.'s" case, study would be better.

A Three Years' Friendship.

"I HAVE been going to places of amusement with a young man for three years," writes "MARY." "The more I see of him the better I like him—I am afraid more than as a mere friend. Do you advise me not to see him again?"

* * * * *

No, I don't advise you to give him up. After all, three years is a good long time to have been meeting a young man, and if you have now discovered that you value him above friendship, let us hope that something serious will result. You have tried each other, and found each other suited to companionship. What better case for an engagement if he should be feeling the same as yourself?

A Mysterious Coolness.

"For three years I have been very intimate with a girl," writes "BROKEN-HEARTED." "The other day she suddenly became very cold in her manner. We had no quarrel. She now only recognises me when she meets me. I am sorely troubled, and have sent two friends of hers to ask an explanation. She says it is all my fault, and that she loves me as much as ever."

* * * * *

You should ask her yourself for an explanation, not trust the task to others. Evidently she has heard or suspected something about you of which you do not know. You should find out exactly what it is that troubles her, and give her every explanation in your power. It is of no use allowing matters to remain as at present.

Unreasonable Parents.

"EDITH" is engaged, and her parents have agreed to her marrying within the next year. Yet they consistently refuse to allow her *fiancé* to meet her alone in the house. They insist on all meetings taking place out, and will not allow the young couple to be together in a sitting-room. Do I not think this very hard on them?

* * * * *

If your parents have spare rooms it seems hard that they cannot leave you two alone together. After all, you are engaged, and they have consented to your marriage. They ought, therefore, to trust both you and your *fiancé*. One would think they would prefer your meeting at home rather than elsewhere. But parents are still very eccentric about their children's love affairs. It seems one of those things which they are fated to misunderstand. You have my sympathy.

A Defence of Colonial Men.

"A COLONIAL." Thank you for your letter. I would not for worlds have intended to suggest that there are not, as you say, thousands of men in South Africa as worthy of a British girl's hand as are to be found at home. It may be, too, as you say, that "you would find more gentlemen in the true sense of the word in the colonies than at home, as a result of free life, pure air, and everything that goes to make a man a man."

* * * * *

The opinion I quoted in December, to which you refer, was the verdict of several girl correspondents, and I am glad to hear of the other side of the case, which I would much rather believe to be the correct one. However, when I am asked whether a girl should go to South Africa, with a view to finding a husband, I still reply that if a girl has not met the right man among the many that she should meet at home, I think she would have the same difficulty abroad.

* * * * *

Further, I suppose you will not differ from me in saying that, in the great mining centres, there is a very large number of men who do *not* belong to the class of "true gentlemen" to which you refer. As you must know, such places often contain the outcasts of every civilised nation.

Cynthia.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, London, Henrietta Street, W.C.

Digitized by Google

"No Better Food."—Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

Fry's PURE CONCENTRATED

"Strongest and Best." —Health. Cocoa

TRY ALSO FRY'S MALTED COCOA

A Combination of Fry's Pure Cocoa and Allen and Hanburys' Extract of Malt.

Strongly recommended by the "LANCET" and "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL."

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand. 2½%

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT, Managing Director.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

GIVEN AWAY

With the Grand Summer Double Number of

Home Notes

(No. 493),

PAPER PATTERN OF THIS

BLOUSE,

With full instruction by ISOBEL.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

Price TWOPENCE.

Digitized by Google

"QUICKLIT"

THE ONLY PERFECT
FIRE LIGHTER
BREAKFAST READY IN 5 MINUTES.

THE
"OCEANIC."
THE UP-TO-DATE
HALF-GUINEA
BRITISH BOOT.
SOLD BY ALL "OCEANIC" UP-TO-DATE DEALERS.

STYLISH. DAINTY.
DURABLE. COMFORTABLE.

Ask for and see the stamp "OCEANIC" inside every Boot.

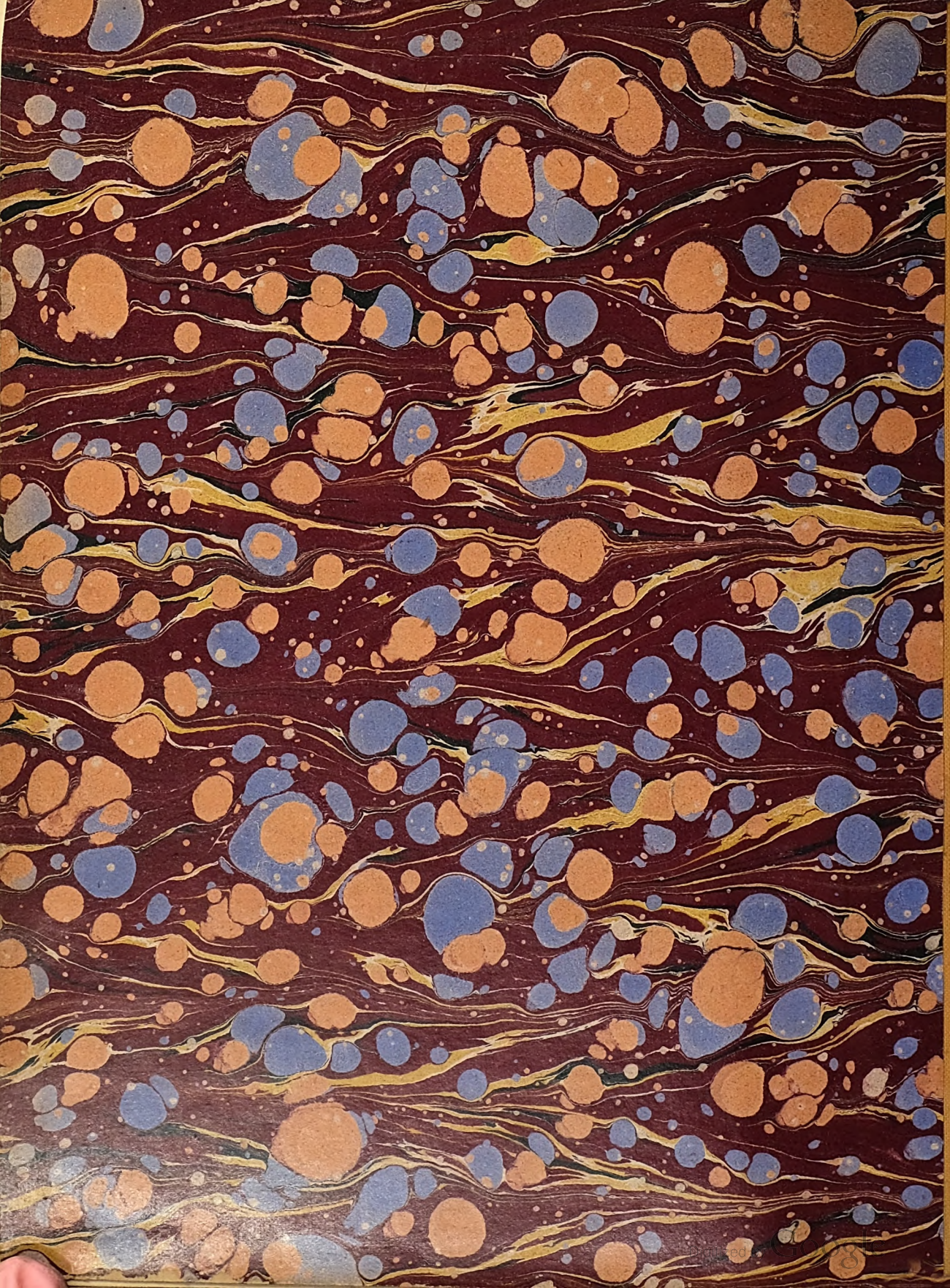
EVERY BRITISH HOUSE-WIFE

should polish all metals with it too. Most foreign polishes set up acid and are *sticky* in use, and require hard work. "MATCHLESS" Metal Polish spreads evenly over the metal, and produces *easily* and *quickly* a lasting brilliancy. "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH is made wholly in England, and its sale supports British Labour.

Manufrs.: The "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH CO., LTD., LIVERPOOL.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google